

The Index

Briefly speaking, the Index is the idea of listing, or identifying, material that may be regarded as harmful to the soul and so not to be read, studied, owned, etc. The formative idea seems to come from about 1485 and the banning of certain types of literature. The most forceful expression of it grows from 1550 (ca) and the pronouncements of Trent on the literary output of the reformers. Since 1571 it was a continuing body at Rome that served as a censor of publications. It recommended and promoted literature at various levels. Material not approved could be regarded as venial sin and possession of banned material made one subject to trial in the church. The "imprimature" etc., is a carryover today of the Index and you will see if the thing has approval before you become involved in the reading or the plot.

The Index was used against Galileo and those who championed the Copernican Theory until 1835. It was used against novelists as well as against religious writers and paved the way for the later motion-picture boards of the church. While it is not so much of a force today, it still continues, the enlightenment and the age of reason dealt it severe blows. But the idea, apart from the formal Roman trappings, offers attractive possibilities and you will occasionally see it practiced in Christian schools and colleges as well as Bible Conferences. It has never been particularly effective where people wanted to think but since many don't, it has at times been a real impediment to getting out the message.

II.9.b. Counter Reform Successes

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France

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That France did not become a reformation country was due only to political repression and strong counter-reformatory practices. It made some major contributions to the reformation and provided some political help at times for pretestants that were salvational. A fuller study than the one we are about to present is needed but the French Reformation era is worth careful notation.

The whole matter in France is closely tied to the French throne and the rivalry between the houses of Guise and Bourbon. Therefore we summarize the work in France following the lines of these kings: