

**Systematic Murder of Believers**  
**The Untold History of the Inquisition**  
By Richard Bennett

Most people at the present time have some knowledge of the Holocaust, the six years of unspeakable horror and suffering to which the Jewish people were subjected under Hitler and the Nazis during the Second World War. Few, however, are aware of the atrocities of systematized torture and murder of Bible-believing Christians and Jews that took place during the 605 years of the Inquisition.<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning of the Papacy to the present time, it is estimated by reputable and trustworthy historians that tens of millions of people have been tortured and killed by Papal persecutors for the crime of believing God's word in the Bible, rather than the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. While the majority of those who suffered were true believers, Papal Rome also persecuted Jews, Muslims, Knights Templar, and those that she called "witches."

Through the Inquisition was demonstrated the grace and divine power that the Lord gave to His people to survive those horrific years with their faith strengthened. Also shown was the inner heart of ritualistic Catholicism and the lengths to which it will go to enforce its will. It is truly a warning for succeeding generations.



In 1203, Pope Innocent III published a decree in France that began the extermination of what the Pope called heresy. This marked the start of the Inquisition as a distinctive Papal institution. It was to endure until its final dissolution in Spain and Portugal in 1808. Pope Innocent III began by commanding armies of the Crusade to attack the Albigenses in France. They were called Albigenses because many of them resided in the city of Albi in southern France. They had developed a committed Christian life, real estate, progressive cities, and townships right across southern France. These Christians were horrifically destroyed and butchered by the armies of Papal Rome in their many cities, towns, and villages across southern France. The Albigenses came from a group that was originally known as the Paulicians, who took their teaching from the Apostle Paul. Even their name, 'Albigenses,' has been deeply tarnished by Roman Catholic sources. Not only were they slaughtered, but their memory has been practically obliterated from the pages of history. However, from their fruits as Christians, we truly see the character of these men and women who traced their faith back to the writings of Paul the Apostle in the New Testament.

From the thirteenth century onwards, the machinery of the Papal Inquisition's terrorism was created. The Popes compelled secular authorities to co-operate under threat of drastic penalties. Kings and princes who disobeyed the Popes' orders were to be excommunicated and

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<sup>1</sup> The main historians that wrote on the Inquisition are Dowling, Lea, Vancandard, Maycock, Coulton, Turberville and Scott

their subjects released from loyalty to them. In 1252, Pope Innocent IV devised in detail for the many Inquisitors how torture was to be carried out. He did this in his decree called, *At Extirpanda*. Confirmatory or regulatory decrees were later issued by Popes Alexander IV, Clement IV, Urban IV, and Clement V. Torture was prescribed, but it was to stop short of pulling off limbs or causing death. Disastrous punishments were enacted on all who protected or gave help to believers. Those who applied the instruments of torture during the Inquisition were following orders. The Popes themselves were wholly responsible for the instruments and how they were used.

Then, in 1487, Pope Innocent VIII planned and ordered the persecution of the Vaudois believers who had remained faithful to biblical faith since apostolic times.



Charles VIII of France agreed to raise an army for the destruction of the Vaudois. The Pope promised forgiveness of sins and a share in the goods to those who participated. The army was joined by thousands of gangsters urged on by the promise of forgiveness of sins and the expectation of obtaining spoil from the Vaudois possessions. This army attacked the Vaudois mountain valleys in northern Italy. Thousands of Bible-believing Christians perished along with their homes while their crops were destroyed. Entire villages were demolished. Their women were raped and then viciously murdered.

### True Believers: the Vaudois in Piedmont Valley

For the most part, there is agreement among scholars about the history of the Inquisition. Lea's great works, the *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages* and the *History of the Inquisition of Spain*, embodied immense and careful research. There is little difference about facts in the writings of Dowling, Vancandard, Maycock, Coulton, and Turberville. The methods of the Inquisition were an outrage to elementary principles of justice. Anyone could be arrested on suspicion. The trials were secret. The prisoner was not allowed to know the accusers or witnesses. The Bishops and priests who acted as judges had absolute power. The evidence of infamous persons, criminals, or perjurers was admitted so long as it was hostile. Children older than twelve were required to bear testimony. The prisoner was disallowed the help of an advocate, for anyone defending a prisoner was held guilty of the crime of heresy. A person tried by the Inquisition was scarcely ever acquitted. "In the register of Carcassonne from 1249 to 1258, comprising about two hundred cases, there is not a single case in which a prisoner was discharged as innocent." Tanon, a French investigator, wrote, "There is scarcely ever an acquittal, pure and simple, in the sentence of the Inquisition."<sup>2</sup>

