

The Italian Renaissance and Popes of Avignon

Pope had a certain work burned "because it was *contra bonos mores*"; and, again, that the Roman Curia looked on and smiled approvingly at such a work because it was not contrary to faith. The real truth is that the Catholic Church was the greatest factor in the Renaissance movement, and he who would understand the forces that contributed to this great awakening of the human intellect, and the development of art and letters which followed logically in its train, must understand the beginnings of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century and the share which the Popes of Avignon—then in exile—took in its promotion and extension.

The poet Petrarch is justly styled the "Father of Humanism," but were it not for the influence, kindly offices and patronage of the Papal Court of Avignon, the sweetest of Italian sonneteers might have lived unheeded—obscure in a lonely villa of Parma or Verona.

Let us, then, examine the share which the Popes of Avignon justly have in this great movement which filled the world of Italy the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as with the glory of a new and dazzling sunrise.

It should not be forgotten that the revival of classical learning in Italy really began early in the twelfth century with the revival of the