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BERNARDINO OCHINO OF SIENA : CAPUCHIN AND REFORMER (1487—1564).

BY JOHN KNIPE.

PART II

1541 CONFERENCE AT RATISBON (REGENSBURG). CONTARINI, THE LEGATE, MAKES CONCESSIONS TO THE PROTESTANTS.

Cardinal Contarini made a noble attempt to heal the breach in the Church. It was Rome's hour, and the Legate, by his kindness, courtesy and wise tolerance, had nearly won back the Protestants of Germany. He thought that Justification by Faith might be accepted as a pious belief but not as a Dogma.

The General Chapter was held at Whitsuntide in Naples and Ochino was unanimously re-elected. "He had not yet shown the slightest token of heresy either by word of mouth or writing" (Boverio). Then the rumour arrived, Contarini was in disgrace and his concessions rejected at Rome. Ochino hesitated to accept office; he went out of the Chapter House alone, but Bernard of Asti followed him and urged him so earnestly that he consented to the entreaties of one whom he greatly honoured.

DEATH OF VALDEZ. THE CIRCLE DISPERSED.

Taken from the evil to come Valdez died that summer.

The Capuchin chronicler, Boverio, in deploring what followed, blamed Ochino for remaining after the Chapter in Naples, and "forming an intimate friendship with Valdez, a heretic," who lent him Lutheran books which "Ochino, fond of novelties, eagerly read." Boverio ignored the earlier years of their friendship. And Ochino did not then remain long in Naples. Probably he was at Florence when he heard of Valdez' death. The Spanish mystic had a great soul in a frail body, and he seems to have died suddenly.

Ochino was himself ill for several months. He declined an invitation to Siena in a letter which shows how he felt his loss. "I have been suffering for some time from such severe lumbago and other ailments that even if I could rise and travel it would be quite impossible for me to preach. . . . I must remain and accomplish my writing work while I am being treated." . . .

He may have tried to reorganize the Circle, for he wrote later of his own spiritual convictions: "The eyes of Italy were so weak that I should have hurt them grievously if I had let them look on the great Light Christ as it had been revealed to me. But *in the narrow Circle* I revealed the secret to many." He added mournfully: "Many of these came to me to tempt me; others from covetousness to inform the Pope and the Cardinals. . . . And again others joined who, partly from envy, partly for religion's sake,

sought to bring the matter to an issue. They contended that I preached heresies . . . and such poisonous heresy that none could ensnare or . . . catch me in my own words." It had become plain both to Ochino's friends and his enemies that he believed in Justification, and it was the *practical* nature of that grand doctrine which cut away the ground of the sacerdotal system. As it does in every age when it is plainly and fearlessly declared.

OCHINO SUSPECTED AT ROME. LENT IN VENICE, 1542.

At Christmas they were selling copies of the "Nine Sermons" in Venice, which were eagerly bought in anticipation of his coming.

When the beloved figure of the venerable Capuchin slowly mounted the pulpit of the SS. Apostoli the Nuncio Fabio Mignanelli had his spies in the church, having received the Pope's directions to watch Ochino closely. The friar knew that he was suspected. He chose his words prudently, while he wrote to his friend Del Vasto, "Christ's soldiers serve the bravest general of all." The disappointed spies wrenched his words from their context and reported them to the Nuncio as "heretical expressions." Mignanelli heard Ochino in private and dismissed the charge. But in March the Nuncio condemned for alleged heresy one of the Valdez' Circle, the preacher Terenziano of Milan. The "Savii" or "Committee of the Great Council for Church Affairs" threw Terenziano without trial into the dungeons near the Bridge of Sighs. All men wondered what Ochino would say. A great congregation held their breath while he knelt in silent prayer before them. Then rising and surveying the upturned faces, "Oh, Queen of the Sea!" he thundered in that mighty voice which he could subdue to a low, clear whisper: "If thou castest the heralds of truth into dungeons and chains and condemnest them to the galleys, what resting-place shall remain for the Truth?" The spies rushed off exultantly to tell the Nuncio. In anger Magnanelli forbade Ochino to preach. But the furious Venetians threatened to expel the Nuncio, who yielded on condition that Ochino abstained from any reference to such disputed matters.

