

DEAR READER
 COMPARE WHAT CARDINAL GIBBONS HAS TO SAY
 ABOUT THE SPANISH INQUISITION AND THE
 SAINT BARTHOLOMEW MASSACRE TO THE BOOK
 "THE GREAT CONTROVERSY"
 BY ELLEN G. WHITE

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The Faith of Our Fathers
 Being a Plain Exposition and Vindication of the
 Church Founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ
 By
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 Archbishop of Baltimore Ninety-third Carefully Revised
 and Enlarged Edition John Murphy Company
 Publishers
 Baltimore, MD. New York
 R. & T. Washbourne, Ltd.
 10 Paternoster Row, London, and at Manchester.
 Birmingham and Glasgow
 1917

Chapter XVIII.
 Charges of Religious Persecution.

I. The Spanish Inquisition.

But did not the Spanish Inquisition exercise enormous cruelties against heretics and Jews? I am not the apologist of the Spanish Inquisition, and I have no desire to palliate or excuse the excesses into which that tribunal may at times have fallen. From my heart I abhor and denounce every species of violence, and injustice, and persecution of which the Spanish Inquisition may have been guilty. And in raising my voice against coercion for conscience' sake I am expressing not only my own sentiments, but those of every Catholic Priest and layman in the land.

Our Catholic ancestors, for the last three hundred years, have suffered so much for freedom of conscience that they would rise up in judgment against us were we to become the advocates and defenders of religious persecution. We would be a disgrace to our sires were we to trample on the principle of liberty which they held dearer than life.

When I denounce the cruelties of the Inquisition I am not standing aloof from the Church, but I am treading in her footprints. Bloodshed and persecution form no part of the creed of the Catholic Church. So much does she abhor the shedding of blood that a man becomes disqualified to serve as a minister at her altars who, by act or counsel, voluntarily sheds the blood of another. Before you can convict the Church of intolerance you must first bring forward some authentic act of her Popes or Councils sanctioning the policy of vengeance. In all my readings I have yet to find one decree of hers advocating torture or death for conscience' sake. She is indeed intolerant of error; but her only weapons against

error are those pointed out by St. Paul to Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat; rebuke with all patience and doctrine."317

But you will tell me: Were not the authors of the Inquisition children of the Church, and did they not exercise their enormities in her name? Granted. But I ask you: Is it just or fair to hold the Church responsible for those acts of her children which she disowns? You do not denounce liberty as mockery because many crimes are committed in her name; neither do you hold a father accountable for the sins of his disobedient children.

We should also bear in mind that the Spaniards were not the only people who have proscribed men for the exercise of their religious belief. If we calmly study the history of other nations our enmity towards Spain will considerably relax, and we shall have to reserve for her neighbors a portion of our indignation. No impartial student of history will deny that the leaders of the reformed religions, whenever they gained the ascendancy, exercised violence toward those who differed from them in faith. I mention this not by way of recrimination, nor in palliation of the proscriptions of the Spanish government; for one offence is not justified by another. My object is merely to show that "they who live in glass houses should not throw stones;" and that it is not honest to make Spain the scapegoat, bearing alone on her shoulders the odium of religious intolerance.

It should not be forgotten that John Calvin burned Michael Servetus at the stake for heresy; that the arch-reformer not only avowed but also justified the deed in his writings; and that he established in Geneva an Inquisition for the punishment of refractory Christians.

It should also be remembered that Luther advocated the most merciless doctrine towards the Jews. According to his apologist Seckendorf, the German Reformer said that their synagogues ought to be destroyed, their houses pulled down, their prayer- books, and even the books of the Old Testament, to be taken from them. Their rabbis ought to be forbidden to teach and be compelled to gain their livelihood by hard labor.

It should also be borne in mind that Henry VIII. and his successors for many generations inflicted fines, imprisonment and death on thousands of their subjects for denying the spiritual supremacy of the temporal sovereign. This galling Inquisition lasted for nearly three hundred years, and the severity of its decrees scarcely finds a parallel in the Spanish Inquisition. Prescott avows that the administration of Elizabeth was "not a whit less despotic and scarcely less sanguinary than"318 that of Isabella. The clergy of Ireland, under Cromwell, were ordered, under pain of death, to quit their country, and theological students were obliged to pursue their studies in foreign seminaries. Any Priest who dared to return to his native country forfeited his life. Whoever harbored a

Priest suffered death, and they who knew his hiding-place and did not reveal it to the Inquisitors had both their ears cut off.

At this very moment not only in England, but in Ireland, Scotland and Holland, Protestants are worshipping in some of the churches erected by the piety of our Catholic forefathers and wrested from them by violence.

