

Council of Basle 1431 A.D.

Convoked by Pope Martin V in 1431, closed at Lausanne in 1449. The position of the pope as the common Father of the Christian world had been seriously compromised by the transfer of the papal court to Avignon, and by the subsequent identification of the interests of the Church with those of a particular race. Men began to regard the papacy more as a national than a universal institution, and their feeling of religious loyalty was often nearly balanced by the promptings of national jealousy. Nor was the papacy likely to be strengthened by the events of the Great Western Schism (1378-1417), when rival claimants were seen contending for the throne of St. Peter and for the allegiance of the Christian nations. Such a spectacle was well calculated to shake men's belief in the monarchical form of government and to drive them to seek elsewhere a remedy for the evils which then afflicted the Church. It was not strange that the advocates of a general council as the final arbitrator, the ultimate court of appeal to which all, even the pope, must yield, should have secured a ready attention. The success of the Council of Constance (1414-18) in securing the withdrawal or deposition of the three rival popes had supplied a strong argument in favour of the conciliar theory. It is clear both from the speeches of some of the Fathers of Constance as well as from its decrees that such a feeling was rapidly gaining ground, and that many people had come to regard the government of the Church by general councils, convoked at regular intervals, as the one most in harmony with the needs of the time. As a result, in the 39th session of the Council of Constance (9 October, 1417) we find it decreed: that general councils should be held frequently; that the next should be convoked within five years; the following seven years later, and after this, a council should be held every ten years; that the place of convocation should be determined by the council itself, and could not be changed even by the pope unless in case of war or pestilence, and then only with the consent of at least two-thirds of the cardinals. It was in accordance with this decree that Martin V convoked the Council of Basle, and it is only by understanding the feeling

underlying this decree that we can grasp the significance of the dispute waged between Eugene IV and the council. Which was to govern the Church? Was it to be the pope or the council? That was the issue really at stake.

Whether Basle is to be regarded as a general council, and if so, in what sense, has been often warmly discussed. The extreme Gallicans (e.g. Edmund Richer, *Hist. Concil. Gen.*, III, vii) contend that it should be reckoned as cumenical from its beginning (1431) till its end in Lausanne (1449); while the moderate writers of the Gallican school (e.g. Nat. Alexander, IX, pp. 433-599) admit that after the appearance of the Bull of Eugene IV (18 September 1437) transferring the council to Ferrara, the proceedings at Basle can be regarded only as the work of a schismatical conventicle. On the other hand, writers like Bellarmine (*De Concil.*, I, vii), Roncaglia, and Holstein absolutely refuse to number Basle among the general councils of the Church on account of the small number of bishops in attendance at the beginning, and the subsequent rebellious attitude in face of the papal decrees of dissolution. The true opinion seems to be that put forward by Hefele (*Conciliengesch.*, 2d ed., I, 63-99) that the assembly at Basle may be regarded as cumenical from the beginning until the Bull "Doctoris Gentium" (18 September 1437) transferred its sessions to Ferrera, and that the decrees passed during that period regarding the extirpation of heresy, the establishment of peace among Christian nations, and the reform of the Church, if they are not prejudicial to the Apostolic See, may be considered as the decrees of a general council. In accordance with the above-mentioned decree of Constance, the Council of Pavia had been convoked by Martin V (1423), and on the appearance of the plague in that city its sessions were transferred to Sienna. Very little was done except to determine the place where the next council should be held. An Italian city was looked upon with disfavour, as likely to be too friendly to the papacy; the French bishops and the Paris University were anxious that some place in France should be selected; but finally, owing mainly to the representations of Emperor Sigismund, Basle was agreed upon by all, and

this choice having been made, the council was dissolved (7 March 1424). As the time approached for the assembling of the council Martin V was urged from all sides to place no obstacle in the way, and though knowing the tendency at the time, and fearing that the council would lead to revolution rather than reform, he finally gave his consent and appointed Cardinal Giuliano Cæsarini as president (1 February 1431).

