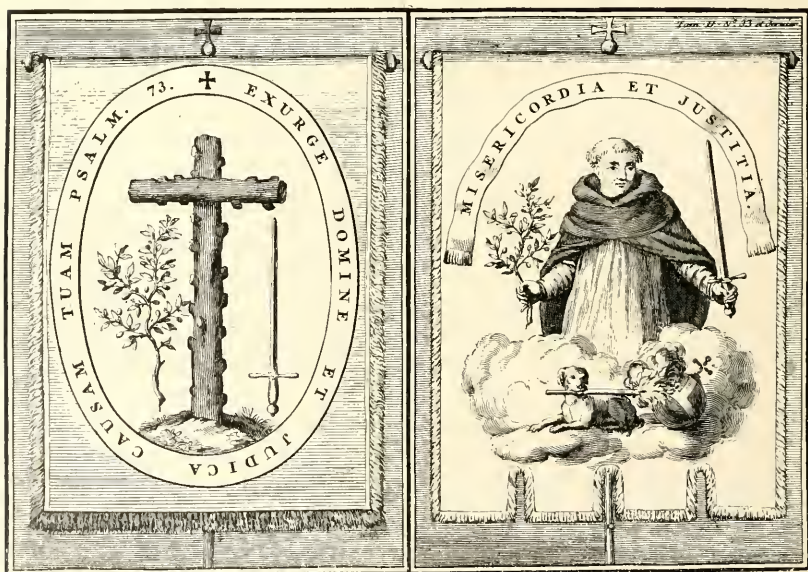


# IS THE CHURCH RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INQUISITION?

BY THE EDITOR.

THE QUESTION has often been raised whether or not the Church is responsible for the crimes of heresy trials, witch prosecutions and the Inquisition, and the answer depends entirely

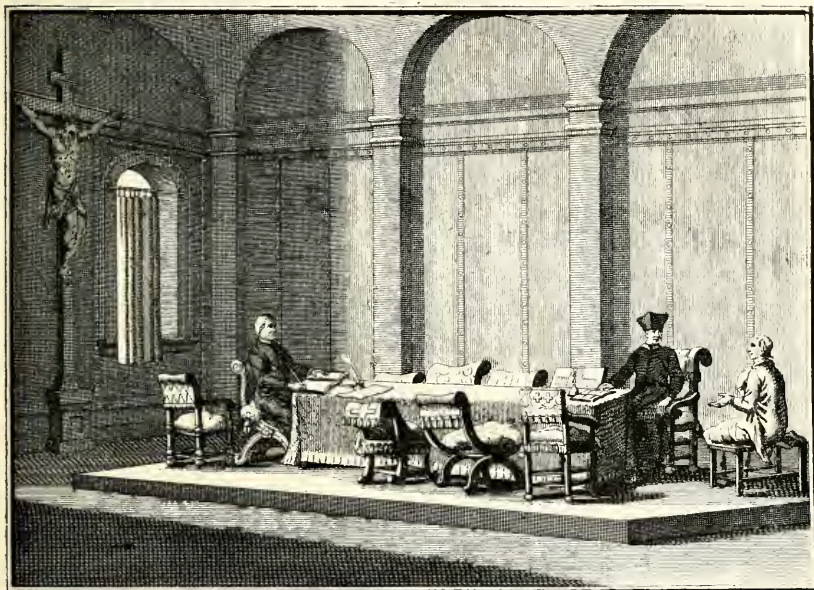


THE BANNER OF THE SPANISH INQUISITION.

THE BANNER OF THE INQUISITION OF GOA.<sup>1</sup>

upon our definition of the Church. If we understand by Church the ideal bond that ties all religious souls together in their common aspirations for holiness and righteousness, or the communion of saints, we do not hesitate to say that we must distinguish between

<sup>1</sup>The illustrations on pages 226-232 are reproduced from Packard.



THE CHAMBER OF THE INQUISITION.



