

never be realized. No wonder then, that having once taken this position, it could soon be said of his utterances to the masses: "All the pregnancy of his preaching lay in his strange assertion of supernatural claims, in the denunciatory visions, in the false certitude, which gave his sermons the interest of a political bulletin. The effect was inevitable. No man ever struggled to retain power over a mixed multitude without suffering vitiation; his standard must be their lower needs, and not his own best insight."

A Republic was formed by the Piagnoni, "which was to be the model of a Christian Commonwealth, of which God Himself was the chief ruler and His Gospel the sovereign law." All forms of vice were suppressed in the city, and incited by the enthusiastic devotion of Savonarola, women gathered in the public square to throw down their ornaments as an offering to God, and men burned great heaps of books and writings tainted with licentiousness and immorality.

At length, in 1495, these measures, coupled with his extravagant assumptions as a prophet and interpreter, drew upon him the attention of the Pope, and he was cited to answer the charge of heresy at Rome.

Disregarding this citation, he was forbidden to preach, but refused to obey either this command or a subsequent summons from the papal court. Difficulties now arose in the Republic, and in the strife with the Medicean party, who conspired to regain the control of affairs, Savonarola lost ground by permitting the execution of some conspirators, in violation of his own laws. At this critical moment Rome issued a sentence of excommunication against him, and though he refused to hold it valid, because he considered the censure unjust, it served to turn the scale, and the next year, 1498, his opponents came into power.

Savonarola was ordered to cease preaching, by the Council, and was also bitterly denounced by a Franciscan monk, Francesco da Puglia, who sought to compass his ruin. An appeal to the ordeal of fire made by his opponent was avoided by the raising of difficulties on the part of Savonarola and his friends,