The principal purpose of the council was to be the reformation of the Church in its "head and members," the settlement of the Hussite wars, the establishment of peace among the nations of Europe, and finally the reunion of the Western and Eastern Churches. The demands of the Roman Curia, its constant interference in the bestowal of benefices, the right of appeal on all matters to the prejudice of the local authorities, the financial burdens involved in such institutions as annates, expectancies, and reservations, not to speak of the direct papal taxation, only too common since the thirteenth century, had given just grounds for complaint to the clergy and secular powers of the different nations. These papal taxes and encroachments on the rights of the local authorities, both ecclesiastical and civil, had long been bitterly resented, especially in England and Germany, and it was because a remedy for these abuses was hoped for only from a general council that people regarded sympathetically the assembly at Basle, even at times when they did not agree with its methods. In addition to these, the question of simony, of concubinage among the clergy, or reorganization of diocesan and provincial synods, of the abuse of censures, especially of interdict, called for some reform in the discipline of the Church. But besides these disciplinary matters the teaching of Wyclif and Hus had found sympathetic supporters in England and Bohemia, and notwithstanding the condemnation at Constance the Hussites were still a powerful party in the latter country. Though the death of their leader Ziska (1424) had proved a serious loss, the different sections still continued the struggle, and Emperor Sigismund was naturally anxious that an end should be put to the war which had already taxed his resources to the uttermost. Furthermore, the growing power of

the Turks was a menace not alone to the existence of the Eastern Empire but to the whole of Europe, and made it imperative upon the Christian princes to abandon their internecine strife and unite with the Greeks in defence of their common Christianity against the power of Islam. The movement in favour of reunion had been specially favoured by Martin V and by the Emperor John VII Palæologus (1425-48).

The president of the council, Cardinal Giuliano Cæsarini, appointed by Martin V and confirmed by Eugene IV, presided at the first public session, but retired immediately upon the receipt of the papal Bull dissolving the council (December, 1431). The members then nominated Bishop Philibert of Constance as president. Later on, probably at the seventh general session (6 November 1432), Cæsarini resumed the presidency and continued the guiding spirit in opposition to the pope till the extreme element under Cardinal d'Allemand of Arles began to gain the upper hand. In the general assembly (6 December 1436) he refused to agree to the wishes of the majority that Basle, Avignon, or some city of Savoy should be selected as the meeting place of the council to be held for the reunion of the Greeks with the Western Church, but he continued to act as president till the 31st of July, 1437, when a decree was passed summoning Pope Eugene IV to appear at Basle within sixty days to answer for his disobedience. Cæsarini finally left Basle after the appearance of the Bull, "Doctoris Gentium" (18 September 1437) transferring the council to Ferrara, and joined the adherents of the pope. After his withdrawal, Cardinal d'Allemand played the leading part and on the election of the antipope, Felix V, was nominated by him as president of the assembly. The nomination however, was disregarded by the members who thereupon elected the Archbishop of Tarentaise. The other members of the council who took a prominent part in the proceedings were Capranica who had been appointed cardinal by Martin, but who as his appointment had not been published was not admitted to the conclave on the death of Martin nor recognized by Eugene; Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, afterwards Pope Pius II; the renowned scholar Nicholas of

Cusa; Cardinal Louis d'Allemand; John of Antioch; John of Ragusa, and the two canonists, Nicholas, Archbishop of Palermo, and Louis Pontanus.