Observe, also, that in all these instances the persecutions were inflicted by the express authority of the founders and heads of Protestant churches.

The Puritans of New England inflicted summary vengeance on those who were rash enough to differ from them in religion. In Massachusetts "the Quakers were whipped, branded, had their ears cut off, their tongues bored with hot irons, and were banished upon pain of death in case of their return and actually executed upon the gallows."³¹⁹

Who is ignorant of the number of innocent creatures that suffered death in the same State on the ridiculous charge of witchcraft toward the end of the seventeenth century? Well does it become their descendants to taunt Catholics with the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition!

In the religious riots of Philadelphia in 1844 Catholic churches were burned down in the name of Protestantism and private houses were sacked. I was informed by an eyewitness that owners of houses were obliged to mark on their doors these words, This house belongs to Protestants, in order to save their property from the infuriated incendiaries. For these acts I never heard of any retaliation on the part of Catholics, and I hope I never shall, no matter how formidable may be their numbers and tempting the provocation.

In spite of the boasted toleration of our times, it cannot be denied that there still lurks a spirit of inquisition, which does not, indeed, vent itself in physical violence, but is, nevertheless, most galling to its victims. How many persons have I met in the course of my ministry who were ostracized by their kindred and friends, driven from home, nay, disinherited by their parents, for the sole crime of carrying out the very shibboleth of Protestantism—the exercise of private judgment, and of obeying the dictates of their conscience, by embracing the Catholic faith! Is not this the most exquisite torture that can be inflicted on refined natures?

Ah! There is an imprisonment more lonely than the dungeon; it is the imprisonment of our most cherished thoughts in our own hearts, without a member of the family with whom to communicate.

There is a sword more keen than the executioner's knife; it is the envenomed tongue of obloquy and abuse. There is a banishment less tolerable than exile from one's country; it is the excommunication from the parental roof and from the affections of those we love.

Have I a right to hold the members of the Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches responsible for these proscriptive measures to which I have referred, most of which have been authorized by their respective founders and leaders? God forbid! I know full well that these acts of cruelty form no part of the creed of the Protestant churches. I have been acquainted with Protestants from my youth. They have been among my most intimate and cherished friends, and, from my knowledge of them, I am convinced that they would discountenance any physical violence which would be inflicted on their fellow-citizens on account of their religious convictions. They would justly tell me that the persecutions of former years of which I have spoken should be ascribed to the peculiar and unhappy state of society in which their ancestors lived, rather than to the inherent principles of their religion.

For precisely the same reasons, and for reasons still more forcible, Protestants should not reproach the Catholic Church for the atrocities of the Spanish Inquisition. The persecutions to which I have alluded were for the most part perpetrated by the founders and heads of the Protestant churches, while the rigors of the Spanish tribunal were inflicted by laymen and subordinate ecclesiastics, either without the knowledge or in spite of the protests of the Bishops of Rome.

Let us now present the Inquisition in its true light. In the first place, the number of its victims has been wildly exaggerated, as even Prescott is forced to admit. The popular historian of the Inquisition is Llorente, from whom our American authors generally derive their information on this subject. Now who was Llorente? He was a degraded Priest, who was dismissed from the Board of Inquisitors, of which he had been Secretary. Actuated by interest and revenge, he wrote his history at the instance of Joseph Bonaparte, the new King of Spain, and, to please his royal master he did all he could to blacken the character of that institution. His testimony, therefore, should be received with great reserve. To give you one instance of his unreliability, he quotes the historian Mariana as his authority for saying that two thousand persons were put to death in one year in the dioceses of Seville and Cadiz alone. By referring to the pages of Mariana we find that author saying that two thousand were put to death in all Spain during the entire administration of Torquemada, which embraced a period of fifteen years.

Before beginning to examine the character of this tribunal it must be clearly understood that the Spanish Inquisition was not a purely ecclesiastical institution, but a mixed tribunal. It was conceived, systematized, regulated in all its procedures and judgments, equipped with officers and powers, and its executions, fines and confiscations were carried out by the royal authority alone, and not by the Church.³²⁰

To understand the true character of the Spanish Inquisition, and the motives which prompted King Ferdinand in establishing that tribunal, we must take a glance at the internal condition of Spain at the close of the fifteenth century. After a struggle of eight centuries the Spanish nation succeeded in overthrowing the Moors, and in planting the national flag over the entire country. At last the Cross conquered the Crescent, and Christianity triumphed over Mahometanism. The empire was consolidated under the joint reign of Ferdinand and Isabella.

