

Chapter 1:

Persecution Proved from Decrees of General Councils and Writings of Celebrated Divines to be an Essential Doctrine of Popery

1.-According to the Scriptural marks of the predicted Roman Apostasy, the Babylonish Harlot of the Apocalypse, is the following:- *"And I saw the woman DRUNKEN WITH THE BLOOD OF THE SAINTS, and WITH THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS OF JESUS"* (Rev. 17:6). The whole history of Popery is a commentary upon the truthfulness of this description. That history is written in lines of blood. Compared with the butcheries of holy men and women by the papal anti Christ, the persecutions of the pagan emperors of the first three centuries sink into comparative insignificance. For not a tithe of the blood of martyrs was shed by Paganism, that has been poured forth by Popery and the persecutors of pagan Rome never dreamed of the thousand ingenious contrivances of torture. which, the malignity of popish inquisitors succeeded in inventing, when in the language of Pollock, they "sat and planned Deliberately, and with most musing pains, How, to extremest thrill of agony, The flesh, and blood, and souls of holy men, Her victims might be wrought."

From the birth of Popery in 600, to the present time, it is estimated by careful and credible historians, that more than FIFTY MILLIONS of the human family, [1] have been slaughtered for the crime of heresy by popish persecutors, an average of more than forty thousand religious murders for every year of the existence of Popery. Of course the average number of victims yearly, was vastly greater, during those gloomy ages when Popery was in her glory and reigned Despot of the World; and it has been much less since the power of the popes has diminished to tyrannize over the nations, and to compel the princes of the earth, by the terrors of excommunication. interdiction , and deposition, to butcher their heretical subjects.

The reader of the foregoing pages need not again be told, that the right to persecute heretics, and to put them to death for the sake of their opinions, has been claimed and exercised for centuries by the Roman church. "The duty of putting heretics to death," says Professor Gaussen, of Geneva, "is among the infallible and irrevocable decrees of its general councils, like those of the Mass and Purgatory; and when Luther dared to say, 'that it was against the will of the Holy Spirit, to burn with fire men convicted of error,' the court of Rome, in its bull Exsurge, placed this opinion among the number of the forty-one propositions for which it condemned Luther, and ordered, under severe penalties, that he should be seized and sent to the Pope. [2]

2.-According to the faith of Romanists, there can be no higher legislative authority than a pope and general council, and whatever is decreed by such a council, with the concurrence of the Pope, becomes a legitimate doctrine and article of faith. Accordingly, as we have seen, every priest, in the words of the creed of pope Pius, solemnly swears, on the holy evangelists, to hold and teach all that the sacred canons, and general councils have delivered, declared, and defined. Of course they are bound to receive all the laws enacted by the general councils of Lateran, Basil, Constance , &c., enjoining the extermination of heretics.

Innumerable provincial and national councils have issued the most cruel and bloody laws of outlawry and extermination against the Waldenses and other heretics; such as the councils of Oxford, Toledo, Avignon, Tours, Lavaur, Albi, Narbonne, Beziers, Tolosa,

&c. [\[3\]](#) But as papists will assert that these possess no authority to establish a doctrine of the church (though they must be admitted to be illustrations of its spirit), I shall pass over these, and simply remind the reader, once more, of the general councils that have sanctioned by their decrees the punishment of death for heresy. Six at least of these highest judicial assemblies of the Roman church, with the Pope at their head, have authoritatively and solemnly enjoined the persecution and extermination of heretics. These comprehended the following:

(1.) The second general council of Lateran, who in the year 1139, in the twenty-third canon, excommunicated and condemned the heretics, commanded the civil powers to suppress, them, and included their protectors and defenders in the same curse with themselves.

(2.) The third general council of Lateran, in 1179, under pope Alexander III., issued a still fiercer manifesto against the heretics. An extract from this bloody decree has already been given in English on page 302. "As the blessed Leo says, although ecclesiastical discipline, content with the sacerdotal judgment, does not exact bloody vengeance; yet, it is assisted by the constitution of Catholic princes, in order that men, while they fear that corporal punishment may be inflicted on them, may often seek a salutary remedy. On this account because in Gascony, Albi, in the parts of Thoulouse, and in other regions, the accursed perverseness of the heretics variously denominated Cathari, or Patarenas, or Publicans, or distinguished by sundry names, has so prevailed, that they now no longer exercise their wickedness in private, but publicly manifest their errors, and seduce into their communion the simple and infirm. We therefore subject to a curse, both themselves and their defenders and harborers, and, under a curse, we prohibit all persons from admitting them into their houses, or receiving them upon their lands, or cherishing them, or exercising any trade with them. But if they die in their sin, let them not receive Christian burial, under pretence of any privilege granted by us, or any other pretext whatever; and let no offering be made for them."

