

# OLD CATHOLICS

Old Catholics (Ger. *Altkatholiken*) is the designation assumed by those members of the Roman Catholic Church who refused to accept the decrees of the First Vatican Council of 1870 defining the dogma of papal infallibility and ultimately set up a separate ecclesiastical organization on the episcopal model. The Old Catholic movement, at the outset at least, differed fundamentally from the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century in that it aimed not at any drastic changes in doctrine but at the restoration of the ancient Catholic system, founded on the diocesan episcopate, which under the influence of the ultramontane movement of the 19th century had been finally displaced by the rigidly centralized system of the papal monarchy. In this respect it represented a tendency of old standing within the Church and one which, in the 18th century, had all but gained the upper hand. Protestantism takes for its standard the Bible and the supposed doctrines and institutions of the apostolic age. Old Catholicism sets up the authority of the undivided Church, and accepts the decrees of the first seven general councils - down to the second council of Nicaea (787), a principle which has necessarily involved a certain amount of doctrinal divergence both from the standards of Rome and those of the Protestant Churches.

The proceedings of the Vatican council and their outcome had at first threatened to lead to a serious schism in the Church. The minority against the decrees included many of the most distinguished prelates and theologians of the Roman communion, and the methods by which their opposition had been overcome seemed to make it difficult for them to submit. The pressure put upon them was, however, immense, and the reasons for submission may well have seemed overwhelming; in the end, after more or less delay, all the recalcitrant bishops gave in their adhesion to the decrees.

The "sacrificio dell' intelletto," as it was termed - the subordination of individual opinion to the general authority of the Church - was the maxim adopted by one and all. Seventeen of the German bishops

almost immediately receded from the position they had taken up at Rome and assented to the dogma, publishing at the same time a pastoral letter in which they sought to justify their change of sentiment on the ground of expediency in relation to the interests of the Church (Michelis, *Der neue Fuldaer Hirtenbrief*, 1870). Their example was followed by all the other bishops of Germany. Darboy, archbishop of Paris, and Dupanloup, bishop of Orleans, in France adopted a like course, and took with them the entire body of the French clergy. Each bishop demanded in turn the same submission from the clergy of his diocese, the alternative being suspension from pastoral functions, to be followed by deprivation of office. It may be urged as some extenuation of this general abandonment of a great principle, that those who had refused to subscribe to the dogma received but languid support, and in some cases direct discouragement, from their respective governments. The submission of the illustrious Karl Joseph von Hefele was generally attributed to the influence exerted by the court of Wurtemberg.

The universities, being less directly under the control of the Church, were prepared to show a bolder front. Dr J. F. von Schulte, professor at Prague, was one of the first to publish a formal protest. A meeting of Catholic professors and distinguished scholars convened at Nuremberg (August 1870) recorded a like dissent, and resolved on the adoption of measures for bringing about the assembling of a really free council north of the Alps. The *Appel aux Eveques Catholiques* of M. Hyacinthe Loyson (better known as "Pere Hyacinthe"), after referring to the overthrow of "the two despotisms," "the empire of the Napoleons and the temporal power of the popes," appealed to the Catholic bishops throughout the world to put an end to the schism by declaring whether the recent decrees were or were not binding on the faith of the Church. This appeal, on its appearance in *La Liberté* early in 1871, was suppressed by the order of the king of Italy.

On the 28th of March Dollinger, in a letter of some length, set forth the reasons which compelled him also to withhold his submission alike as "a Christian, a theologian, an historical student and a citizen." The publication of this letter was shortly followed by a sentence of excommunication pronounced against Dollinger and Professor Johannes Friedrich, and read to the different congregations from the

pulpits of Munich. The professors of the university, on the other hand, had shortly before evinced their resolution of affording Dollinger all the moral support in their power by an address (April 3, 1871) in which they denounced the Vatican decrees with unsparing severity, declaring that the German bishops had stooped to the dishonoring task of "forcing consciences in the service of an unchristian tyranny, of reducing many pious and upright men to distress and want, and of persecuting those who had but stood steadfast in their allegiance to the ancient faith".

An address to the king, drawn up a few days later, received the signatures of 12,000 Catholics. The refusal of the rites of the Church to one of the signatories, Dr Zenger, when on his deathbed, elicited strong expressions of disapproval; and when, shortly after, it became necessary to fill up by election six vacancies in the council of the university, the feeling of the electors was indicated by the return of candidates distinguished by their dissent from the new decrees.

