

The Spanish Inquisition



What Every Christian Needs To Know

—by Peter Hammond

One of the reoccurring accusations against Christianity is that Christians are responsible for 'The Inquisition!' and that our religion is bloodthirsty and intolerant because of this historical event.

Frequently, while trying to love one's neighbour and share the Gospel of our Lord, Christians receive some tirade against 'The Church' and 'The Inquisition' - which is used as some kind of general-purpose club with which to bludgeon Christians.

Often when one witnesses or engages in any sort of discussion about the Gospel, you are accused of belonging to a religion that is responsible for "the Inquisition" which "burned thousands of witches!"

AN ANTI-CHRISTIAN AGENDA

The problem with this assumption is that it is entirely untrue and based on hearsay. In fact most people don't actually know the historical truth about the Inquisition - which is that a vast majority burned at the stake by the Spanish Inquisitors were not witches at all, but Protestant believers!

Should one study the court records of the inquisitors it becomes very clear that they were by no means Christians. They would vindictively condemn to

death Christians who believed in, who translated, or who taught, the Holy Scriptures. Often the inquisitors contemptuously tossed the victim's Bible into the fire to be burned with the martyr. Anyone who has read Foxes 'Book of Martyrs', or similar historical records of the cruel persecutions endured by the Waldensians, the Huguenots and other Protestant reformers, will know that the

there was a Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ. Yet it would not be fair to make Judas representative of the twelve Apostles! The total record of the Church needs to be examined, and the good far outweighs the bad. Besides which, the Christian Faith is centred in Christ, not in Christians.

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Inquisition was anti-Christian. The Inquisition occurred at a time of blatant corruption, when priesthoods, bishoprics and even papal seats were bought and sold. There were many ungodly men dominating all levels of leadership in the medieval Roman Church. Far from the Inquisition being Christians persecuting non-Christians, the reality is that it was the very opposite. The Inquisition was an anti-Christian persecution of Protestant believers.

THE JUDAS FACTOR

The Church has never been perfect. Even amongst the twelve Apostles

Name, we need to first examine whether the people involved were true Christians or not. Our Lord Jesus Christ made it abundantly clear: "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the Will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, cast out demons in Your Name and done many wonders in Your Name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!" Matt 7: 21-23

Jesus made it clear that some people are truly part of His Church; the elect are »



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all those who are regenerated by His Holy Spirit. However, not all of those in the larger, visible church are members of the true, invisible Church of Christ. The Lord warned that there would be weeds among the wheat and goats amongst His sheep. Many who claim to be Christians are not Christians at all.

THE HISTORICAL FACTS

When people bring up the Inquisition we need to ask them what they actually know about the Inquisition? Seldom has the individual done any research on the matter at all. The Spanish Inquisi-

tion began in the year AD 1233. This is almost 300 years before the Protestant Reformation.

So, Protestants had no part in the Inquisition except as victims. Bible-believing, Evangelical Protestants were often on the receiving end of the Inquisition, tortured and killed for their beliefs.

This included tens of thousands of Waldensian Christians tortured and murdered in the most brutal ways and the Lollards of England, the field workers of the Reformation, who were mercilessly persecuted. The English Reformer, William Tyndale, was burned at the stake in Belgium for the crime

EXECUTING BIBLE-BELIEVERS

At that time, Spain was the most powerful country in the world, Holland was occupied by Spain and in 1566 Phillip II issued a proclamation demanding that all his subjects accept the decrees made by the Council of Trent. Early in 1567, to crush the flourishing Protestant Faith in Holland, Phillip sent in the Duke of Alva, who unleashed a reign of terror upon the Dutch Protestants. In 1568 the Inquisition condemned all three million inhabitants of the Netherlands to death as 'heretics'.

Under the courageous leadership of William Prince of Orange, the Dutch

bidden Books', the Papacy viciously persecuted the Waldensians. The hostility of the inquisitors to the Bible is clearly seen in their pronouncements such as in the condemnation of English Bible translator, Professor John Wycliffe of Oxford University:

"Pestilent and most wretched John Wycliffe, of damnable memory... crowned his wickedness by translating the Scriptures into the mother tongue!" Similarly, the Inquisition condemned the Professor of Prague University, John Hus to be burned alive, for his Reformation works. Foxes 'Book of Martyrs' records the condemnation of prominent Protestant preacher, Reformer and Bible translator, John Rogers, who was burned at the stake, January 1555. Asked by the inquisitor to recant his beliefs, Rogers replied that what he had preached from the pulpit he would seal now with his blood. "Then thou art a heretic!" exclaimed the inquisitor.

"That shall be known on Judgement Day," replied Rogers. "Well, I will never pray for you", said his judge.

"I will pray for you", responded Rogers. As he walked to the stake in Smithfield, Rogers sang the Psalms.

On one day, in 1519, seven men and women in Coventry were burned alive by the Inquisition for the crime of teaching their children The Lord's Prayer, The Ten

Commandments and The Apostle's Creed - in English!

At his trial, Bishop Ridley was urged to reject his Protestant Faith. His reply: "As for the doctrine which I have taught, my conscience assureth me that it is sound and according to God's Word...in confirmation thereof I seal the same with my blood."

IGNORANT ACCUSERS BLAME THE VICTIMS

Anyone attempting to blame Christians for the Inquisition is obviously ignorant of the historical record. Clearly most people simply pick up bits and pieces of information and try to use it as a weapon against Biblical (born-again) Christians when they attempt to share their faith.

It is an utter distortion to blame the victims for the tortures and murders inflicted on them. So, the next time non-Christians attempt to blame believers for the Inquisition, you are equipped with the facts to point out to them that, in reality, the Inquisition was an anti-Christian persecution of Protestant believers. "Woe to those who call evil good; and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness..." Isa 5:20. ■

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Isa 5:20

of having translated the Bible into the English language. Protestants were burned at the stake as 'heretics' in Spain, Italy, France, England and Scotland. Yet the Dutch Protestants suffered even worse persecutions at the hands of the Catholic Inquisition. Under King Phillip II of Spain, more than 18 000 Protestants were executed in the Netherlands. In an attempt to force them to confess to 'heresy', both men and women were mercilessly tortured.

Protestants rose up in resistance against the oppression of Catholic Spain. Prince William the Silent and his brave Dutch resistance fighters became the inspiration of Protestants world wide, particularly in England.

THE CORRUPT INQUISITORS WANTED TO LIMIT PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO THE BIBLE

After the Council of Valencia in 1229, placed the Bible on 'The Index of For-



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