

Research paper on the catholic counter reformation

[Business](#), [Management](#)



The Catholic Church had descended into corruption and scandals through the middle ages, with popes being closely involved in politics, civilian affairs and above all, levying exorbitant fees and tithes in return for the pope's indulgences. Martin Luther served to crystallize the growing discontent among the faithful, with the publication of the 95 Theses, which proposed varied reforms within the Catholic Church, which by then the most powerful and wealthy institution in the world. Luther's manifesto, which sought to cut out the church bureaucracy, structure and cost (the Middlemen to Salvation). The Germany princes, influenced by Luther's works, openly defied the Vatican's authority, further bolstering Luther's assertions, and the emergency of the Protestant churches in Germany. The churches ironically drew the most powerful and richest groups in Europe, posing a direct challenge to the Vatican, and thus the need for action to claw back its power, which came in the form of the Counter Reformation.

This began with Pope Paul III's convention of the Council of Trent (1545), which comprised of cardinals to spearhead the reforms within the Church, including Papal indulgences, corruption, multiple other financial abuses and moral degradation among the church leadership. While the council maintained the church's basic structure as well as the basic religious practices including veneration of saints and various sacraments, which had attracted Protestant controversy, multiple reforms were initiated. The Council Trent initiated education programs directed at both the laity, and majority of rural priests, who were poorly educated, in a bid to breach the growing gap between the Church, bolster efficient administration and discipline within the Church. Political patronage and the Secular Renaissance

that had risen under Alexander IV and Leo X were no longer tolerated, while Bishops were accorded greater supervisory authority over priests and other church bureaucracy under their dioceses.

The formation of religious orders, including the Jesuits, Barnabites and the Capuchins, was also an important response, which sought to check Church corruption, heresy and expansion of the Church in other regions of the world. This allowed for the emergence of charismatic leaders to champion the cause of the Church, reconvert Protestant believers and reaffirm the Papal authority. In addition multiple spiritual movements were created, headed by leaders such as Ignatius of Loyola, Philip Neri and John of the Cross, charged with varied tasks. These tasks included interior conversion, spreading Catholic faith abroad and teaching among others.

The Church still retained enormous censorship power, which it deployed with the publication of the index of heretical books, including 583 books (including Calvin and Luther's texts) and Bible translations. Vernacular sermons and music were also permitted in worship, in a bid to win back disillusioned followers. These were in addition to the decrees on Art, which effectively banned nudity and adulterated paintings of Christ and other religious images. The Catholic Church also created a new Obedience Agency, modeled after the Spanish Inquisition, leading to the creation of councils to hear evidence on dissent and heresy. All Catholic nations carried out inquisitions, which implemented relentless interrogations and multiple other means to establish truth, to facilitate action. The Counter Reformation comprised a series of measures that initially sought to react to Martin Luther

and Calvin, but ultimately brought the Church closer to the people, eliminated excessive bureaucracy and entrenched corruption.

References

Mullett, M. A. (1999). *The Catholic Reformation*. London: Routledge.

Thomsett, M. (2011). *Heresy in the Roman Catholic Church: A History*. London: McFarland.

Wright, A. D. (2005). *The counter-Reformation: Catholic Europe and the non-Christian world*. New York: Ashgate.