VARIOUS MANNERS OF CROSS-EXAMINING THE DEFENDANTS.



the ideal and its representatives ; but if we understand by Church the organisation as it actually existed at the time, there is no escape from holding the Church responsible for everything good and evil done by her plenipotentiaries and authorised leaders. Now, it is strange that while many Roman Catholics do not hesitate to concede that many grievous mistakes have been made by the Church, and that the Church has considerably changed not only its policy but its principles, there are others who would insist on defending the most atrocious measures of the Church, be it on the strength of



A MAN AND A WOMAN CONVICTED OF HERESY WHO HAVE PLEADED GUILTY BEFORE BEING CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

their belief that the Church is the divinely guided organ of God's revelation, or on some other doctrinal ground.

We will illustrate the contrast of views that obtains at present by quoting a few sentences from Roman Catholic authors. The reviewer of Gustav Freytag's *Martin Luther*, in the *Providence Journal*, after a column's discussion of Luther, of whom he says that "even Rome owes a debt to Luther," continues :

"Freytag's attitude is well expressed in his opening words : 'All Christian denominations,' he says, 'have good reason to be grateful to Luther, for to him they owe a purified faith which satisfies the heart and soul and enriches their lives. The heretic of Wittenberg is a reformer for the Catholic quite as much as for the Protestant.' That in the struggle with Luther Catholicism was forced to purify itself, to outgrow mere scholasticism, to make its sacraments true means of grace.



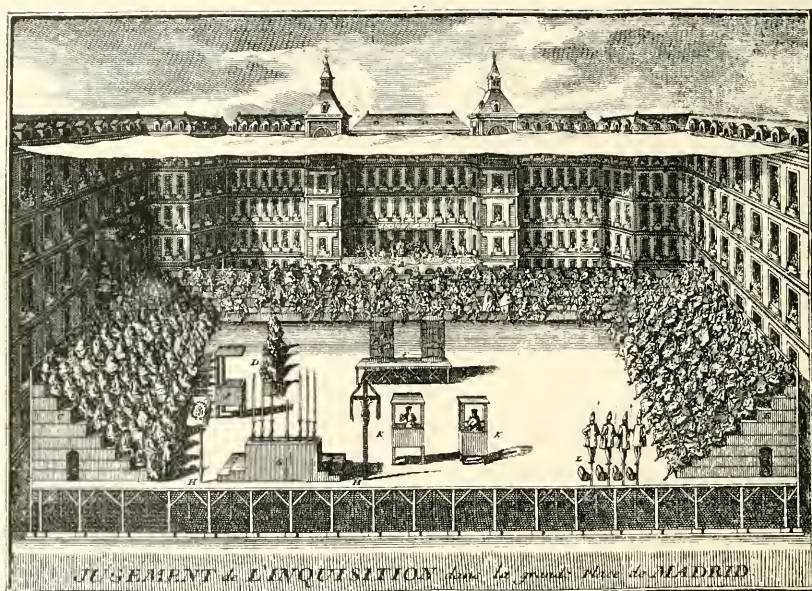
HERETICS CONDEMNED TO BE BURNED.



A MAN AND A WOMAN CONDEMNED TO BE BURNED BUT PARDONED ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR CONFESSION.



may freely be admitted. But Catholics, at least, can hardly be blamed for holding also that in some respects the loss outweighed the gain, and that irreparable harm was done to Christianity by a movement which, despite its original purity of intention, developed rapidly into the sectarianism which Protestants themselves deplore. Where Luther was certainly right, however, was in his first decided protest against the sale of indulgences and other abuses, and in his strong upright defiance of authority which led him to the Diet at Worms. It is not necessary to agree with his later theology in order to see this. Nor can Catholicism set Luther down as a mere reckless disturber of the peace in the light of those unimpeachable authentic documents which show how thoroughly justified his revolt was. The English monasteries, for example, were probably no worse—they may have been better—than



THE INQUISITION IN SESSION ON THE MARKET SQUARE AT MADRID.