There were many accounts of burning at the stake across Europe. The ferocious Inquisitor, Robert le Bugre, who considered his mission was "not to convert but to burn,"

<sup>2</sup>See Coulton, *The Inquisition and Liberty*, p. 125

devastated much of France. In one period of about three months he is said to have thus dispatched about fifty prisoners of either sex, and the whole number of his victims during the several years of his unchecked career was very large.<sup>3</sup>

The notorious Conrad of Marburg caused a general panic in Germany where he was appointed Inquisitor by Pope Gregory IX. In 1520, Pope Leo X in his famous decree, *Exsurge Domine*, denounced the teachings of Luther with the following words, “That heretics should be burned is contrary to the will of the Spirit. The Roman Catholic scholar Lord Acton wrote, “Rome taught for four centuries that no Catholic could be saved who denied that heretics ought to be put to death.”<sup>4</sup>



The prisons of the Inquisition were some of the most common and atrocious places. The Inquisitors could leave people in their prisons indefinitely, without trial. The Inquisitor Eymeric, in his records called *Directorium*, stated that a person believed guilty “shall be shut up in prison, strictly confined and in chains. If he shows no willingness to be converted there is no need for haste for the pains and privations of imprisonment often bring about a change of mind.”<sup>5</sup> To quote Lea, “The dungeons of the Inquisition were abodes of fearful misery, but where there were reasons for increasing their terrors there was no difficulty in increasing the hardships. The chains and starvation in a stifling hole was a favorite device for extracting confession from unwilling lips.”<sup>6</sup>

Historians give us some detailed information about some of the prisons of the Inquisition. Even some Catholic priests complained about the prison conditions in some towns in the south of France. Historians tell that the cells were fitted up with a variety of instruments to cause severe suffering. Many prisoners, through the severity of their torments, lost the use of their limbs and were rendered utterly helpless.

The burning at the stake was the standard way that the Papacy disposed of believers. This was usually done with dramatic pomp and festivity before the massive gatherings of people. It was as if the Roman Church believed that both their bodies and beliefs would disappear into cinders. In England, Mary Tudor, known as “Bloody Mary,” a fervent Catholic beholden to the Pope, employed the Inquisition to burn no fewer than 288 Bible-believing martyrs. Most of them died because they denied the Catholic dogma that Jesus Christ is really present, flesh and blood, body and soul, divinity and humanity in the communion bread. The burning back to back of Bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley at the stake outside Balliol College Oxford, in 1555, is known to many people. So also are Latimer’s stirring last words an inspiration to Christians over the centuries, “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day, by God’s grace, light such a candle in England as I trust shall never be put out.”

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<sup>3</sup>Lea, *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*, Vol. 11, p. 116

<sup>4</sup>Lord Acton Correspondence, Vol. 1, p. 108

<sup>5</sup>Maycock, *The Inquisition*, p. 157

<sup>6</sup>Lea, *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*, Vol. 1, p. 420

## The Instruments of Torture

“The Rack” is one of the best known forms of medieval torture. This mechanism operated by having the victim lie on a horizontal rack with his hands and ankles tied to rollers on opposite ends.



The Inquisitors would perform the interrogation while turning the rollers, stretching the body of the suspect and causing colossal pain.

They would stretch the body out until the joints were actually yanked from their sockets. The ultimate intent was that of killing the victim either through shock or injuries. If the believer were still alive, yet refused to submit, he or she was sent to be burned at the stake.

Besides the Rack, there was the torture of pulling the believer towards the ceiling with ropes, and then with a weight on his or her feet, dropping him or her to the floor so that excruciating pain ripped through the body.



The Inquisitors also used “Skull Crusher.” They ordered the believer’s chin to be placed on a lower bar and a screw then forced an iron cap down on his or her head. Their teeth could be crushed. Their eyes could be squeezed from their sockets.

It was hoped that the believer was so overcome by the extreme pain of having his head crushed would confess his alleged errors and believe in the Holy Mother Church.

The Inquisitors also used the “Iron Maiden.” It was a tomb-sized container with folding doors. The spiked studded arms wrapped around the victim in such a way so as to puncture parts of the entire body, including the ears and eyes.



The purpose of the use of Iron Maiden was to inflict pain by means of vicious spikes and a slow death. The prickles inside were designed so that the trapped believer was left to slowly die in the utmost pain.