In the following September the demand for another and a free council was responded to by the assembling of a congress at Munich. It was composed of nearly 500 delegates, convened from almost all parts of the world; but the Teutonic element was now as manifestly predominant as the Latin element had been at Rome. The proceedings were presided over by Professor von Schulte, and lasted three days. Among those who took a prominent part in the deliberations were Landammann Keller, Windscheid, Dollinger, Reinkens, Maassen (professor of canon law at Vienna), Friedrich and Huber. The arrangements finally agreed upon were mainly provisional; but one of the resolutions plainly declared that it was desirable if possible to effect a reunion with the Eastern Orthodox Greek and Russian Churches, and also to arrive at an "understanding" with the Protestant and Episcopal communions.

In the following year lectures were delivered at Munich by various supporters of the new movement, and the learning and eloquence of Reinkens were displayed with marked effect. In France the adherence of the abbe Michaud to the cause attracted considerable interest, not only from his reputation as a preacher, but also from the notable step in advance made by his declaration that, inasmuch as the adoption of the standpoint of the Tridentine canons would render reunion with the

Lutheran and the Reformed Churches impossible, the wisest course would be to insist on nothing more with respect to doctrinal belief than was embodied in the canons of the first seven ecumenical councils. In the same year the Old Catholics, as they now began to be termed, entered into relations with the historical little Jansenist Church of Utrecht. Dollinger, in delivering his inaugural address as rector of the university of Munich, expressed his conviction that theology had received a fresh impulse and that the religious history of Europe was entering upon a new phase.

Other circumstances contributed to invest Old Catholicism with additional importance. It was evident that the relations between the Roman Curia and the Prussian government were becoming extremely strained. In February 1872 appeared the first measures of the Falk ministry, having for their object the control of the influence of the clergy in the schools, and in May the pope refused to accept Cardinal Hohenlohe, who during the council had opposed the definition of the dogma, as Prussian minister at the Vatican.

Many priests and parishes in Germany refused to accept the decrees of the First Vatican Council and congregations of Old Catholics were shortly after formed at numerous towns and villages in Bavaria, Baden, Prussia, German Switzerland, and even in Austria. At Warnsdorf in Bohemia a congregation was collected which still represents one of the most important centers of the movement.

In September the second congress was held at Cologne. It was attended by some 600 delegates or visitors from all parts of Europe, and the English Church was represented by the bishops of Ely and Lincoln and other distinguished members. At this congress Friedrich boldly declared that the movement was directed "against the whole papal system, a system of errors during a thousand years, which had only reached its climax in the doctrine of infallibility." The movement thus entered a new phase, the congress occupying itself mainly with the formation of a more definite organization and with the question of reunion with other Churches.

The immediate effect was a fateful divergence of opinion; for many who sympathized with the opposition to the extreme papal claims shrank from the creation of a fresh schism. Prince Chlodwig

Hohenlohe, who as prime minister of Bavaria had attempted to unite the governments against the definition of the dogma, refused to have anything to do with proceedings which could only end in the creation of a fresh sect, and would make the prospect of the reform of the Church from within hopeless; more important still, Dollinger refused to take part in setting up a separate organization, and though he afterwards so far modified his opinion as to help the Old Catholic community with sympathy and advice, he never formally joined it.

Meanwhile, the progress of the quarrel between the Prussian government and the Curia had been highly favorable to the movement. In May 1873 the celebrated Falk laws were enacted, whereby the articles 15 and 18 of the Prussian constitution were modified, so as to legalize a systematic state supervision over the education of the clergy of all denominations, and also over the appointment and dismissal of all ministers of religion. The measure, which was a direct response to the Vatican decrees, inspired the Old Catholics with a not unreasonable expectation that the moral support of the government would henceforth be enlisted on their side.

On the 11th of August Professor J. H. Reinkens of Breslau, having been duly elected bishop of the new community, was consecrated at Rotterdam by Bishop Heykamp of Deventer, the archbishop of Utrecht, who was to have performed the ceremony, having died a few days before. In the meantime the extension of the movement in Switzerland had been proceeding rapidly, and it was resolved to hold the third congress at Constance. The proceedings occupied three days (12th to 14th September), the subjects discussed being chiefly the institution of a synod as the legislative and executive organ of the Church, and schemes of reunion with the Greek, the African and the Protestant communions. On the 10th of September the election of Bishop Reinkens was formally recognized by the Prussian government, and on the 7th of October he took the oath of allegiance to the king.