Eugene IV confirmed his predecessor's appointment of Cæsarini as president on the very day of his coronation (12 March), but with certain reservations which were dictated by Eugene's desire of holding a council in some city more convenient for the representatives of the Greeks. There was present at Basle on the day on which the council should have been opened (4 March) only one delegate, but by the beginning of April, three representatives arrived from the University of Paris, together with the Bishop of Châlons and the Abbot of Cîteaux. These six came together (11 April) and issued pressing letters of invitation to the cardinals, bishops, and princes of Europe. Cæsarini, who up to this time had been engaged in the crusade organized against the Hussites, endeavoured to reassure the delegates and to restrain their eagerness, while the influence of Sigismund was employed in the same direction. The pope wrote to Cæsarini (31 May) requesting him to settle the affair of the Hussites as quickly as possible and then to proceed to Basle for the opening of the council. On the reception of this letter the legate determined, after consultation with Sigismund, to remain with the military forces, but at the same time to dispatch two of his companions, John of Palomar and John of Ragusa, to act as his representatives at Basle. These arrived there on 19 July and held an assembly (23 July) in the Cathedral of Basle at which the documents of authorization were read, and the council declared formally opened. Though there were not a dozen members present the assembly immediately arrogated itself the title of a general council, and began to act as if its authority were secured.

Cæsarini, after the failure of his crusade against the Hussites, arrived in Basle on the 11th of September and a few days later (17 September), in accordance with instructions received from Eugene, dispatched John Beaupre to Rome, in the capacity of delegate, to inform the pope of the proceedings. The delegate who was unfavourable to the continuance of

the council represented to the pope that very few prelates had attended, that there was little hope of an increased number owing to the war between Burgundy and Austria and the general unsafety of the roads, and that even the city of Basle itself was in danger and its people unfriendly to the clergy. On the receipt of this news Eugene issued (12 November) a commission to Cæsarini, signed by twelve cardinals, empowering him to dissolve the council, if he should deem it advisable, and to convoke another to meet at Bologna eighteen months after the dissolution. Meanwhile the assembly at Basle had entered into communication with the Hussites, requesting them to send representatives to the council, and, in case they complied, granting letters of safe-conduct. This was understood at Rome as indicating a desire to reopen for discussion questions of doctrine already settled at Constance and at Sienna, and as a result Eugene IV issued (18 December) a Bull dissolving the council and convoking another to meet at Bologna.

Before the arrival of this Bull Cæsarini had already (14 December) held the first public session, at which were present three bishops, fourteen abbots, and a considerable body of doctors and priests. Naturally enough, the Bull of dissolution, though not entirely unexpected, gave great offense, to those present, and on the 3rd of January 1432, when it was to have been read, the members absented themselves from the sitting to prevent its publication. Cæsarini forwarded to Rome a strongly worded protest against the dissolution, in which he pointed out the evil consequences which would result from such a step, but at the same time in obedience to the papal Bull he resigned his position as president of the council. Sigismund, who had already appointed Duke William of Bavaria protector of the council, was also opposed to the action of Eugene IV, as he had great hopes that through this council the Hussite controversy might be terminated; on the other hand, he wished to stand well with the pope, from whom he expected the imperial crown. Hence it is that while sympathizing generally with the council, he played the role of mediator

rather than that of defender. Delegates were dispatched from Basle to secure the withdrawal of the Bull.

Many of the princes of Europe who had hoped for useful reforms from the labours of the council expressed their disapproval of the papal action, and more especially the Duke of Milan who was personally hostile to Eugene IV. Relying on this support the second public session was held (15 February 1432) at which were renewed the decrees of Constance declaring that a general council had its authority directly from Christ and that all, even the pope, are bound to obey it. Besides, it was decreed that the "General Council" now in session could not be transferred, prorogued, or dissolved without its own consent. Everything seemed just then to favour the council. Sigismund had a powerful army in Northern Italy; an Assembly of the French Clergy at Bourges (February, 1432) declared for the continuation of the council at Basle and resolved to send representatives; the Duke of Burgundy wrote that he would send the bishops of his own nation and would use his influence with the King of England to induce him to do likewise; the Dukes of Milan and Savoy were equally sympathetic, while the Paris University declared that the devil alone could have inspired the pope to adopt such a course. Thus encouraged the council held its third public session (29 April 1432) in which the pope was commanded to withdraw the Bull of dissolution and to appear at Basle either personally or by proxy within three months. A similar summons was addressed to the cardinals, and both pope and cardinals were threatened with judicial proceedings unless they complied. In the fourth public session (20 June 1432) it was decreed that in case the papal throne should become vacant during the time of the council, the conclave could be held only at its place of session; that in the meantime Eugene IV should appoint no cardinals except at the council, nor should he hinder any person from attending, and that all censures pronounced against it by him were null and void. They even went so far as to appoint a governor for the territory of Avignon and to forbid any papal embassy