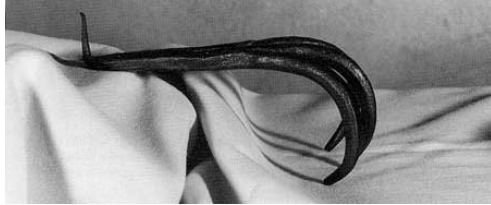
A prisoner would be bidden to stand right in front of Iron Maiden prior to torture. The spring would be touched by the executioner and the Iron Maiden would fling open her arms, and the wretched victim would straightway be forced within them. Another spring was then touched and the Iron Maiden closed upon her victim. Then spiky arms of the Iron Maiden slowly but irresistibly closed upon the man, cruelly goring him.



The talons Iron Maiden, sometimes called the “Iron Virgin,” were not designed to kill outright. They trapped the prisoner who was left to slowly perish in the utmost pain.

Beside these instruments of torture there were others for the tearing and ripping of one’s flesh.





The Catholic Church learned a human being could live until the skin was peeled down to the waist. Often the torturers heated these instruments and then used them on women's breasts and the genital organs of both sexes.

There were also instruments for compressing the fingers until the bones would be squeezed into splinters. There were instruments for probing below the fingernails until pain like burning fire would run along the nerves.



There were instruments for tearing out the tongue, for scooping out the eyes, and for rooting out the ears. There was a bunch of iron cords with a spiked circle at the end of every whip for tearing the flesh from the back until bone and sinew were laid bare.

There were also iron cases for the legs, which were tightened upon the limb placed in them by means of a screw, till flesh and bone were reduced to a pulp.

The thumbscrews were also applied to crush prisoners' toes, while larger, heavier devices based on the same design principle were applied to destroy knees and elbows.

## The Chair of Nails Torture



The chair nails, used by Inquisitors, was studded with spikes. The victim was strapped naked in the chair and a fire was lit beneath it. Heavy objects were placed upon the victim to increase the pain of the spikes. Blows with mallets were also used to inflict more pain.

There were also devices to slowly and painfully remove the intestines and other organs from the body while keeping the person alive and conscious of the pain. Anyone of those horrors could be inflicted on anybody, i.e., man, woman, or child over the age of 12 that did not agree with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The Inquisition was carried out

in France, Holland, Germany, Spain, and Italy.



### **The Stocks Torture**

The victims often had their feet placed in stocks. The stocks comprised two pieces of timber clamped together, over and under, across each leg above the ankles. The soles of the victim's feet were greased with lard and a blazing brazier was applied to them. Their feet were first blistered and then fried. At intervals, a plank was interposed between the fire and their feet. This plank was to be immediately removed if the victims failed to admit that they were guilty as charged.

The Inquisition in Spain perpetrated horrors on a more terrific scale than in other countries. Activities in Spain were more atrocious and its hecatombs of victims more numerous than elsewhere. The atrocities of the Spanish Inquisition cannot be disputed. Torquemada, the most infamous of the Inquisitors for ferocity, had full papal authorization. He was commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV in 1483. He was re-commissioned by Innocent VIII in 1485. So far were the popes from seeking to hold back Torquemada's inhuman cruelties that we find them praising him and encouraging him. Pope Sixtus IV wrote to him praised his zeal, saying "We commend you in the Lord and exhort you, cherished son, to persevere with tireless zeal in aiding and promoting the cause of faith, by doing which, as we are assured you will, you will win our special favor." In Spain the burnings of believers was called "Autos-da-fé" there they had peculiar pomp and festivity. As late as 1680 there was a stunning Auto-da-fé at Madrid at which one hundred believers were burned. The historian Turberville quotes Voltaire's comment; "that an Asiatic arriving in Madrid on such an occasion would be doubtful whether he was witnessing a festival, a religious ceremony, a sacrifice, or a massacre; it was in fact all of these."<sup>7</sup> The Judas Chair was also a torture device used in the Spanish Inquisition.