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(3.) The fourth general council of Lateran in 1215, under the inhuman pope Innocent III., exceeded in ferocity all that had preceded it. A copious extract from the decree of this council, both in the original and in English, has already been given on pages 332, 333. "We excommunicate and anathematize every heresy extolling itself against this holy, orthodox, Catholic faith which we before expounded, condemning all heretics by what names soever called. And being condemned, let them be left to the secular power, or to their bailiffs, to be punished by due animadversion. And let the secular powers be warned and induced, and if need be condemned by ecclesiastical censure, what offices soever they are in, that as they desire to be reputed and taken for believers, so they publicly take an oath for the defence of the faith, **THAT THEY WILL STUDY IN GOOD EARNEST TO EXTERMINATE, TO THEIR UTMOST POWER, FROM THE LANDS SUBJECT TO THEIR JURISDICTION, ALL HERETICS DENOTED BY THE CHURCH;** [\[4\]](#) so that every one, that is henceforth taken into any power, either spiritual or temporal, shall be bound to confirm this chapter by his oath." . .

"But if the temporal lord, required and warned by the church, shall neglect to purge his territory of this heretical filth, let him by the Metropolitan and Comprovincial Bishops be tied by the bond of excommunication; and if he scorn to satisfy within a year, let that be

signified to the Pope, that he may denounce his vassals thenceforth absolved from his fidelity (or allegiance), and may expose his country to be seized on by Catholics, who, the heretics being excommunicated, may possess it without any contradiction, and may keep it in the purity of faith, saving the right of the principal lord, so be it he himself put no obstacle hereto, nor oppose any impediment; the same law notwithstanding being kept about them that have no principal lord." . . . "And the Catholics that taking the badge of the cross shall gird themselves for the exterminating of heretics, shall enjoy that indulgence, and be fortified with that holy privilege which is granted to them that go to the help of the holy land." . . . "And we decree to subject to excommunication the believers and receivers, defenders and favorers of heretics, firmly ordaining, that when any such person is noted by excommunication, if he disdain to satisfy within a year, let him be, ipso jure, made infamous." The Latin original of this translation can be found on page 333 of Dowling's book]

(4.) The sixteenth general council held at Constance in 1414, we have already seen carrying these bloody principles into execution in the inhuman religious murder of Huss and Jerome. Not content with this act of horrible treachery and barbarity, the Pope and the council proceeded, previous to its dissolution in 1418, to a solemn sanction of the inhuman decrees of Lateran. The holy and infallible assembly, in its forty-fifth session, presented a shocking scene of blasphemy and barbarity. Pope Martin, presiding in the sacred synod and clothed with all its authority, addressed the bishops and inquisitors of heretical pravity, on whom he bestowed his apostolic benediction. The eradication of error and the establishment of Catholicism, Martin represented as the chief care of himself and the council. His Holiness in his pontifical politeness, characterized Wickliff, Huss, and Jerome, as pestilent and deceitful hierarchs, who, excited with truculent rage, infested the Christian fold, and made the sheep putrify with the filth of falsehood. The partisans of heresy through Bohemia, Moravia, and other kingdoms, he described as actuated with the pride of Lucifer, the fury of wolves, and the deceitfulness of demons. The Pontiff then, supported by the council, proceeded, for the glory of God, the stability of Romanism, and the preservation of Christianity, to excommunicate these advocates of error, with their pestilent patrons and protectors, and to consign them to the secular arm and the severest vengeance. He commanded kings to punish them according to the Lateran council. The above mentioned inhuman enactments of the Lateran, therefore, were to be brought into requisition against the Bohemians and Moravians, and they were to be despoiled of all property, Christian burial, and even of the consolations of humanity.

