

From the age of eighteen he held various posts as a church organist and in small princely courts. In 1723 he became master of music in St Thomas's church in Leipzig. Here, unappreciated and underpaid, he wrote most of his church music: during the first two years he turned out a cantata every week. He wrote only three oratorios and five passions (some now lost). The evangelist's role became more dramatic; all the soloists had arias of deep feeling; the choruses became moments of both drama and religious meditation. The *St Matthew Passion* of 1729 remains the most beloved passion music of all Christendom. This passion probably brought religion home to many more souls than the words of a thousand curates. At times doctors of music have been nearer than doctors of divinity to God.

CATHOLIC REFORMATION

This is sometimes called the 'Counter-Reformation', but that mixes up the reformation of the Church with the political activities that went on at the same time. Mostly it was not 'counter'. It was an old-fashioned zeal to improve religious life and worship in the old-fashioned way.

Spain, rich with its new empire in America, was the power of the sixteenth century; it dominated Italy, and was mighty in Northern Europe because it ruled the Spanish Netherlands. The Spanish still had the crusading fervour which had come from turning the Muslims out of their land, and this mood infected conservative Europe.

Under pressure from the Emperor Charles v the Council of Trent met to reform the Catholic Church. Its important innovations were a new catechism to educate the young, and an order that those to be made priests should be trained in seminaries – then a new word to mean such colleges. This was the first time that a system of colleges, other than universities, to train clergy was set up in any church. It did not work very well at first because it produced a few excellent institutions and a lot of weak ones.



Pius v, pope for six years from 1566 to 1572, was suited to carrying out reforms of this kind; he was the first pope for 270 years to be made a saint. A Dominican friar, with a duty to teach, he had been an inquisitor with a duty to repress heresy, and wore a hair shirt under his robes. Like Calvin in Geneva, he tried to turn Rome into a holy city, with punishments for swearing, adultery and disturbing the peace on Sunday. He chose good men as cardinals, and tried to ban priests who did not live in their parishes, and fought hard to make them give up their women. He limited the issue of indulgences. His inquisition was severe: Protestantism disappeared from Italy, except in the Alpine valleys where

A sacred concert in the age of Bach, 1732. On the piano, 'everything that hath breath, praise the Lord'.