



UNIVERSALITAS & PERVASIVITAS

il costituirsi e diffondersi della S.J. e suoi echi (1540 - 1773)

di A. Pisani

Schede autori Atti costitutivi, ordinamenti, agiografie, etc.

Petrus Canisius santo

St. Peter Canisius, S.J. (Dutch: 1521-1597) was a renowned preacher, theologian, founder of many of Europe's schools and a Doctor of the Universal Church. Canisius was one of the first Jesuits, was the first Jesuit to publish a book, the first to found a university and the first Jesuit university president. He distinguished himself as a theologian at the Council of Trent and was considered "the pride and ornament of all Germany" and called "the second Apostle of Germany". In 1550 he entered Germany with only two Jesuits, but by 1580 their number had grown to 1,110.

Among the 37 books he wrote is his concise, lucid catechism which became a best seller, circulated in 15 languages. He was so pivotal in catechetical work that his name was synonymous with catechism. Centuries later one could still hear "Have you learned your Canisius?" Canisius found the effect of the Reformation on Catholics devastating. This calamity was apparent in an abysmal ignorance of the faith on the part of the laity as well as the clergy, whom he described as: "a scandal before God and the whole world." The more hopeless the situation seemed to be, however, the more energetic he became, stressing the need for education.



He was instrumental in the founding of 18 colleges in as many cities with strong emphasis on academic excellence, insisting: "Better a college without a church than a college without a library." (Ban, Cor, Ham, Jlx, O'M, Som, Tyl)

<http://www.faculty.fairfield.edu/jmac/jp/jpcancos.htm>

Canisio pubblicò il suo Catechismo latino nel 1555, cioè undici anni prima della pubblicazione di quello del Concilio di Trento. Ciononostante egli già aveva una profonda conoscenza dei suoi contenuti e soprattutto delle discussioni che avevano portato al risultato finale, e da ciò deriva la sintonia tra il suo catechismo e quello tridentino. Alcune lettere di [Ignazio di Loyola](#) a Canisio danno testimonianza dell'influsso esercitato dal fondatore dell'Ordine su temi chiave quale quello dell'eresia (alla quale Ignazio fa riferimento usando metafore di tipo medico: *veleno, cancer, peste, morbus*).

“In posizione subordinata rispetto al detentore dell'autorità, al gesuita spettava una funzione intellettuale e spirituale specifica: operare per l' 'aiuto delle anime', predicando, ascoltando confessioni, insegnando la dottrina ortodossa, ma anche segnalando all'Inquisizione i sospetti di eresia. Si trattava di una funzione che doveva essere svolta con discrezione. Le informazioni raccolte dai gesuiti si dovevano all'efficacia del rapporto che erano capaci di istituire coi penitenti



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in confessione. Ed era soprattutto in confessione che i gesuiti tendevano a risolvere le colpe di eresia, ricorrendo tutt'al più all'abiura segreta secondo una prassi che fu largamente seguita in Germania da Pietro Canisio. Ma quello che si apprendeva su eventuali ambienti ereticali doveva essere riversato all'Inquisizione, sia pure attraverso i meccanismi della *spontanea comparitio*. Tuttavia, l'eventuale clamore destato dall'uso di quelle conoscenze poteva avere effetti distruttivi sulla fiducia dei penitenti. Così, quando le autorità ecclesiastiche minacciavano di far uso di quelle informazioni per pubblici e clamorosi processi, i gesuiti si trovavano a disagio e – come fece [Nadal](#) nel 1550 – potevano rifiutarsi di collaborare.

Cfr: Adriano Prosperi *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* Torino: Einaudi, 1996, p. 574.

Confessor and Doctor of the Church. Born 8 May 1521(1521-05-08) Nijmegen, Duchy of Guelders, Netherlands - Died 21 December 1597 (aged 76) - Venerated in Catholic Church - Beatified 1864, Rome by Pope Pius IX - Canonized 21 May 1925, Rome by Pope Pius XI - Feast 21 December; 27 April (General Roman Calendar, 1926-1969)

Saint Petrus Canisius (8 May 1521 – 21 December 1597) was an important Jesuit who fought against the spread of Protestantism in Germany, Austria, Bohemia (Czech Republic), and Switzerland. The restoration of Catholicism in Germany after the Reformation is attributed to his work.

St Peter Canisius was beatified by Blessed [Pius IX](#) in the year 1864, and later canonized and declared a Doctor of the Church on 21 May 1925 by Pope [Pius XI](#).^[1] His feast day was included in the General Roman Calendar in 1926, for celebration on 27 April. In 1969 it was moved to 21 December, his day of death and so the normal day for celebrating a saint's entry into heaven.

Life

He was born Peter Kanis in Nijmegen in the Duchy of Guelders (until 1549 part of the Spanish Netherlands within the Holy Roman Empire, now the Netherlands). In the University of Cologne, he met Blessed Peter Faber, one of the founders of the Society of Jesus. St Peter Canisius became the first Dutchman to join the Jesuit order in 1543.

Through his work in the order he became one of the most influential Catholics of his time. He supervised the founding and maintenance of the early German Jesuit Colleges, often with little resources at hand. Because of his frequent travels between the colleges, a tedious and dangerous occupation at the time, he became known as the Second Apostle of Germany.

St Peter Canisius also exerted a strong influence on Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I; he ceaselessly reminded Ferdinand of the imminent danger to his soul should he concede more rights to Protestants in return for their military support. When Peter Canisius sensed a very real danger of Ferdinand's son and heir, King Maximilian, openly declaring himself a Protestant, he convinced Emperor Ferdinand to threaten disinheritance should Maximilian desert the Catholic Faith.