(5.) The council of Sienna, in 1423, which was afterward continued at Basil, published persecuting enactments of a similar kind. The holy synod assembled in the Holy Ghost, and representing the universal church, acknowledged the spread of heresy in different parts of the world through the remissness of the inquisitors, and to the offence of God, the injury of Catholicism, and the perdition of souls. The sacred convention then commanded the inquisitors, in every place, to extirpate every heresy, especially those of Wickliff, Huss, and Jerome. Princes were admonished by the mercy of God to exterminate error, if they would escape divine vengeance. The holy fathers and the viceroy of heaven conspired, in this manner, to sanction murder in the name of the God of mercy: and granted plenary indulgences to all who should banish those sons of heterodoxy or provide arms for their destruction. These enactments were published every sabbath, while the bells were rung

and the candles lighted and extinguished.

(6.) The fifth general council of the Lateran, in 1514, enacted laws, marked, if possible, with augmented barbarity. Dissembling Christians of every kind and nation, heretics polluted with any contamination of error were, by this infallible gang of ruffians, dismissed from the assembly of the faithful, and consigned to the inquisition, that the convicted might undergo due punishment, and the relapsed suffer without any hope of pardon. "The principle of persecution, therefore," justly remarks the learned Edgar, "being sanctioned, not only by theologians, popes, and provincial synods, but also by general councils, IS A NECESSARY AND INTEGRAL PART OF ROMANISM. The Roman communion has, by its representatives, declared its right to compel men to renounce heterodoxy and embrace Catholicism, and to consign the obstinate to the civil power to be banished, tortured, or killed." [5]

3.--The same persecuting principles have been advocated by individual Roman divines in various ages. It will be sufficient to quote proofs of this remark from Saint Aquinas in the thirteenth century, Bellarmine of the sixteenth, and Peter Dens who wrote in the eighteenth, but is studied and followed by popish colleges and seminaries of the nineteenth.

The persecuting doctrine is frequently avowed in the writings of St. Aquinas, the angelic doctor, as he is called by Romanists. "Heretics," says he, "are to be compelled by corporeal punishments, that they may adhere to the faith." [Aquinas 2, 42; 2, 10.] In other places, St. Aquinas unequivocally asserts, that "heretics may not only be excommunicated, but justly killed," and that "the church consigns such to the secular judges to be exterminated from the world by death." [Aquinas 2, 11; 3:48 .] But the most remarkable illustration of the spirit of Popery on this subject, is the labored argument of a celebrated Cardinal, enforcing the duty of thus putting heretics to death.

Cardinal Bellarmine is the great champion of Romanism, and expounder of its doctrines. He was the nephew of pope Marcellus, and is acknowledged to be a standard writer with Romanists. In the 21st and 22d chapters of the third book of his work, entitled "De Laicis" (concerning the laity), he enters into a regular argument to prove that the church has the right, and should exercise it, of punishing heretics with death. The following extracts are so conclusive as to the faith of Romanists on this point, that we give them in the original, as well as in the translation. The titles of the chapters are Bellarmine's as well as what follows.

[Cardinal Bellarmine: This celebrated popish casuist and divine was born in Tuscany , in 1542. He was raised to the dignity of Cardinal in 1599, as a reward for his writings and services on behalf of Popery; and from 1605 to the year of his death, 1621, he resided at Rome, in constant attendance upon the person of the popes, and under their patronage, industriously employing his pen for the defence of the Roman Catholic faith. After his death, on account of the valuable services he had rendered the Roman church by his writings, he was very near being placed in the calendar of saints. Out of seventeen cardinals, we are informed by a Roman historian, that ten voted for his canonization. (Dupin, cent. xvii., book 5).]

"We will briefly show that the church has the power and ought to cast off incorrigible heretics, especially those who have relapsed, and that the secular power ought to inflict on such, temporal punishments, and even death itself.

1st. This may be proved from the Scripture. 2d. It is proved from the opinions and laws of the Emperors, which the church has always approved. 3d. It is proved by the laws of the church. 4th. It is proved by the testimony of the fathers. Lastly. It is proved from natural reason. For first: It is owned by all, that heretics may of right be excommunicated-of course they may be put to death. This consequence is proved because excommunication is a greater punishment than temporal death.

