

The Inquisition

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Jesus said, "Learn from me, for I am meek and lowly of heart."

We ought always to be disposed to persecution, to suffer for Christ's sake. In the United States, so far, I may say there is yet a comparative peace, for the people of God to worship Him as they themselves believe to be right. But how long this peace will last, we do not know, and therefore, prepare ye for the coming of the Lord, for we know not when He shall come, He shall come as a thief in the night. I think I may safely say He is coming soon, and therefore we should make our whole life only a pilgrimage, wanderers, and preparing for that Heavenly Glory which shall be only for God's chosen people, not longing for the things of this life but striving for something far better. We should not see how far we may go in certain evils, but we must draw a strict line and stay on the right side of it, to be true and living Christians. For we must look for that beautiful city, whose builder and maker is God.

The Inquisition was for the purpose of punishing heretics. Let us stop here a moment and consider this, be fair and see if there is any real argument which we can give for it. We must remember that during this time people were just beginning to get a touch of civilization, they were a man of the "Iron Age". The only church there had been in that generation was the Catholic Church, no branches, no splits, just the one Church.

I am, however, not favoring the Inquisition, but on the contrary, I feel deeply that this was very much of an error on the part of the Roman Catholic Magistrates, but we must remember God's plan, that this all had to work together for the coming and furthering of God's true Church, so God creates all these ways, which are oft' times hard for the people of God to bear.

The Roman Pontiff's chief aim was to crush every form of heresy before it spread. Naturally, that would be logical, I think the Magistrates knew that the Church had departed from the true religion and that is the reason they made the punishments so severe. So as the years flew by, they departed from the true teachings of the Church. The chief reason for this was that the people were not allowed to read the Scripture and see how evil the Church had become.

We ought to suffer grievances, not cause them, it is in this manner that Jesus was nailed to the cross. He was crucified, He died for us, He did not crucify others. This must have been a comfort for the people who were persecuted. Most people could not read the words of Jesus where He said, Ye will be persecuted for my Name's sake.

Jesus said, "Many testify in my Name yet err from the truth," yet He speaks of the good that does come out of it, if it is done in His Name. Yes, we ought to fight heretics, not to throw down those who are upright, but to raise up those who are fallen, for that war is inevitable, and by this war we must, through His Word, give life to the dead. We ought not to seek to injure heretics in person, but to seek to remove the error of misunderstanding. and the evil of the heart. Hence, it was that the laws enacted against heretics, subjecting them to fire, imprisonment, and oft times taking the lives of the people.

The Inquisition punishments were done in an Order. On one district the Judges, aided by the local bishops and the state authorities, would announce thirty days grace for all heretics to come in and confess their crime. When that period was over a trial of the accused person began. The names of those who reported or witnessed were never let outside of the Inquisition Courts. Following the trial, methods of torture were used to persuade the accused to confess.

Great ceremonies were held after a certain amount of time was given for the accused to

confess. At these ceremonies the names of guilty were announced, the punishments inflicted, ranging from fines, imprisonment, torture, and many times death.

The common law of the church forbade any part of the Church or clergyman to make punishments, or to take any part in them. This too, shows the Church knew that they were doing a great evil by punishing the so-called heretics in this way. This is the reason why they hid under the cloak of the State.

The Inquisition reached its height in Spain during the days of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella when Fray Thomas was made Inquisition General for the Kingdom. Here the King had almost complete control.

The Inquisition was very active in Southern Europe, but was practiced not quite as much as in Spain. It did take place in just about all of Europe, however, but not in such a horrible sense as in Spain and in the Southern parts of Europe.

There were many different methods of torture, all of which I will not go into detail, but will mention some of the outstanding ones right now.

Not so common was the Head-Band torture, causing the victim to become violently insane. This was followed by death.

Another method of torture was the Dropping Water torture. This also caused the victim to become insane.

The methods of torture were divided into three parts, as follows: At the first torturing, if the prisoner refused to comply with the inquisitors by confessing all the crimes, they thought proper to charge with sore torture. The victim entered a room where there was no light but from a few candles. The room was lined with a thick quilting so that the other prisoners could not hear the horrible cries from the torture. As the prisoner entered he was horrified by the sight of six wretches who prepared the torture and stripped him naked to his drawers. He was then fastened tight and the ropes with which he was tied were all drawn at the same time. The ropes cut through his flesh to the bone, making the blood gush out at all different places at a time. This was done four times until the victim fainted dead away.

After six weeks if confession was not made, they tried to introduce something much worse than the former. About two months after the second torture they were subjected to more torture, making their limbs all dislocated. The victim was allowed to live but he lived a terrible life, most of his limbs were disjoined, he was bruised and exhausted, and was unable for weeks to move his hands to his mouth. Long after he would have thrilling pains to which he had never before been subject.

Blessed are they who endure persecution for Christ's sake. How many in this day would go thru the suffering that the people of the Middle Ages went thru? To be able to suffer as the Saints of old?

Will we be able to stand in that day when persecution will again come? Will we be able to leave all, and die for Christ's sake? Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." But we have one comfort in life and death, and that is that we belong to our faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ. We should be able to leave all for Him. The victory belongs to Christ and His Bride.

Ah, in this age of shallow thinking, let every one of us stop and think a moment of the saints of old, who suffered for Christ's sake. Yes, they lost their lives, their earthly bodies, but what does an earthly body mean when some day we shall be with Him in Glory? For His sake they also found life, life eternal.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33.

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