

# **THE LIVES OF THE POPES, PART IV**

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The lives of the popes, part IV by Anonymous

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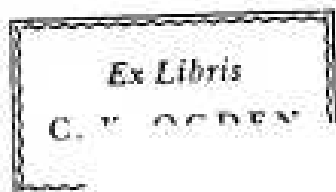
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**THE LIVES OF THE  
POPES, PART IV**





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THE LIVES

OF

THE POPES.

PART IV.

FROM THE ROMANIST REACTION TO  
POPE PIUS THE NINTH.

A.D. 1605—1862.

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THE  
LIVES OF THE POPES.

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CHAPTER I.

PONTIFICATES OF LEO XI. AND PAUL V.—THE JESUITS  
IN VENICE.  
A.D. 1605—1607.

From the commencement of the re-action which followed so swiftly on the great Reformation, the character of the Roman pontiffs underwent a remarkable change. Men of activity and energy, not mere men of pleasure, were now chosen to steer through troubled waters the "bark of St. Peter." Attention was paid not only to the personal influence, but also to the personal qualities of a candidate for the tiara. Hardly would a Leo x., much less an Alexander vi., have now succeeded in winning the suffrages of the conclave.

To this marked alteration in the character of the popes may in a great degree be ascribed the success of the re-action. The world was by no means prepared for so vast a revolution as that of throwing off altogether the supremacy of the pope. Still it was sufficiently

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enlightened to perceive that the teachers of Christianity ought not to be the foremost in breaking its precepts. But, thanks to Luther, this fault was mended. There was at least a regard for outward propriety among those who claimed to sit in the seat of the apostles. The name of *priest* was no longer, as it had been, a byword of reproach for gross covetousness, immorality, and irreligion. At least the *semblance* of the virtues opposed to these vices was assumed; nor would it be fair to deny to some of the pontiffs the meed of praise for self-denying zeal and rigid integrity, although coupled, for the most part, with a fierce bigotry which horribly caricatured the fair features of religion.

With the Jesuits in her van, and the Inquisition in her rear, the Romish church had started afresh in a victorious career of delusion and priestcraft. By the end of the sixteenth century much territory which had seemed lost was wholly regained. France, with some of the German States, had returned to allegiance to the pope, and the march of Protestantism was, to all appearance, triumphantly repressed—but *in appearance* alone. Who can effectually hinder the progress of truth? If aught seems to hinder it, is not the hindrance converted by the infinite wisdom of the Most High into the means of its surer and wider conquests? Although, therefore, the downfall of Rome was arrested when it appeared most imminent, it was only deferred in order that the stupendous



## LEO XI.

power of that superstition which had so enslaved men's minds might be the better understood, that we might not be tempted to under-rate the mischievous potency of error, that yet a purer form of truth might be arrayed against the monster, and that its ultimate destruction might be the more complete, the more instructive to the world, the more advantageous to the church.

For a while, therefore, we shall see the papacy rearing its head like some tall tree, loftily and proudly as ever. But we may also perceive, in spite of its flourishing aspect, indubitable marks of decay. These we shall find widening and deepening from generation to generation, growing daily more apparent and more fatal, until, weakened by its own corruptness, and scathed by the rough hands of both friends and foes, it is stripped and shattered amid the storms of a revolutionary age; and if left still standing, left only a headless trunk, the seared and blasted relic of its strength, attesting indeed its ancient grandeur, but likewise publishing the just and awful retributions of an almighty and holy God.

The first pope of the seventeenth century, and who, in 1605, ascended the throne left vacant by the death of Clement VIII., held his honours but a very short period. Belonging to the Medici family, he very naturally assumed the title of LEO XI.; but the title was scarcely adopted before death dis-crowned and disrobed its owner. After a reign of only twenty-six

days, Leo III. died, oppressed, it was said, by the great weight of responsibility suddenly imposed upon him.

Party spirit ran so high in the conclave that all were prepared to contest the ensuing election with the utmost vehemence. They carried the struggle to such a pitch that they could only arrive at the needful degree of concord by relinquishing all their candidates, and choosing a man who belonged to no party, and to whom, therefore, both Spaniards and Frenchmen were willing to give their votes. The object of their choice was the cardinal Borghese.

PAUL V. had raised himself from a very humble station by his ability and industry as an ecclesiastical lawyer. The quiet pursuit of his occupation, and his habit of remaining buried amongst books and papers, had secured him from the enmity of those who might otherwise have accounted him a rival. That he should be chosen to the highest dignity of the church might well have excited his own astonishment, and actually led him to imagine that he owed it to the special favour and direct interposition of the Holy Spirit.

Impressed with this conviction, his whole deportment now underwent a sudden and striking change. He resolved on elevating the character of the papacy by his own example, and by rigorously enforcing the laws of the church. Perhaps it was partly a fanatical bent of mind, and partly his former studies in canonical law, that induced him to attach a

## PAUL V.

higher value to the papal office than even his predecessors had done. He declared that as he had been raised to this post not by men but by the will of God, he was in duty bound to guard all the prerogatives of the church, and that he would rather risk his life than be found unfaithful to so high a trust.

To uphold these prerogatives in foreign states, and especially where they were in danger of attack from the prevalence of Protestant sentiments, recent popes had adopted the method of sending agents to foreign courts whom they called *Nuncios*, and whose duty it was to watch over the interests of the papal see. Already had these appointments occasioned jealousies and disputes in numerous states; but, on the accession of Paul v., the impertinences of the functionaries in question were intolerably aggravated, as the high pretensions of the pope were quickly communicated to his subordinates in office. And to such a pitch were these pretensions pushed, that the pontiff even asserted that none but himself had right to control or regulate the intercourse between the Catholics and Protestants of any nation whatsoever.

Although these extravagances were productive of much inconvenience to the Italian States, they were hardly thought of sufficient importance to justify a quarrel with the pope. But in Venice the interference of the nuncio proceeded to such lengths as to rouse the indignation of the republic, and fierce disputes were the result. First of all, the Venetians were