to approach Basle unless letters of safe-conduct had been previously requested and granted.

Sigismund was in constant communication with the pope and urged him to make some concessions. In the beginning Eugene IV agreed to allow a national council to be held in some German city for the reform of the abuses in the Church of Germany and for the settlement of the Hussite controversy. Later on, he was willing to permit the council at Basle to continue its discussions on church reform, the Hussite controversy, and the establishment of peace among Christian nations, provided that its decisions were subject to the papal confirmation, and provided, too, that a council should be held in Bologna, or some Italian city for the reunion of the Eastern Church. Sigismund forwarded this letter to Basle (27 July) and exhorted the delegates to moderation. On the 22d of August, the plenipotentiaries of the pope were received at Basle and addressed the council at length, pointing out that the monarchical form of government was the one established by Christ, that the pope was the supreme judge in ecclesiastical affairs, and that the Bull of dissolution was not due to the pope's jealousy of a general council as such. They ended by declaring that the assembly at Basle, if it persisted in its opposition to Eugene, could be regarded only as a schismatical conventicle, and was certain to lead, not to reform, but to still greater abuses. In the name of the pope they made an offer of Bologna or some city in the Papal States as the place for the future council, the pope to resign his sovereign rights over the city selected, so long as the assembly should be in session. The council replied to this communication (3 September) by reasserting the superiority of a general council over the pope in all matters appertaining to faith, discipline, or the extirpation of schism, and by an absolute rejection of the offers made by the plenipotentiaries.

In the sixth public session (6 September), at which were present four cardinals (Cæsarini, Branda, Castiglione, and Albergati) and thirty-two bishops, it was proposed to declare Eugene and his eighteen cardinals

contumacious, but this proposal was postponed, owing, mainly, to the representations of Sigismund. In October, the standing orders for the transaction of the business of the council were drawn up. Without reference to their ecclesiastical rank the members were divided into four committees, on which the four nations attending the council should be equally represented. The votes of the cardinals or bishops were of no more importance than those of the professors, canons, or parish priests; in this way it was secured that the inferior clergy should have the controlling voice in the decisions of the council. Each committee was to carry on its sittings in a separate hall and to communicate its decisions to the others, and it was only when practical unanimity had been secured among the committees that the matter was introduced at a public session of the whole body. This arrangement, whereby the irresponsible members had gained the upper hand, tended to bring affairs to a crisis. In the seventh public session (6 November) it was arranged that in case of Eugene's death the cardinals should appear at the council within 60 days for the holding of the conclave. Shortly afterwards, at the eighth public session (18 December), the pope was allowed a further term of sixty days to withdraw the Bull of dissolution, under threat of canonical proceedings in case he failed to comply, and, finally, at the tenth public session (19 February 1433) this threat was enforced, and in the presence of five cardinals and forty-six bishops the pope was declared contumacious and canonical proceedings were instituted against him.