St Peter Canisius was an influential teacher and preacher, especially through his "German catechism", a book that defined the basic principles of Catholicism in the German language and found many readers in German-speaking countries. He was offered the post of bishop of Vienna, but declined in order to continue his travelling and teachings. However, he was administrator of the Diocese of Vienna from 1554 to 1555 and main pulpit spokesman in Augsburg Cathedral from



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1559 to 1568, where he strongly witnessed to his faith on three or four occasions each week. His preaching was said to have been so convincing that it attracted hundreds of Protestants back to the old faith. He was one of the main theologians at the Colloquy of Worms in 1557.

By the time he left Germany in 1590, the Jesuit order in Germany had evolved from almost nothing into a powerful tool of the Counter Reformation. Canisius spent the last 20 years of his life in Fribourg, Switzerland, where he founded the Jesuit preparatory school, the Collège Saint Michel, that prepared generations of young men for careers and future university studies, and under cantonal administration continues to exist as a coeducational preparatory institution.

Pastoral Strategy of Petrus Canisius

Petrus Canisius lived in the age of Reformation and dedicated much of his work to the clarification of the Catholic faith in light of emerging Protestantism. His lasting contribution is his three catechisms, which he published in Latin and German, which became widespread and popular in Catholic regions. In his fight with German Protestantism, he requested much more flexibility from Rome. "If you treat them right, the Germans will give you everything". Many err in matters of faith, but without arrogance. They err the German way, mostly honest, a bit simple-minded, but very open for everything Lutheran. An honest explanation of the faith would be much more effective than a polemical attack against reformers.[2] He rejected Catholic attacks against Calvin and Melancton with the words: With words like these, we don't cure patients, we make them incurable [3]

Mariology of Canisius

While there are many roads leading to Jesus Christ, Marian veneration is the best way to him [4] Canisius tried to show the practical and pragmatic rationale for Marian devotion and defended it against opposing Protestant arguments. His sermons and letters document a clear preoccupation with Marian veneration. [4] Under the heading "prayer" he explains the Ave Maria, Hail Mary, as the basis for Catholic Marian piety. [5] Less known are his Marian books, in which he published prayers and contemplative texts. Canisius published an applied mariology for preachers, in which Mary is described in tender and warm words. [6] He actively promoted the sodalities of our Lady and the rosary associations. He is credited with adding to the Hail Mary the sentence

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners. [7]

Eleven years later it was included in the Catechism of the Council of Trent of 1566. Theologically, Canisius defended Roman Catholic Mariology, in his 1577 book, *De Maria Virgine Incomparabili et Dei Genitrice Sacrosancta Libri Quinque*. The book was ordered by Pope Pius V to present an factual presentation of the Catholic Marian teachings. Petrus Canisius provided a classical defence of the whole Catholic mariology against Protestantism, judged three hundred years later, a leading Catholic theologian. [8] From today's perspective, Canisius clearly erred in some of his sources, but, because of his factual analysis of original sources, represents one of the best theological achievements in the 16th century. [9]

Legacy

In recognition of his early work in the establishment of Jesuit education, there are multiple educational institutions named for St Peter Canisius. Among them is Canisius College, a Jesuit secondary school in his hometown of Nijmegen and the alma mater of Peter Hans Kolvenbach, recently retired Superior General of the Society of Jesus. Another Canisius College, a post-



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secondary school, and Canisius High School, a secondary school, are located in Buffalo, New York. Furthermore, a Jesuit-run Canisius Kolleg can be found in Berlin, Germany. There is also a secondary school named after Canisius, Kolese Kanisius (Collegium Canisianum or Canisius College), in Jakarta, Indonesia. In addition, there is a primary school: Basisschool Petrus Canisius in Puth in Limburg, The Netherlands. In 1850 they also founded the Canisius Hospital on the corner of the Houtmarkt and the Pauwelstraat in Nijmegen. In 1974 it has merged in to the Canisius Wilhelmina Hospital located at the Weg door Jonkerbos in Nijmegen. The 'Apologetische Vereniging St. Petrus Canisius' (apologetic association Petrus Canisius) was founded in the Netherlands in 1904. The purpose of this association was the defense of the Roman Catholic Church against new values of socialism and liberalism and the restoration of the society with a more Catholic way of life.

Works

(1555) Summa doctrinae christianae

The longer version (with quotes from authority):

Vol. 1: Faith, Hope, Charity, the Precepts of the Church

Vol. 2: The Sacraments

Vol. 3: Christian Justification, good works, Cardinal Virtues, Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Ghost, Eight Beatitudes, Evangelical Counsels, etc.

(1556) Catechismus minor

(1558) Parvus catechismus catholicorum

Wikimedia Commons has media related to: Category:Petrus Canisius

References

1 *"Lives of the Saints, For Every Day of the Year"* edited by Rev. Hugo Hoever, S.O.Cist., Ph.D., New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1955, p.164

2 Burg, Kontroverslexikon, Essen, 1903 224

3 Burg 225

4^{a b} Stegmüller, 1052)

5 Streicher, 95,245,267

6 Meditationes, 1591-1593

7 This sentence appeared for the first time in his catechism of 1555 (Streicher Catechismi, I, 12)

8 Scheeben, Handbuch der kath. Dogmatic, 1882, 478

9 Otto Stegmüller 1063

External links

Catholic Encyclopedia: St. Peter Canisius

Canisius College Jakarta's official web site

Kolese Kanisius Jakarta in Wikipedia

Website of Canisius Kolleg Berlin, Germany (German)

Website of Canisius College, Buffalo, New York, United States

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