

perpetuating them. The Reformers, as the adherents of the new party styled themselves, professed to be the most dutiful children of the Church. But to escape the judgments of the Holy See they called for a general council. The difficulties in the way of the scheme were not inconsiderable. Italy alone enjoyed comparative peace at the moment, but the Reformers would accept no council held within the dominions of the Pope. For another cause, the city of Mantua was not available; Vicenza was next agreed upon, but it was set aside in favor of Trent, a town of Austrian Tyrol. It was a place acceptable to both parties, and here the celebrated council was opened on the 13th of December, 1545. Meanwhile, the Protestants seeing that the first obstacles were unexpectedly surmounted, retired from their first position, and, while seeking impossible concessions, eventually refused to take part in the council. They asked for an assembly where discussion was free, something never refused. They would not, however, yield to the reasonable conditions that the laws which governed former general councils should be maintained in the present one. Nor would they bind themselves by a promise made previously to fully accept the rulings and decrees voted by the majority of those assembled. Finally, after all efforts at agreement were quite exhausted, the council set to work. After weary years of alternate sitting and suspension, it was happily concluded in December, 1563. The canons and decrees which had been drawn up in twenty-five sessions were solemnly approved by Pius IV, in January, 1564 and declared obligatory for the whole church from May of the same year. Those acts had previously received the signatures of the two hundred and fifty prelates who were present at the closing session.

The dissidents held out till the last. No argument could prevail upon them to take part in, or present their claims to the council. The so-called Reformation was, in fine, an accomplished fact. The Protestants were no longer desirous of remaining members of one great fold with a single shepherd, and hence formed independent societies of their own. New paths were struck out. As the new-fashioned apostles worked their teachings into shape it be-

came apparent that most of the old landmarks were to be swept away. They accorded in little or nothing with the old religion. The negotiations of compromise which marked the first stages of the Council finally, as was perceptible especially in the latter sittings, gave place to indifference towards each other on the part of both the Protestants and the Fathers of the Council. The dissenters did not care to be present, and in consequence no judgment regarding either their persons or their opinions was pronounced. Their systems of belief were hardly alluded to, except to note those points which clashed with Catholic Faith. The Council turned its undivided attention to measures of reform, but of wise and prudent reform. Once the sources of weakness and scandal were removed, and the causes of decay stopped, the great losses already suffered would be surely, if but slowly, repaired. Without sacrificing any of its claims, the Church would be in a position to overcome by superior discipline and unity the heterogeneous and dissociated masses opposed to it. The measures adopted fully answered expectations. It is pretty well agreed that the triumphs of Protestantism ceased within the first fifty years of its existence. "We see," says Macaulay, "that during two hundred and fifty years Protestantism has made no progress worth speaking of. Nay, we believe that as far as there has been a change, that change has been in favor of Rome." The great religious revolution which excited wonder and alarm by its unparalleled progress, met a decisive repulse at Trent, nor to this day has it managed to recover.

Comfort is sought in the fact that a large portion of Christianity refused to accept either the council or its reforms. The authority of its statutes is not thereby lessened. There was a defection, but did none such ever take place before? Did the Arians bow to the Council of Nice; the Nestorians to that of Ephesus; the partisans of Eutyches to Chalcedon? The teaching body, instituted with and as the Church, legislated at Trent, either as a whole or as a part. Surely not as a part. For years previous "an Ecumenical Council" was the great demand, but it ceased the moment the Synod of Trent became