But there still remained elements of discord in the nation. The population was composed of three conflicting races—the “Letters on the Spanish Inquisition,” by the Count de Maistre.

For an impartial account of the Inquisition, the reader is referred to the Spaniards, Moors and Jews. Perhaps the difficulties which beset our own Government in its efforts to harmonize the white, the Indian and the colored population, will give us some idea of the formidable obstacles with which the Spanish court had to contend in its efforts to cement into one compact nation a conquering and a conquered people of different race and religion.

The Jews and the Moors were disaffected toward the Spanish government not only on political, but also on religious grounds. They were suspected, and not unjustly, of desiring to transfer their allegiance from the King of Spain to the King of Barbary or to the Grand Turk.

The Spanish Inquisition was accordingly erected by King Ferdinand, less from motives of religious zeal than from those of human policy. It was established, not so much with the view of preserving the Catholic faith, as of perpetuating the integrity of his kingdom. The Moors and Jews were looked upon not only as enemies of the altar, but chiefly as enemies of the throne. Catholics were upheld not for their faith alone, but because they united faith to loyalty. The baptized Moors and Israelites were oppressed for their heresy because their heresy was allied to sedition.

It must be remembered that in those days heresy, especially if outspoken, was regarded not only as an offence against religion, but also as a crime against the state, and was punished accordingly. This condition of things was not confined to Catholic Spain, but prevailed across the sea in Protestant England. We find Henry VIII. and his successors pursuing the same policy in Great Britain toward their Catholic subjects and punishing Catholicism as a crime against the state, just as Islamism and Judaism were proscribed in Spain.

It was, therefore, rather a royal and political than an ecclesiastical institution. The King nominated the Inquisitors, who were equally composed of lay and clerical officials. He dismissed them at will. From the

King, and not from the Pope, they derived their jurisdiction, and into the King's coffers, and not into the Pope's, went all the emoluments accruing from fines and confiscations. In a word, the authority of the Inquisition began and ended with the crown.

In confirmation of these assertions I shall quote from Ranke, a German Protestant historian, who cannot be suspected of partiality to the Catholic Church. “In the first place,” says this author, “the Inquisitors were royal officers. The Kings had the right of appointing and dismissing them.... The courts of the Inquisition were subject, like other magistracies, to royal visitors. ‘Do you not know,’ said the King (to Ximenes), ‘that if this tribunal possesses jurisdiction, it is from the King it derives it?’

“In the second place, all the profit of the confiscations by this court accrued to the King. These were carried out in a very unsparing manner. Though the fueros (privileges) of Aragon forbade the King to confiscate the property of his convicted subjects, he deemed himself exalted above the law in matters pertaining to this court.... The proceeds of these confiscations formed a sort of regular income for the royal exchequer. It was even believed, and asserted from the beginning, that the Kings had been moved to establish and countenance this tribunal more by their hankering after the wealth it confiscated than by motives of piety.

“In the third place, it was the Inquisition, and the Inquisition alone, that completely shut out all extraneous interference with the state. The sovereign had now at his disposal a tribunal from which no grandee, no Archbishop, could withdraw himself. As Charles knew no other means of bringing certain punishment on the Bishops who had taken part in the insurrection of the Comunidades (or communes who were struggling for their rights and liberties), he chose to have them judged by the Inquisition....

“It was in spirit and tendency a political institution. The Pope had an interest in thwarting it, and he did so; but the King had an interest in constantly upholding it.”³²¹

That the Inquisition acted independently of the Holy See, and that even the Catholic hierarchy fell under the ban of this royal tribunal, is also apparent from the following fact: After the convening of the Council of Trent, Bartholomew Caranza, Archbishop of Toledo, was arrested by the Inquisition on a charge of heresy, and his release from prison could not be obtained either by the interposition of Pius IV. or the remonstrance of the Council.

It is true that Sixtus IV., yielding to the importunities of Queen Isabella, consented to its establishment, being advised that it was necessary for the preservation of order in the kingdom; but in 1481, the year following its introduction, when the Jews complained to him of its severity, the same Pontiff issued a Bull against the Inquisitors, as Prescott informs us, in which “he rebuked

their intemperate zeal and even threatened them with deprivation." He wrote to Ferdinand and Isabella that "mercy towards the guilty was more pleasing to God than the severity which they were using."

When the Pope could not eradicate the evil he encouraged the sufferers to flee to Rome, where they found an asylum, and where he took the fugitives under his protection. In two years he received four hundred and fifty refugees from Spain. Did the Pontiff send them back, or did he inflict vengeance on them at home? Far from it; they were restored to all the rights of citizens. How can we imagine that the Pope would encourage in Spain the legalized murder of men whom he protected from violence in his own city, where he might have crushed them with impunity? I can find no authenticated instance of any Pope putting to death, in his own dominions, a single individual for his religious belief.