Eugene IV, afflicted with bodily suffering, deserted by many of his cardinals, and hard pressed by Italian rebels, endeavoured by every means in his power, together with the support of Philip, Duke of Milan, to bring about a settlement. He proposed (14 December 1432) an Italian town as the place for the council, allowing the assembly at Basle four months to settle up the Hussite controversy; on the rejection of this, he agreed that it should be held in a German city provided twelve impartial bishops and the ambassadors of the different countries so wished it. Later still (1 February 1433) he accepted a German town unconditionally, and even

went so far as to agree to accept (14 February 1433) Basle itself in case the decrees against the papal power were withdrawn, his own legate allowed to preside, and the number of bishops present at least seventy-five. These offers were rejected by the council (March 1433), the decree about the superiority of a general council renewed (27 April), and it was with difficulty that Duke William of Bavaria prevented the opening of the process against the pope in the twelfth general session (13 July). Meanwhile Sigismund had made peace with Eugene and had received the imperial crown in Rome (31 May 1433). He requested the council not to proceed further against the pope until he himself should be present, and on the other hand he pressed the pope to make some further concession. In response to this appeal Eugene issued (1 August 1433) a Bull in which he declared that he was willing and content that the council should be recognized as lawfully constituted from the beginning and continued as if nothing had happened, and that he himself would assist its deliberations by every means in his power, provided, however, that his legates were admitted as real presidents, and that all decrees against himself or his cardinals were withdrawn. This declaration coincided exactly with the formula sent by Cæsarini to the emperor (18 June) except that the pope had inserted “we are willing and content” (*volumus et contentamur*) in place of the words “we decree and declare” (*decernimus et declaramus*). This change was displeasing to the council, implying, as it did, mere toleration and not the approbation which they desired; so relying upon Eugene’s troubles in Italy with the Colonnas, the Duke of Milan, and others, they refused to accept even this concession. Finally, on the 15th of December 1433, Eugene issued a Bull in which he accepted the formula “we decree and declare” by which he withdrew all his previous manifestos against the Council of Basle.

Thus peace was established between the two parties, but the reconciliation was more apparent than real. The papal legates were indeed admitted as presidents, but their jurisdiction was denied, their powers limited by the will of the council, they were even forced to accept the decrees of

Constance which they did in their own name but not in the name of the pope (24 April 1434), and finally when in the eighteenth public session (26 June) the Constance decrees were solemnly renewed they refused to attend. In spite of their efforts the council continued in its opposition to the pope, claiming jurisdiction in all affairs, political and religious, and entering into negotiations with the Greeks about the reunion of the Churches. At the twentieth public session (22 January 1435) the reform of the church discipline was begun. Decrees were passed against concubinage of the clergy and the abuse of excommunications and interdicts. On the 9th of June 1435, annates and all the customary papal taxes were abolished, although no steps were taken to provide for the financial status of the papacy. Later still the papal collectors were ordered to appear in Basle to render an account of their work and all outstanding debts due to the pope were to be paid at Basle. The papal delegates, especially Traversari and Anton de Vito, defended the rights of Eugene, but the moderate element was gradually losing control in the assembly, and the extreme party, gathered around Cardinal Louis d'Allemand, could no longer be restrained. No legislation had any chance of being passed unless directed against the Holy See. At last, after the papal deputies, Cardinals Albergati and Cervantes, had been received very badly at Basle (25 March 1436), and after decrees had been passed regarding the future conclave, the papal oath, the number of cardinals, etc., Eugene IV realized that conciliation was no longer possible, and addressed a Note to the princes of Europe in which he summed up the injuries inflicted on the papacy by the council and requested the different rulers to withdraw their bishops from Basle and assist in the preparation for another general council from the deliberations of which something better might be awaited.

