

**Review: J.C. Fernald, *A Study of the Inquisition, The Baptist Review (July-September 1881), pp 341-365***

This article provides credible evidence of the atrocities undertaken by the inquisitors on behalf of Rome and includes some graphic detail of the torture system, methods and celebrations of the murders.

Proscribed death for convicted 'heretics' was first implemented by Theodosius the Great in 382 AD. While the Council of Verona formally instituted the Inquisition in 1184, its seed was clearly sown much earlier. This early act had nothing to do with prescriptions in the New Testament for dealing with true heretics; rather it was the result of Roman pagan influences, worldly compromising and temporal advancement of the (false) church.

The first murders were just before Theodosius, carried out by his predecessor Maximus. He tortured and killed Priscillian, Bishop of Avila in Spain and six of his followers for 'doctrinal error'. Until Verona there were inquisitorial episodes in various places, however no documented evidence is provided. It is likely no records survive but persecution was still widespread (Rv 12.14 and 13.5,7).

The first account of general persecution is of the Albigenses (so named after a town in Southern France). While inferior in war to the Northern French, they exceeded them in the arts and commerce as well as purity of religion. This purity encompassed a denunciation of core antichrist doctrines: host adoration, priestly power to forgive sins and worship of dead saints and relics. For this cause the devil's hand came down upon them via Pope 'Innocent' III in 1193.

The Count of Tholouse, Raymond allowed papal legates free passage into his domain without actively aiding their cause. Due to this lack of 'progress', one of papists pressed the issue and was murdered (supposedly by one of Raymond's followers). This triggered the Albigensian Crusade.

Propaganda was sent to all levels of society denouncing Tholouse as an heretical province and a call to arms was made (in similar fashion to that which destroyed the Omniadan incursion across the Pyrenees). In 1209, under the banner of the cross, Papal Legate Arnaud Amalric and military general Simon de Monfort led an army of 50 000 on crusade.

One detailed account was of the infamous sacking of Beziers in July of that year. All persons regardless of religion were murdered and property destroyed by fire (Amalric: "Kill All! The Lord will know his own."). Mortality estimates by Arnaud himself ranged from 60 000 down to 15 000. As a reward Amalric was promoted to Archbishop of Narbonne!

Along with, and after, the crusading flames flickered out in the Albigensian territory the Inquisition marched forth leaving destruction in its wake. As well as using the sword, the Roman Church concurrently tried persuasion and espionage. For this cause the order of the Dominicans was constituted in 1215 AD. The Inquisition was formally delegated to them in 1248 AD.

A Dominican had helpers in the form of militia-like familiars (militia of Christ). Notices of inquisition would be served by a familiar and the defendant would immediately follow, often disappearing off the face of the earth.

The legal apparatus was vastly different from under Theodosius who presided over an open trial (*aperiat forum*). From arrest until the point of sentencing the church controlled the process in secret. After conviction the heretic was handed over to secular authorities, a clever tactic to be free of blood-guilt, and in hindsight attempt to shift blame onto civil authorities for the whole murderous affair. Reaching an apex of duplicity, the inquisitorial authority recommended their civil counterparts exercise mercy! Without accountability, murders could be sanctioned with maximum efficiency (from minimised legal challenges) and gratuitous forms of torture also undertaken. Death from the process of extracting evidence was a normal occurrence.

The system of gathering and processing evidence, and also sentencing betrays a superhuman- infernal intelligence. The key was secrecy, as light is feared by the devil he chooses to operate in darkness wherever possible. All parties remained anonymous to the other (except where the accused would be able to deduce someone). Hearings were undertaken only in the presence of an officer of the Inquisition and his scribe with the defendant guilty until proven innocent! There was one option of Appeal or to call an Advocate, however the said person had to be a 'zealous Catholic' and the inquisitor had a power of veto!

A crowning achievement in this system was a periodic offer of amnesty, or 'Edict of Faith'. This could be used upon entering a new area or to more deeply root out heresy in existing ones. The Edict allowed anyone to volunteer their heresy and receive mercy, as opposed to being summoned (thereby already

incriminated). Questions were framed in such a manner as to extract some degree of self-incriminating evidence of heresy against the Romish Church or identify other potential heretics.

As only a heretic would volunteer themselves these were caught. Anybody named by a heretic was also probably one as well so this group would be caught. All others (likely to be few) must therefore be innocent.

It is noted there was a strong financial incentive for inquisitors to find heretics. All property was ceded to the crown, from which inquisitorial expenses were paid. It was effectively a commission-based role then of torture and murder incentivising those with power. Apart from pecuniary and death penalties, those who escaped with their lives suffered mandated ignominy being denied any place of status in society, having to wear a yellow cross at all times, and these punishments laid also upon their children and grand children.

Those found innocent but whose property had been stolen were obviously unlikely to pursue the matter any further.

In 1481, under the Inquisitor General Torquemada, Spain reached the embodiment of an Inquisition, with no countervailing forces of resistance in existence. Likewise in Portugal, although theirs was less efficient ('feeble' and 'brutal'). Not restricted domestically, naval and colonial inquisitions in the far East were undertaken until stifled by commerce. The territory of the Netherlands was lost, becoming a bastion of Protestantism as they fought for their lives against the threat of the Inquisition.

Sentencing of heretics was done en-masse during a bizarre ceremony called the 'Auto-da-fe'. This festival was designed to showcase the power, authority and righteousness of the Romish Church's actions. A convenient area was chosen for building an amphitheatre to house honoured guests and spectators. The grand procession began with the most important (nobility and inquisitors) then the Dominicans (a diverse group of mean men interspersed by scholars) and familiars. The parade standard was a green cross on black ground with an olive branch and sword on opposing sides.

The guilty then followed, beginning with those who had confessed (penitents). These were made to wear a yellow sack and bore in their faces the mark of torture. The condemned followed, guarded by two familiars and monks (resistance from the general populace was unlikely given the right to bear arms

had been taken away). These were clothed in a *zamarra* (like the yellow sack but rudely painted with flames and devils) and *coroza* (mocking crown).

After announcement of sentence, as above the condemned were handed over to civil authorities for punishment. With an unbelievable gall, monks would pray the authorities no harm would come to them! This went unheeded and the burning took place on a stone structure sixty feet square and seven feet high (a *Quemadero*). The duplicitous monks made an offer to the saints of strangulation, only if they chose to repent!

The last murder under the Spanish Inquisition took place in Yorktown in 1781. Its demise came about because of the reformation and bible-believing Christians who fought and died, the rise of Protestant Britain, and the New World where the icy fingers of Catholicism hadn't pierced. Ironically, civil authorities espoused today as secular forces of justice were enablers to this whole sorry affair.