Three days after Ochino was back in the pulpit and the Nuncio was writing to Rome. The Savii did not condemn Terenziano, but they left him in his dungeon from which some years after he escaped. He became a pastor in the Valtelline.

His Course finished Ochino retired to Verona. The Capuchin Convent stood "where the Adige leaves the town walls." He expounded St. Paul's Epistles to his friars from all over Italy and saw daily his friend Bishop Giberti, sometime member of the "Oratory of Divine Love."

Siena begged him to return. The city "had amended after his preaching," and the Pope had promised them his Missioner for the next Lent. Ochino's reply in the Town Archives was warmly affectionate. He was sorry, but "a Papal Brief had ordered him to go to Venice and stay there until further orders."

CITATION TO ROME.

The wavering Pope had shelved the Report on Church Reform, alleging the impossibility to reform his Curia! Now he summoned Caraffa and asked him, "How shall we overcome the heretics and retain Catholics in the Faith?"

Caraffa advised him to restore the Inquisition. Heresy should be crushed by the highest Tribunal sitting in Rome. The Cardinals much preferred a General Council, but backed by Ignatius Loyola, who signed the Memorial of Request, and other influential names, Caraffa obtained the infamous Bull "LICET AB INITIO." June 21, 1542.

It was not—as has been pretended by some historians—"to suppress bad books." Of thirteen paragraphs all were concerned with "Proceedings against Heretics and those Suspect of Heresy." The Holy Office was given unlimited and rapid powers, secret denunciations were accepted, the accused might neither call nor question witnesses, and even the Confessional Seal was not held sacred in reserved cases. Of course Ochino's name was foremost on Caraffa's List.

But Rome dared not arrest him openly. It must be "without uproar." The Cardinal De Carpi, Protector of the Order, "agreed with the Pope that Ochino should be cited privately." The Secretary, Cardinal Farnese, sent him a civil letter, requiring his presence after the great heat, on "matters of importance."

Ochino showed Giberti the letter. He distrusted it. He had been warned that he was suspected as a Lutheran and how certain of his own friars had arrived in Rome to give evidence against him. He thought the smooth words were "not honest nor straightforward" (Giberti letter to Del Vasto, Sept.). However, Ochino decided to obey and he wrote that he would come in the cooler weather. Giberti got a dispensation for him to ride, but he could not obtain a delay. Instead a second Brief came from Venice, citing Ochino to appear at once. It was mid-August. The friar consulted Giberti, who urged him to obey, and trust the Pope's kindness. The bishop lent him a horse and servant, and gave him a letter to Beccadelli, Contarini's secretary. On the way Ochino read it and found his fears were justified. "The affairs of our Pater Fra Bernardino," wrote Giberti, "will, I trust, have that ending which his sincere piety deserves; which we may expect from the Pope's wisdom before whom he is invited to appear . . . if the Lord Cardinal will assist him in his kindness all will be so much easier." This letter opened Ochino's eyes.

ARRIVAL IN BOLOGNA. MYSTERIOUS SICKNESS OF CONTARINI.

When Ochino reached the Legate's Palace Contarini had fallen suddenly ill. "The Cardinal received Ochino and told him to retire to rest till the morning" (Muzio). This brief statement shows that Contarini did both see and speak to Ochino privately

on the night of his arrival—Ochino has himself described his reception by the great Cardinal :

“ Although I knew that a hard struggle was awaiting me at Rome I set out thither. . . . At Bologna I spoke with the Cardinal Contarini and convinced myself that there was not the smallest hope that . . . Justification would be accepted in Rome. Contarini added that he himself had been in great danger because it was said he had not exposed the Protestants enough at the Diet. He barely escaped death. He even added in a whisper, ‘ If I have only escaped it.’ I answered, ‘ If they have dealt thus with the green tree, how shall it be with the dry ? ’ ”

Later on Beccadelli denied the private interview. He said that he kept Ochino till noon hoping Contarini would improve, but that the Cardinal only grew worse in the night and being in high fever he could hardly murmur his regrets and ask for Ochino’s prayers.