The council had previously opened communication with the Greeks (September 1434) to determine where the assembly for reunion should be held. In December 1436, it was proposed that the council should be held either at Basle itself, at Avignon, or in Savoy. Cardinal Cæsarini refused

to put this proposal to the meeting, but on the motion of Cardinal d'Allemand it was passed. The pope refused to consent, and the deputies of the Greek Emperor protested against it (23 February 1437), whereupon a new embassy was dispatched to Constantinople. The Greeks refused to come either to Basle or Savoy, and the people of Avignon had shown no desire that the council should be held there. A strong minority, including the papal legates, and most of the bishops present, wished that some Italian city should be selected; the majority, led by Cardinal d'Allemand and composed mainly of the inferior clergy, were opposed to this proposal, and after a disorderly session (7 May 1437), at which both parties published their decrees, Eugene IV confirmed that of the minority, and the Greek ambassador declared it to be the once acceptable to the emperor. The revolutionary party now completely controlled the council. Against the wishes of Cæsarini, Cervantes, and Sigismund, the pope was commanded (31 July 1437) to appear before the council to answer for his disobedience, and on the 1st of October he was declared contumacious. Eugene IV replied to these excesses by the publication of the Bull "Doctoris gentium" (18 September), in which it was stated that unless the delegates abandoned their methods and confined themselves for a limited number of days only to the Bohemian affair the council would be transferred to Ferrara. The reply was a reassertion of the superiority of a general council (19 October). Cardinal Cæsarini made one final effort to effect a reconciliation, but failed, and then, accompanied by all the cardinals except d'Allemand and by most of the bishops, he left Basle and joined the pope at Ferrara, to which place the council had been definitely transferred by a Bull of Eugene IV (30 December).

Henceforth the assembly at Basle could be regarded only as schismatical. Most of the Christian world stood loyal to the pope and to the Council of Ferrara. England, Castile and Aragon, Milan, and Bavaria disavowed the assembly at Basle, while, on the other hand, France and Germany, though recognizing Eugene IV, endeavoured to maintain a neutral position. In a meeting of the French Clergy at Bourges (May 1438), at which were

present delegates from the pope and from Basle, it was determined to remain loyal to Eugene, while at the same time many of the reforms of Basle were accepted with certain modifications. It was on this basis that the twenty-three articles of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges were drawn up (7 July 1438). In Germany, after the death of Sigismund (9 December 1437), delegates of both parties attended at Frankfurt (1438) to seek the assistance of the princes, but they declared for neutrality until a king had been elected, and even after the election of Albrecht II the attitude of neutrality was maintained till at last, in Mainz (March 1439), they followed the example of France and declared for Eugene IV as lawful pope while they accepted many of the reforms of Basle.

In Basle itself it was resolved to depose the pope and in order to prepare the way for deposition three articles were drawn up, namely:

- that a general council is superior to a pope;
- that the pope cannot prorogue, or dissolve such an assembly;
- that whoever denies these is a heretic.

Cardinal d'Allemand was the leading spirit in this undertaking. Against the wishes of the bishops and most of the ambassadors present, these decrees were passed (16 May 1439), and Eugene IV was deposed as a heretic and schismatic (25 June). Immediately steps were taken to elect his successor. Cardinal Louis d'Allemand, eleven bishops, five theologians, and nine jurists and canonists formed the conclave, and on the 30th of October 1439, Amadeus, ex-Duke of Savoy, was elected and took the name of Felix V. Since his retirement he had been living with a body of knights, which he organized as the Order of St. Maurice, on the banks of the Lake of Geneva. He was closely connected with many of the princes of Europe, and the council stood in bad need of the wealth which he was reputed to possess. He named Cardinal d'Allemand president, but the conventicle resented this act of authority and elected instead the Archbishop of Tarentaise (26 February 1440). Steps were also taken to levy taxes on ecclesiastical benefices to provide revenue for Felix V (4

August 1440). But the election of an antipope alienated the sympathy of the world from Basle. Henceforth they could rely only upon Switzerland and Savoy.