Secondly. Experience proves that there is no other remedy; for the church has step by step tried all remedies- first,-excommunication alone; then pecuniary penalties; afterward banishment; and lastly has been forced to put them to death; to send them to their own place.

Thirdly. All allow that forgery deserves death; but heretics are guilty of forgery of the word of God.

Fourthly. A breach of faith by man toward God, is a greater sin, than of a wife with her husband. But a woman's unfaithfulness is punished with death; why not a heretic's?

Fifthly. There are three grounds on which reason shows that heretics should be put to death: the 1st is, lest the wicked should injure the righteous- 2d, that by the punishment of a few, many may be reformed. **FOR MANY WHO WERE MADE TORPID BY IMPUNITY, ARE ROUSED BY THE FEAR OF PUNISHMENT; AND THIS WE DAILY SEE IS THE RESULT WHERE THE INQUISITION FLOURISHES.**

Finally, It is a benefit to obstinate heretics to remove them from this life for the longer they live the more errors they invent, the more persons they mislead: and the greater damnation do they treasure up to themselves.

In the next chapter Bellarmine proceeds to reply to the objections of Luther and others, against the burning of heretics. We transcribe the replies of the popish casuist to the first, second, thirteenth and eighteenth arguments against the burning of heretics. The chapter is entitled as follows: **CHAPTER XXII. OBJECTIONS ANSWERED. 'SOLVUNTUR OBJECTIONES.'**

"It remains to answer the objections of Luther and other heretics. Argument 1st. From the history of the church at large. 'The church,' says Luther, 'from the beginning, even to this time, has never burned a heretic. Therefore it does not seem to be the mind of the Holy Spirit, that they should be burned.' [If Luther ever made this assertion ascribed to him by Bellarmine, his meaning must have been that the true church of God had never burned a heretic, not that the anti-Christian Popes, councils, and secular powers of the Roman church had not burned heretics, for in the sense of the Roman church, all history testifies to the truth of Bellarmine's remark, that "an infinite number" of heretics were "either burned, or otherwise put to death," and that too (in the words of Bellarmine), "BY THE CHURCH."]

I reply that this argument proves not the sentiment, but the ignorance, or impudence of Luther; **FOR AS ALMOST AN INFINITE NUMBER WERE EITHER BURNED OR OTHERWISE PUT TO DEATH,** Luther either did not know it, and was therefore ignorant; or if he knows it, he is convicted of impudence and falsehood- for that heretics score often burned **BY THE CHURCH** may be proved by adducing a few from many examples.

Argument 2d. 'Experience shows that terror is not effective.' I reply, **EXPERIENCE PROVES THE CONTRARY-FOR THE DONATISTS, MANICHEANS, AND**

ALBIGENSES WERE ROUTED, AND ANNIHILATED BY ARMS.

Argument 13th. 'The Lord attributes to the church "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" but not the material sword, nay, He said unto Peter, who wished to defend him with a material sword, "put up thy sword into the scabbard." John 18th.' I answer; As the church has ecclesiastical and secular princes, who are her two arms, so she has two swords, the spiritual and material; and therefore when her right hand is unable to convert a heretic with the sword of the Spirit, she invokes the aid of the left hand, and coerces heretics with the material sword.

Argument 18th. "The Apostles never invoked the secular arm against heretics." Answer (according to St. Augustine, in letter 50 and elsewhere). "The Apostles did it not, because there was no Christian Prince whom they could call on for aid. But afterwards in Constantine's time. . . . the church called in the aid of the secular arm." [Thus far Bellarmine. The whole of this labored argument of the great popish divine, to prove the lawfulness and expediency of the burning of heretics, is well worthy of examination and study, by all who would understand what genuine Popery is. In the edition of Bellarmine's works (Six vols., fol. 1610), which I have consulted in the celebrated Van Ess library of the New York Theological Seminary, it occupied ten folio columns of Vol. II., p. 555, &c., besides the 20th chapter, of four columns, proving that the books of heretics ought to be destroyed.]