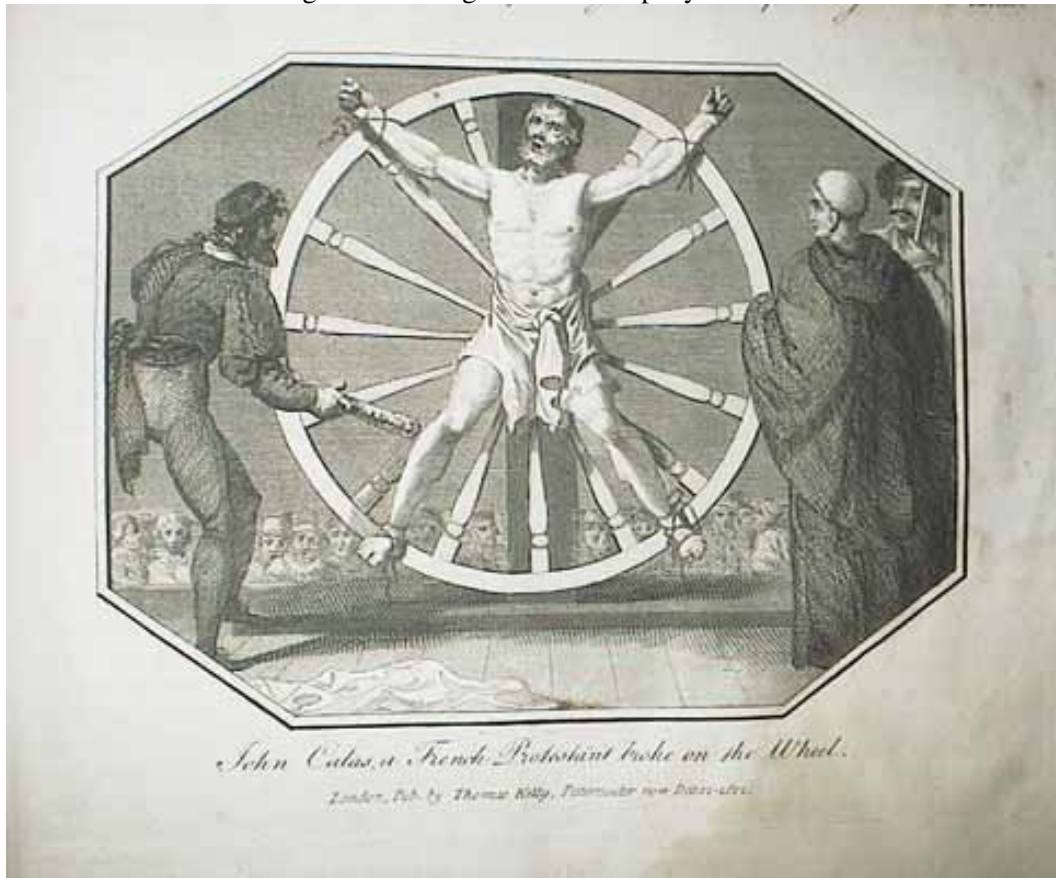
### **The Actual Judas Chair and the Art work showing Chair as it was used**

The Judas Chair, also known as the Judas Cradle, was a pyramid-shaped seat. The victim was placed on top of it, with the point inserted into their orifices, then very slowly lowered by ropes. The purpose was to

<sup>7</sup>Turberville, *The Spanish Inquisition*, p. 113

stretch the orifice over a long period of time in extreme pain in order that the victim would renounce his or her faith.

Then bishops and priests of the Inquisition used a devise for breaking a believer's faith as he was tied to a wheel. Clubbing and mocking would accompany this torture.



**An attempt to break a believer's faith as he was tied to a wheel**



Then there was the commonly used torture technique called the "Strappado." All that was needed was a sturdy rafter and some rope. The victims wrists were bound behind their back and the rope tossed over the beam or on a pulley. The victim was repeatedly dropped from a height so their arms and shoulders would dislocate. This and many more torture devices were use to get the believer to renounce his or her Christian faith, and then profess his or her faith in the Roman Church. We rejoice that the believers for the most part, remained true to the Lord. We realize that Bible believers in those horrendous years were fortified by the power of God through faith. They experienced what the Apostle Peter wrote that as believers we are "*kept by the power of God through faith.*" Consequently, kept by the power of God, their faith resounded at that time before the throne of God, and it still resounds on the pages of history for those who dare comprehend the true historical accounts. The torture chambers of the Inquisition lasted 605 years and were found throughout the nations

controlled by Papal Rome. They had their beginning under Pope Innocent III in 1203 until the Inquisition's final dissolution in Spain and Portugal in 1808.