Moreover, sometimes the Pope, when he could not reach the victims, censured and excommunicated the Inquisitor, and protected the children of those whose property was confiscated to the crown.

After a struggle he succeeded in preventing the Spanish government from establishing its Inquisition in Naples or Milan, which then belonged to Spain, so great was his abhorrence of its cruelties.

To sum up: I have endeavored to show that the Church disavows all responsibility for the excesses of the Spanish Inquisition, because oppression forms no part of her creed; that these atrocities have been grossly exaggerated; that the Inquisition was a political tribunal; that Catholic Prelates were amenable to its sentence as well as Moors and Jews, and that the Popes denounced and labored hard to abolish its sanguinary features.

And yet Rome has to bear all the odium of the Inquisition!

I heartily pray that religious intolerance may never take root in our favored land. May the only king to force our conscience be the King of kings; may the only prison erected among us for the sin of unbelief or misbelief be the prison of a troubled conscience; and may our only motive for embracing truth be not the fear of man, but the love of truth and of God.

II. What About The Massacre Of St. Bartholomew?

I have no words strong enough to express my detestation of that inhuman slaughter. It is true that the number of its victims has been grossly exaggerated by partisan writers, but that is no extenuation of the crime itself. I most emphatically assert that the Church had no act or part in this atrocious butchery, except to deplore the event and weep over its unhappy victims. Here are the facts briefly presented:

First—In the reign of Charles IX. of France the Huguenots were a formidable power and a seditious element in that country. They were under the leadership of Admiral Coligny, who was plotting the overthrow of the ruling monarch. The French King, instigated by his mother, Catherine de Medicis, and fearing the influence of Coligny, whom he regarded as an aspirant to the throne, compassed his assassination, as well as that of his followers in Paris, August 24th, 1572. This deed of violence was followed by an indiscriminate massacre in the French capital and other cities of France by an incendiary populace, who are easily aroused but not easily appeased.

Second—Religion had nothing to do with the massacre. Coligny and his fellow Huguenots were slain not on account of their creed, but exclusively on account of their alleged treasonable designs. If they had nothing but their Protestant faith to render them odious to King Charles, they would never have been molested; for, neither did Charles nor his mother ever manifest any special zeal for the Catholic Church nor any special aversion to Protestantism, unless when it threatened the throne.

Third—Immediately after the massacre Charles dispatched an envoy extraordinary to each of the courts of Europe, conveying the startling intelligence that the King and royal family had narrowly escaped from a horrible conspiracy, and that its authors had been detected and summarily punished. The envoys, in their narration, carefully suppressed any allusion to the indiscriminate massacre which had taken place, but announced the event in the following words: On that "memorable night, by the destruction of a few seditious men, the King had been delivered from immediate danger of death, and the realm from the perpetual terror of civil war."

Pope Gregory XIII., to whom also an envoy was sent, acting on this garbled information, ordered a "Te Deum" to be sung, and a commemorative medal to be struck in thanksgiving to God, not for the massacre, of which he was utterly ignorant, but for the preservation of the French King from an untimely and violent death, and of the French nation from the horrors of a civil war.

Sismondi, a Protestant historian, tells us that the Pope's nuncio in Paris was purposely kept in ignorance of the designs of Charles; and Ranke, in his History of the Civil Wars, informs us that Charles and his mother suddenly left Paris in order to avoid an interview with the Pope's legate, who arrived soon after the massacre; their guilty conscience fearing, no doubt, a rebuke from the messenger of the Vicar of Christ, from whom the real facts were not long concealed.

Fourth—It is scarcely necessary to vindicate the innocence of the Bishops and clergy of France in this transaction, as no author, how hostile so ever to the Church, has ever, to my knowledge, accused them of any complicity in the heinous massacre.

On the contrary, they used their best efforts to arrest the progress of the assailants, to prevent further bloodshed and to protect the lives of the fugitives. More than three hundred Calvinists were sheltered from the assassins by taking refuge in the house of the Archbishop of Lyons. The Bishops of Lisieux, Bordeaux, Toulouse and of other cities offered similar protection to those who sought safety in their homes.

Thus we see that the Church slept in tranquil ignorance of the stormy scene until she was aroused to a knowledge of the tempest by the sudden uproar it created. Like her Divine Spouse on the troubled waters, she presents herself only to say to them: "Peace be still."

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