Now If; as Romanists in protestant countries sometimes assert, the Roman is not a persecuting church; could it be possible that one of the very highest dignitaries of that church, a Cardinal, the nephew of one pope, and the special favorite and confidant of others, could have penned, without rebuke, such an infamous and labored argument in support of the burning of heretics, as that from which the foregoing extracts are made. 4. Some people suppose that, with the lapse of ages, the character of persecuting Rome has changed. No such thing. Popery is unchangeable, and so her ablest advocates declare. Says Charles Butler in the work he wrote in reply to Southey's book of the church,--"It is most true that the Italian Catholics believe the doctrines of the church to be UNCHANGEABLY; and that it is a tenet of their creed, that what their faith ever has been, such it was from the beginning SUCH IT IS NOW and SUCH IT EVER WILL BE."

But supposing Romanists admitted a possibility of change in their doctrines, still there is abundant evidence in point of fact, from the writings of recent popish divines, that their doctrine remains the same, relative to the duty, whenever they possess the power of extirpating heretics by death. It would be easy to cite a multitude of proofs of this assertion from various writers, but a single author will be sufficient. It is from the theology of Peter Dens, the celebrated doctor of Louvain. It was written, or rather the first volume was printed in 1758, and was adopted by the popish clergy in Dublin, in the year 1808. "who unanimously argued that this book was the best work, and the safest guide in Theology for the Irish clergy." A single extract will be sufficient. After stating that heretics are deservedly visited with the penalties of exile, imprisonment, &c., the popish Doctor inquires,

"Are heretics rightly punished with DEATH? St. Thomas answers in the AFFIRMATIVE. Because forgers of money or other disturbers of the state are justly punished with death; therefore also heretics, who are forgers of the faith, and as experience shows, greatly

disturb the state. . . . This is confirmed by the command of God under the old law, that the false prophets should be killed. . . . The same is proved by the condemnation--by the fourteenth article--of John Huss in the council of Constance ." [Dens, 2, 88, 89.] The same horrid doctrine is taught in the Extravagants or Constitutions and other authorized writings of a large number of the popes, the Directorium Inquisitorium, or Directory for Inquisitors, the notes to the Rhemish Testament, [6] &c &c., but the point is already established upon sufficient authority and further testimony is unnecessary. Without undertaking to give a complete account of the persecutions of Popery, we shall present a few additional sketches of the manner in which the persecuting principles of Rome have in various ages been carried out in the tortures, massacres, burnings, and other barbarities inflicted upon those whom she chose to stigmatize with the name of heretics. [7]

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End Notes

[1] No computation can reach the numbers who have been put to death, in different ways, on account of their maintaining the profession of the Gospel, and opposing the corruptions of the Church of Rome. A MILLION of poor Waldenses perished in France ; NINE HUNDRED THOUSAND orthodox Christians were slain in less than thirty years after the institution of the order of the Jesuits. The Duke of Alva boasted of having put to death in the Netherlands , THIRTY-SIX THOUSAND by the hand of the common executioner during the space of a few years. The Inquisition destroyed, by various tortures, ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND within thirty years. These are a few specimens, and but a few, of those which history has recorded; but the total amount will never be known till the earth shall disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain" (Scott's Church History)

[2] See an able discourse of Professor Gaussen, of Geneva , to the Theological students at the opening of the course in October, 1843, entitled "Popery an argument for the Truth, by its fulfilment of Scripture Prophecies

[3] See Edgar, 218, 219, with citations of original authorities.

[4] 'Pro defensione fidei praestat juramentum, quod de terris suae jurisdictionis subjectos universos haereticos ab Ecclesia denotatos, bona fide pro viribus exterminare studebunt:'

[5] See Edgar, chapter vi., passim

[6] In the Rhemish translation of the New Testament for the English Romanists, the following note is appended to the words of our Lord--Luke 9:55--when he rebuked two of his disciples for their desire to destroy those who refused to receive him: "Not justice, nor all rigorous punishment of sinners, is here forbidden; nor Elias's fact reprehended; nor the Church, nor Christian princes, blamed for putting heretics to death; but that none of these should be done for desire of our particular revenge, or without discretion, and in regard of their amendment and example to others. Therefore, St. Peter used his power upon Ananias and Sapphira, when he struck them both down to death for defrauding the Church!" Hebrews 10:29 , is, in like manner, applied to all whom the Church of Rome calls heretics.

[7] Full information on these persecutions may be obtained from that well known and authentic work, "Fox's Book of Martyrs," "Southey's Book of the Church," &c.]