

and a complete change taking place in the feelings of the people, he was brought to trial before the Council for heresy and misleading the people by false prophecies.

His confession published by this Council was such as seriously to damage his reputation as a sincere and upright man. But when it is known that half the examiners were his bitterest enemies, that he confessed under the agony of torture, and that his removal, in some way, had become a political necessity to his opponents, we may well regard their correctness with suspicion. The only heresy proven was his disobedience to the Pope's mandate, and disregard of the sentence of excommunication. He retracted his prophetic claims, but never wavered in his assertion that he sought the good of Florence, the church, and the world, first of all, though the ambition to lead the reform he could not deny.

His fellow-monks bore testimony to "an unimpeachable purity and consistency in his life which had commanded their unsuspecting veneration;" yet against all this, sufficient was extracted from Savonarola to give some show of justice to an act already determined, namely, his condemnation and execution.

The Council and Pope united in this sentence, and their common enemy, really the enemy of oppression and licentiousness, was executed and burned with two companions, in 1498. He died a professed Catholic, accepting the last absolution from the papal commissary; and it is stated to be still a question with Catholics whether he should be regarded as a confessor of the truth or a fanatical forerunner of the Reformation.

It is exceedingly difficult, in this age and these changed times, to form a just estimate of Savonarola and his work. One thing is certain, that of all the forerunners of the Reformation, none surpassed him in enthusiasm for some, at least, for the great principles of God's Word, or for boldness in attacking the corruption and abounding wiles of a dissolute age.

His position at the outset was exactly similar to that of Luther, and his stand against the Pope's authority quite as firm; and humanly speaking, had the circumstances been dif-