Disputes soon broke out between Felix V and the conventicle at Basle. It refused to allow his name to precede that of the council in the promulgation of its decrees, and he was unwilling to undergo the expense of supporting nuncios in the different countries. The sessions became less frequent, the relations between Felix V and the council were strained until, at last, in defiance of its wishes, he left Basle and took up his residence at Lausanne (December 1442). Disappointed in the hope of securing the support of Sforza, Aragon, or Milan, the council held its last session at Basle (16 May 1443), and decreed that a general council should be held in Lyons after three years; that until the opening of this the Council of Basle should continue its work, and in case the city of Basle should become unsafe that it should be transferred to Lausanne. No decrees of general interest were passed after this session. But it was some time before the princes of Germany could be induced to abandon the attitude of neutrality. At different diets, Nuremberg (1438), Mainz (1441), Frankfort (1442), Nuremberg (1443, 1444), Frankfort (1445), it was proposed that a new general council should be held to settle the disputes between Basle and Eugene IV. A sentence of deposition issued by Eugene IV against the Prince-Electors of Cologne and Trier who favoured Basle roused all the princes of Germany against him, and at the Diet of Frankfort (1446) it was resolved to send an embassy to Rome to demand the convocation of a new council, and, in the meantime, the recognition of the reforms effected in Basle; else they would withdraw from their allegiance. The Emperor Frederick III dissented from this decision and sent his secretary, Æneas Sylvius, to confer with the pope. At last, after long negotiation in Rome and Frankfort, an agreement was arrived at (February 1447) known as the Concordat of the Princes. On their side they agreed to abandon the attitude of neutrality, while the pope restored the deposed princes and accepted with modifications certain of the reforms of Basle. In accordance with this

agreement the Vienna Concordat was drawn up between the successor of Eugene IV and the Emperor Frederick III. The pope's rights in the appointment to benefices were clearly defined, and the sources of revenue to take the place of the annates, then abolished, were agreed upon. Once this had been concluded, Frederick III forbade the city of Basle to harbour any longer the schismatical assembly, and in June 1448, they were obliged to retire to Lausanne. Finally, after a few sessions at Lausanne, Felix V resigned and submitted to the lawful pope, Nicholas V. The members of the assembly also elected Nicholas as pope and then decreed the dissolution of the council (25 April 1449).

It only remains to deal with the negotiations between the Council of Basle and the Hussites. The latter were invited, as we have seen, at the very beginning of the council, but it was only in the fourth session (20 June 1432) that the conditions proposed by the Hussites were accepted, and prayers ordered for their return to the Church. About the beginning of January 1433, nearly three hundred of the Calixtine party arrived, and after repeated negotiations in Prague and Basle, the four articles demanded by the Hussites were agreed upon with certain modifications. These were Communion under both kinds, though their priests were to teach that Communion under one kind was equally valid; free preaching of the word of God, but subject to ecclesiastical authority; the punishment of mortal sin, but only by a lawful tribunal; the retention of their temporalities by the clerics, who were however, bound to bestow their superfluous wealth according to the canons. These formed the Compact of Prague, agreed upon the 30th of November 1433. Many of the more extreme sects, such as the Taborites, refused to accept this treaty, but after their defeat (Lippau, 1434) a better feeling set in, and a similar compact was proclaimed at Iglau in July 1436, and enforced by the Council of Basle (15 January 1437).

The Council of Basle might have done much to secure reforms, then so badly needed, and to restore confidence in ecclesiastical authority. From all sides it was assured of sympathy and support as the one remedy for the abuses which existed. But under the influence of extreme theories and theorists it allowed itself to be hurried into an inglorious struggle with the pope, and the valuable time and energy which should have been given up to useful legislation were spent in useless discussions. It succeeded in fixing the eyes of the world upon the abuses, but without the pope it had not sufficient authority to carry through the necessary reforms, and as a consequence the secular rulers undertook what the ecclesiastical authority had shamefully failed to set right. It struck a terrible blow at the rights of the Holy See and shook men's faith in the pope's spiritual power at a time when his temporal sovereignty was in imminent danger. In this way it led directly in France, through the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, to the establishment of Gallicanism as a definite formula, while in Germany, through the long intervals of neutrality, people were prepared for the complete severance from the Holy See which was afterwards effected in the Reformation.