### **Twentieth Century Inquisition in Croatia**

In 1929, Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty with Pope Pius XI officially conceding Vatican Hill to the Pope. The Papacy once again became a sovereign civil state. The legal agreement between Mussolini and the Vatican was just the beginning. Following this, the Papacy formed alliances in the twentieth century with Roman Catholic dictators such as Adolph Hitler of Germany, Francisco Franco of Spain, Antonio Salazar of Portugal, and Juan Peron of Argentina. But the alliance that proved to be the most brutal and bloodthirsty of all was that between the Papacy and Anton Pavelic in Croatia. It was agreed that Anton Pavelic<sup>8</sup> was to be head of the new nation state of Croatia, which was carved out of Yugoslavia during the Second World War.



**Anton Pavelic with Archbishop Stepinac**

During Pavelic's four-year reign, he and Roman Catholic Prelate, Archbishop Alois Stepinac, pursued a "convert or die" policy among the 900,000 Greek Orthodox Serbs, Jews, and others in Croatia. 200,000 were converted; the 700,000 who chose to die were tortured, burned, buried alive, or shot after digging their own graves. This appalling persecution carried out by the Ustasis included many of the worst atrocities of history. The mutilations were horrific, the tortures vicious, and the savagery terrible. The Catholic Church did not leave the execution of a religious war to the secular arm. She was there herself, openly ignoring precautions and bolder than she had been for a very long time. Wielding the hatchet or dagger, pulling the trigger, organizing the massacre, the Roman Catholic priests became their own instruments of the Inquisition.



**Anton Pavelic with Franciscan Monks**

Many of the Ustashi officers were priests or friars sworn to fight "with dagger or gun," for the "triumph of Christ and Croatia." Priests played a prominent role in the closing or takeover of Serbian Orthodox Churches, the seizure of church records and the interrogation of the Serbian Orthodox clergy. They also supervised concentration camps and organized the torture of many of the victims.

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<sup>8</sup> Ante Pavelić b. July 14, 1889 – d. December 28, 1959



French author Edmond Paris, who was born a Roman Catholic and has written a very thorough account of this terrible massacre in his book *Convert or Die*, has said,

“It is difficult for the world to believe that a whole people could be doomed to extermination by a government and religious hierarchy of the twentieth century, just because it happened to belong to another ethnical and racial group and had inherited the Christianity of Byzantium rather than that of Rome.”

The creation of the entirely Roman Catholic, independent State of Croatia during the Second World War was accompanied by a persecution so ferocious that it is difficult to find a parallel in all of history. The Inquisition applied to the Serbian Orthodox by the Croatian Catholics accounted for 700,000 Serbs being tortured and killed in just four years. So while the Inquisition ended in the nineteenth century, the same procedures and mindset were evident in Croatia in the twentieth century. In fact, the same mindset is still officially maintained by the Papacy in the twenty-first century. The Roman Church to this day maintains the laws that she used as her authority to torture and murder Bible believers for over 600 years. In her present-day laws she states her right to coerce Christian people. Thus Canon law, Canon 1311, states,

“The [Catholic] Church has an innate and proper right to coerce offending members of the Christian faithful by means of papal sanctions.”

The Catholic Church also holds to the fact that she can demand a submission of intellect and will as she did in the years of the Inquisition. Consequently she states the following,

“A religious respect of intellect and will, even if not the assent of faith, is to be paid to the teaching which the Supreme Pontiff or the college of bishops enunciate on faith and morals.”

So to whatever the Supreme Pontiff or his college of bishops teach on faith and morals, a person must submit their intellect and will. This is the same teaching that was upheld with the terrors of the Inquisition for 600 years. While there are no sanctions in torture and death at the present time, the same astonishing mindset is Roman Catholic law. The fact is that the Papacy still claims the right to judge and impose chastening that has not changed since the days of the Inquisition. In present-day Canon Law she also decrees,

Canon 1405 (Sect.1) “It is the right of the Roman Pontiff himself alone to judge in cases mentioned in can. 1401: 1. those who hold the highest civil office in a state;...

Canon 1401 “By proper and exclusive right the Church adjudicates: 1. cases concerning spiritual matters or connected with the spiritual; 2. the violation of ecclesiastical laws and all those cases in which there is a *question of sin* in respect to the determination of culpability and the imposition of ecclesiastical penalties.”

The Holy Spirit’s admonition to believers is to be remembered as these decrees are certified into law, “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*”<sup>9</sup>

In past times, kings and princes and nations were supposed to tremble at her decrees. Woe to him who resisted! Subjects were released from their oaths of allegiance; whole states were placed under interdict. By deception regarding the Gospel and, subsequently, by force the Papacy has held her domain together. She has only external unity, as any one who has lived within her system and studied her decrees and history knows. It is of signal importance to realize that the Roman Catholic Church has no other way to maintain her life than by imposition of her external laws, because she lacks the life giving power of the Holy Spirit and unity of the One

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<sup>9</sup> Galatians 5:1.

Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. She must legislate to exist, and she needs civil powers to enforce her decrees. It is crucial to understand that suppression and control are her main stratagems, although at the time such are not apparent. If control by her is to be avoided, her paradigm must be understood.

### **The Lord's Final Victory**

Papal Rome has asked pardon for the wrongs of the Inquisition. During a Mass on March 12, 2000, Pope John Paul II asked pardon for wrongs committed in the past by members of the church. It was not individual members of the church, but as Lord Acton observed, it was "the Popes in particular that caused and instigated the sufferings and persecutions, involving themselves in detail even in the minute ways that believers were to be tortured."

We have seen how the institutionalized Papacy and the powers of darkness have conspired against Christ's kingdom and His people. It is most important to know what the Lord's anointed has to say about His kingdom and to know that all the powers on earth cannot challenge Him.

As Psalm 2 reminds us, the Messiah reigns and His Throne is not moved, nor has His plans changed, whatever may be the turmoil and schemes against Him. While the enemies of the Gospel are plotting and planning how to break His bands asunder and cast His cords from them, He has already defeated their devices and He says to them, "*yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*"<sup>10</sup> All events are in His hands. Who can stand against the Almighty?

Things are not as they seem. It looks as if the powers that designed and implemented the Inquisition still govern the hearts of much of mankind at the present time. The Lord God's fixed decrees remain and all the schemes of hell cannot efface a single part of His purpose. He reigns by inheritance, "*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*"<sup>11</sup> The Lord God owns Him, and declares Him Lord and Head of the Church. The supreme government of the Church is His responsibility and He will bring it to complete success including the punishment of His enemies. It necessarily follows that though Papal Rome has been a rebel against the government of Christ Jesus, the Lord God has nonetheless fulfilled His purpose through all the terrible evil that has taken place. The truth is that through all the dreadful deeds of Papal Rome, the Sovereign Lord Jesus Christ was entirely with His people, and He was in control of all events so that the faith and witness of millions shone forth both in this world and before the throne of God; and will shine forth throughout all the ages of the world to come.

From the beginning the Lord God purposed to glorify Himself "*in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.*"<sup>12</sup> He has glorified Himself in the faith and suffering of true believers throughout the 605 years of the Inquisition, as His Word proclaims, "*the Lord reigneth; let the people tremble.*"<sup>13</sup>

The voice of the Lord thunders from the final chapters of the Bible and reverberates throughout the world, "*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*"<sup>14</sup> While the Papacy from the city of Rome continues to wax strong her final

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 2:6

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 2:7

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 3:21

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 99:1

<sup>14</sup> Revelation 18:4

condemnation is already written, “*Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*”<sup>15</sup> The Lord God’s reserved wrath, His punishing justice, and His enmity to sin, will be revealed to the entire world. The destruction of Papal Rome will proceed from the glory of His power. “*The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.*”<sup>16</sup> The certainty of the final triumph should animate us in our efforts, and true believers in their struggles.

The frequently quoted maxim that “peoples ignorant of history are destined to repeat it” is true. Without the knowledge of the systematic murder of believers during the Inquisition, we can fail to see that the true Gospel is a matter of life. True believers are in real danger of compromise with the Church of Rome. As the Apostle Paul told believers, “*All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*”<sup>17</sup> The victory of the faith and courage of believers over the severest trials is repeatedly recorded in the pages of history. As the Lord Himself proclaimed, “*Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. Also I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.*”<sup>18</sup> Where there is true faith and love of the Lord, there is in the midst of all afflictions a joy unspeakable and full of glory. God is the only Holy Father, the All Holy One. His holiness is the distinguishing factor in all His essential characteristics. This is the reason why we need to be in right standing before the one and only All Holy God on the terms He prescribes. Turn to God in faith alone, in Christ alone, for the salvation that He alone gives, by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, based on Christ’s death and resurrection for His own, and believe on Him alone, “*to the praise of the glory of his grace.*”<sup>19</sup> ♦

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<sup>15</sup> Revelation 14:8

<sup>16</sup> Revelation 14:10

<sup>17</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12

<sup>18</sup> Luke 12:4

<sup>19</sup> Ephesians 1:6