The following year (1874) was marked by the assembling of the first synod and a conference at Bonn, and of a congress. Reinkens was elected at Cologne in early Christian fashion by clergy and people, the latter being representatives of Old Catholic congregations.

The diocesan synod, under the presidency of the bishop, consists of the clergy of the diocese and one lay delegate for every 200 church members. It now meets twice a year and transacts the business prepared for it by an executive committee of 4 clergy and 5 laymen. In Switzerland the organization is still more democratic; the bishop does not preside over the synod and may be deposed by it.

Bishop Reinkens spoke in hopeful terms of the results of his observations during a recent missionary tour throughout Germany. The conference, held on the 14th, 15th and 16th of September, had for its special object the discussion of the early confessions as a basis of agreement, though not necessarily of fusion, between the different communions above-named. The meetings, which were presided over by Dollinger, successively took into consideration the *Filioque* clause in the Nicene creed, the sacraments, the canon of Scripture, the episcopal succession in the English Church, the confessional, indulgences, prayers for the dead, and the eucharist.

The synod (May 27-29) was the first of a series, held yearly till 1879 and afterwards twice a year, in which the doctrine and discipline of the new Church were gradually formulated. The tendency was, naturally, to move further and further away from the Roman model; and though the synod expressly renounced any claim to formulate dogma, or any intention of destroying the unity of the faith, the "Catholic Catechism" adopted by it in 1874 contained several articles fundamentally at variance with the teaching of Rome.

At the first synod, too, it was decided to make confession and fasting optional, while later synods pronounced in favor of using the vernacular in public worship, allowing the marriage of priests, and permitting them to administer the communion in both kinds to members of the Anglican Church attending their services. Of these developments that abolishing the compulsory celibacy of the clergy led to the most opposition; some opposed it as inexpedient, others - notably the Jansenist clergy of Holland - as wrong in itself, and when it was ultimately passed in 1878 some of the clergy, notably Tangermann and Reusch, withdrew from the Old Catholic movement.

Meanwhile the movement had made some progress in other countries - in Austria, in Italy and in Mexico; but everywhere it was

hampered by the inevitable controversies, which either broke up its organization or hindered its development. In Switzerland, where important conferences were successively convened (at Solothurn in 1871, at Olten in 1872, 1873 and 1874), the unanimity of the "Christian Catholics," as they preferred to call themselves, seemed at one time in danger of being shipwrecked on the question of episcopacy. It was not until September 18th, 1876, that the conflict of opinions was so far composed as to allow of the consecration of Bishop Herzog by Bishop Reinkens. The reforms introduced by M. Hyacinthe Loyson in his church at Geneva received only a partial assent from the general body. Among the more practical results of his example is to be reckoned, however, the fact that in French Switzerland nearly all the clergy, in German Switzerland about one half, are married men.

The end of the *Kulturkampf* in 1878, and the new alliance between Bismarck and Pope Leo XIII. against revolutionary Socialism, deprived the Old Catholics of the special favor which had been shown them by the Prussian government; they continued, however, to enjoy the legal status of Catholics, and their communities retained the rights and the property secured to them by the law of the 4th of July 1875.

In Bavaria, on the other hand, they were in March 1890, after the death of Dollinger, definitely reduced to the status of a private religious sect, with very narrow rights. When Bishop Reinkens died in January 1896 his successor Theodor Weber, professor of theology at Breslau, elected bishop on the 4th of March, was recognized only by the governments of Prussia, Baden and Hesse.