There is no more dramatic incident in the history of the Reformers than Ochino’s meeting thus with the dying Contarini. The friar reached Florence and sent back Giberti’s loan. Alarming rumours were in the air. Peter Martyr came from Lucca, resolved himself to disobey a similar summons to Genoa. He had written to Monsignor Pole. He warned Ochino of his imminent peril and pressed money upon him out of his own slender purse. Flaminio and Carnesecchi begged their friend to flee. The heat was intense and Ochino paused to reflect. He had been secretly informed that the Pope would exchange the cowl for a cardinal’s hat if he submitted. “ Their religion has need of silence,” Ochino said bitterly. He wrote a long pathetic letter to Vittoria Colonna. “ I am still lingering near Florence, tormented by doubts. . . . I was especially persuaded by Don Pietro Martire and others not to go. . . . I should be forced to deny Christ or be crucified. . . . I feel no call to go to death. . . . Christ has several times taught us to flee. Shall I preach Him under a mask ? . . . I hear Cardinal Farnese says that I am cited because I taught heresies and other abominable things. . . . I am the same person your Excellency has known. You will consider how the flesh shrinks from the thought of leaving everything behind. Christ has permitted my persecution. . . . He wills it for some good purpose. . . . I should have much liked to speak with you . . . or Monsignor Pole, or to receive a letter from you, but I have not had one for more than a month. Pray God for me. I am more willing than ever to serve Him. Salute all. Florence, Aug. 22, 1542.”

The Valdez Circle was scattered and Vittoria proved herself to be a fair-weather friend. Her brother, Prince Ascanio Colonna, gave Ochino a horse and servant. On the hills near Siena that St. Bartholomew’s Eve the Inquisition Guards watched all day for the Capuchin Vicar-General. At sunset they closed their cordon round the Convent outside Porta Camollia. Ochino had not arrived. He had turned to the north-east, avoiding Bologna where the noble Contarini died the next day, beloved and lamented by his flock. The Capuchin, his friars told to friends, reached Ferrara and was

hospitably received by the brave Duchess Rénee, Calvin's hostess, who was ever ready to help the Reformers. In her Palace Ochino laid aside his habit and put on secular dress. Thence he rode on by Brescia to Milan where the Imperial Governor Del Vasto was a faithful friend. Bishop Giberti wrote thanking him "for all he had done to help the good father." Probably the Marchese gave Ochino an armed escort. He reached Chiavenna and climbed the Splügen Pass over the Swiss frontier alone. He stood awhile looking back sorrowfully over Lake Como and the rich Lombardy Plain where the vines twined in festoons between the high maize-poles. Ahead to the north stretched the rugged territory of the Free Cantons where was security and religious freedom; but Ochino was a Latin, by birth, by training and by temperament; alien in spirit and in feeling, he was, as he wrote: "an exile for Christ Who never forsakes His own."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

The chief authority for the above sketch is Dr. Karl Benrath's *Life*. Ranke also has a brief notice. The Siena Archives contain his letters to the Council, and Monsignor Bembo's Letters are published. There are only two writings of Ochino's Italian Period: "The Nine Sermons" and "The Seven Dialogues." The remainder were burned by the Inquisition.

Of his exile, including his visit to England and Cranmer's hospitality at Lambeth, there are many accounts.

It may interest Evangelicals to know that Ochino was Cranmer's guest during the Compilation of the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI (1552).

RETREATS. Their Value, Method and Organization. Edited by the Rev. R. Schofield. *S.P.C.K.* 3s. 6d. net.

Retreats have reached the stage when they have to be scientifically considered and psychologically valued, and this book is intended to be a guide for every class of Retreat. It represents the views of all sections of Christians including the Free Churches and the Roman Church. It describes the methods that have been adopted with success by each. There are many different temperaments and the style of retreat which suits one may make no appeal to others, and this is recognized in the wide variety of methods indicated. Bishop Chavasse writes a preface in which he points out some of these facts and gives an interesting account of the first Evangelical Retreat held at Christ Church, Hampstead, in October, 1874. Its leading principles were fellowship, freedom, and variety. Retreats conducted with these ideals may well receive the support of Evangelical Churchpeople, and useful suggestions as to conducting them will be gathered from the experiences of the contributors to this volume.