The present position of the Old Catholic Church has disappointed the expectation of its friends and of its enemies. It has neither advanced rapidly, as the former had hoped, nor retrograded, as the latter have frequently predicted it would do. At the turn of the century in Germany there were 90 congregations, served by 60 priests, and the number of adherents was estimated at about 60,000. In Switzerland there were 40 parishes, 60 clergy, and about 50,000 adherents. In Austria, though some accessions have been received since the *Los von Rom* movement began in 1899, the Old Catholic Church had not made much headway; it had some 15 churches and about 15,000 adherents. In Holland the Old Catholic or Jansenist Church had 3

bishops, about 30 congregations and over 8000 adherents. In France the movement headed by Loyson did not go far. There is but one congregation, in Paris, where it had built for itself a beautiful new church on the Boulevard Blanquin. Its priest was George Volet, who was ordained by Herzog, and it had just over 300 members. It is under the supervision of the Old Catholic archbishops of Utrecht. In Italy a branch of the Old Catholic communion was established in 1881 by Count Enrico di Campello, a former canon of St Peter's at Rome. A church was opened in Rome by Monsignor Savarese and Count Campello, under the supervision of the bishop of Long Island in the United States, who undertook the superintendence of the congregation in accordance with the regulations laid down by the Lambeth conference. But dissensions arose between the two men. The church in Rome was closed; Savarese returned to the Roman Church; and Campello commenced a reform work in the rural districts of Umbria, under the episcopal guidance of the bishop of Salisbury. This was in 1885.

In 1900 Campello returned to Rome, and once more opened a church there. In 1902 he retired from active participation in the work, on account of age and bodily infirmity; and his place at the head of it was taken by Professor Cicchitti of Milan. Campello ultimately returned to the Roman communion. There are half dozen priests, who were either in Roman or Old Catholic orders, and about twice as many congregations.

Old Catholicism had spread to America. The Polish Romanists there, in 1899, complained of the rule of Irish bishops; elected a bishop of their own, Herr Anton Kozlowski; presented him to the Old Catholic bishops in Europe for consecration; and he presided over seven congregations in Chicago. The Austrian and Italian churches possessed no bishops, and the Austrian government refused to allow the Old Catholic bishops of other countries to perform their functions in Austria.

Every Old Catholic congregation has its choral union, its poor relief, and its mutual improvement society. Theological faculties exist at Bonn and Bern, and at the former a residential college for theological students was established by Bishop Reinkens. Old Catholicism had eight newspapers - two in Italy, two in Switzerland, and one each in

Holland, Germany, Austria and France. It had held reunion conferences at Lucerne in 1892, at Rotterdam in 1894, and at Vienna in 1897. At these, members of the various episcopal bodies have been welcomed. It had also established a quarterly publication, the *Revue internationale de theologie*, which had admitted articles in French, German and English, contributed not merely by Old Catholics, but by members of the Anglican, Russian, Greek and Slavonic churches. Old Catholic theologians have been very active, and the work of Dollinger and Reusch on the Jesuits, and the history of the Roman Church by Professor Langen, have attained a European reputation.

An outline of the whole movement up to the year 1875 will be found in *The New Reformation*, by "Theodorus" (J. Bass Mullinger); and an excellent résumé of the main facts in the history of the movement in each European country, as connected with other developments of liberal thought, and with political history, is given in the second volume of Dr F. Nippold's *Handbuch der neuesten Kirchengeschichte*, vol. ii. (1883). See also A. M. E. Scarth, *The Story of the Old Catholic and Kindred Movements* (London, 1883); Bihler, *Der Altkatholicismus* (Leiden, 1880); J. F. von Schulte, *Der Altkatholizismus* (Giessen, 1887); and article in Hauck-Herzog's *Realencyk. für prot. Theol. and Kirche*, i. 415. For details the following sources may be consulted: (a) For the proceedings of the successive congresses: the *Stenographische Berichte*, published at Munich, Cologne, Constance, &c.; those of the congress of Constance were summarized in an English form, with other elucidatory matter, by Professor John Mayor. (b) For the questions involved in the consecration of Bishop Reinkens: *Rechtsgutachten über die Frage der Anerkennung des altkatholischen Bischofs Dr Reinkens in Bayern* (Munich, 1874); Emil Friedberg, *Der Staat und d. Bischofswahlen in Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1874); F. von Sybel, *Das altkatholische Bisthum and das Vermögen d. römischkatholischen Kirchengesellschaften in Preussen* (Bonn, 1874). (c) Reinkens's own speeches and pastorals, some of which have been translated into English, give his personal views and experiences; the *Life of Huber* has been written and published by Eberhard Stirngiebl; and the persecutions to which the Old Catholic clergy were exposed have been set forth in a pamphlet by J. Mayor, *Facts and Documents* (London, 1875). (d) For Switzerland, C.

Herzog, *Beitrdge zur Vorgeschichte der Christkathol. Kirche der Schweiz* (Bern, 1896).