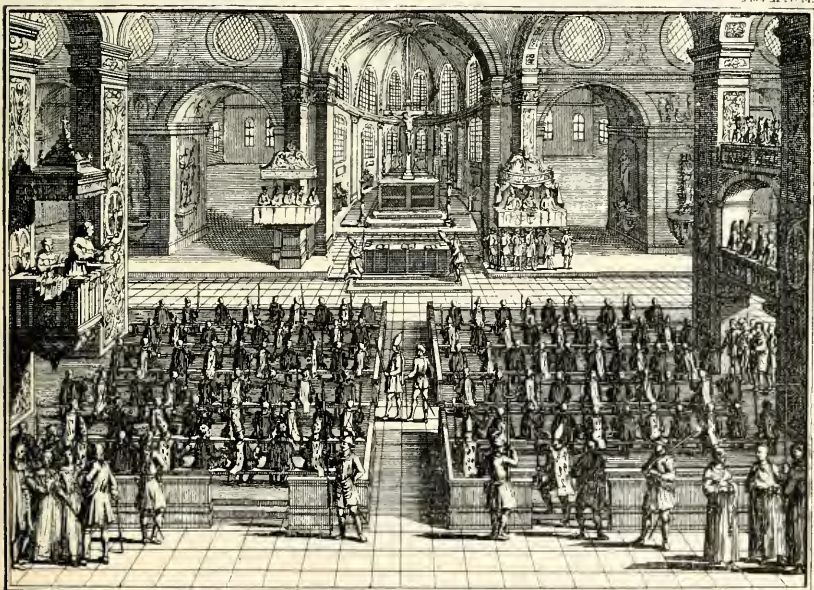
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|--|---|---|
| <i>A.</i> King and Queen.                    | <i>F.</i> Two cages in which the criminals  | <i>J.</i> The preacher's pulpit.                |
| <i>B.</i> Grand Inquisitor.                  | were placed when their sentence             | <i>K. K.</i> Stands for those who read the      |
| <i>C.</i> Counsellors.                       | was read.                                   | sentences.                                      |
| <i>D.</i> Nobility.                          | <i>G.</i> Altar for saying mass.            | <i>L.</i> Effigies of those who died in prison. |
| <i>E.</i> The defendants and their families. | <i>H. H.</i> Escutcheon of the Inquisition. |   |

those on the Continent. Yet we know what Morton, Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury, thought it necessary to say about the Abbot of St. Alban's when Pope Innocent VIII. commissioned him to correct and reform the religious houses. Queen Mary's agents endeavored to destroy the records of the visitation under Henry VIII.; but there is evidence enough in the papers in the Cotton Library and in the Rolls House, to say nothing of evidence from private persons; and if we had nothing else, the Acts of Parliament would be sufficient. It is idle in the face of all this to say that the Reformation was not needed or might have been averted. The men really responsible for Luther's revolt were they who refused to heed his complaints. One great Churchman, Erasmus, saw this clearly. He urged reform upon deaf ears, having himself borne witness to the imperative demand for it. 'The stupid



PROCESSION OF THE INQUISITION OF GOA.

- A.* The Banner. *B.* Dominican friars. *C.* Criminals condemned to be burned alive. *D.* Criminals who, having pleaded guilty, were pardoned. *E.* Crucifix turning its back upon those that are condemned to be burned. *F.* Criminals condemned to be burned. *G.* Effigies of those who escape the fagots by having died in prison. *H.* Grand Inquisitor.



THE LAST SERMON PREACHED TO THE CONDEMNED.



monks,' he writes, 'say mass as a cobbler makes a shoe; they come to the altar reeking from their filthy pleasures. Confession with the monks is a cloak to steal the people's money, to rob girls of their virtue, and commit other crimes too horrible to name.' Nor was he less emphatic in writing to the Pope himself. 'Let each man amend first his own wicked life,' he urges. 'When he has done that, and will amend his neighbor, let him put on Christian charity, which is severe enough when severity is needed. If your Holiness give power to men who neither believe in Christ nor care for you, but think only of their own appetites, I fear there will be danger. We can trust your Holiness, but there are evil men who will use your virtues as a cloak for their own malice.' The weight of the testimony is indisputable."



THE HERETICS' DEATH ON THE FAGOTS.

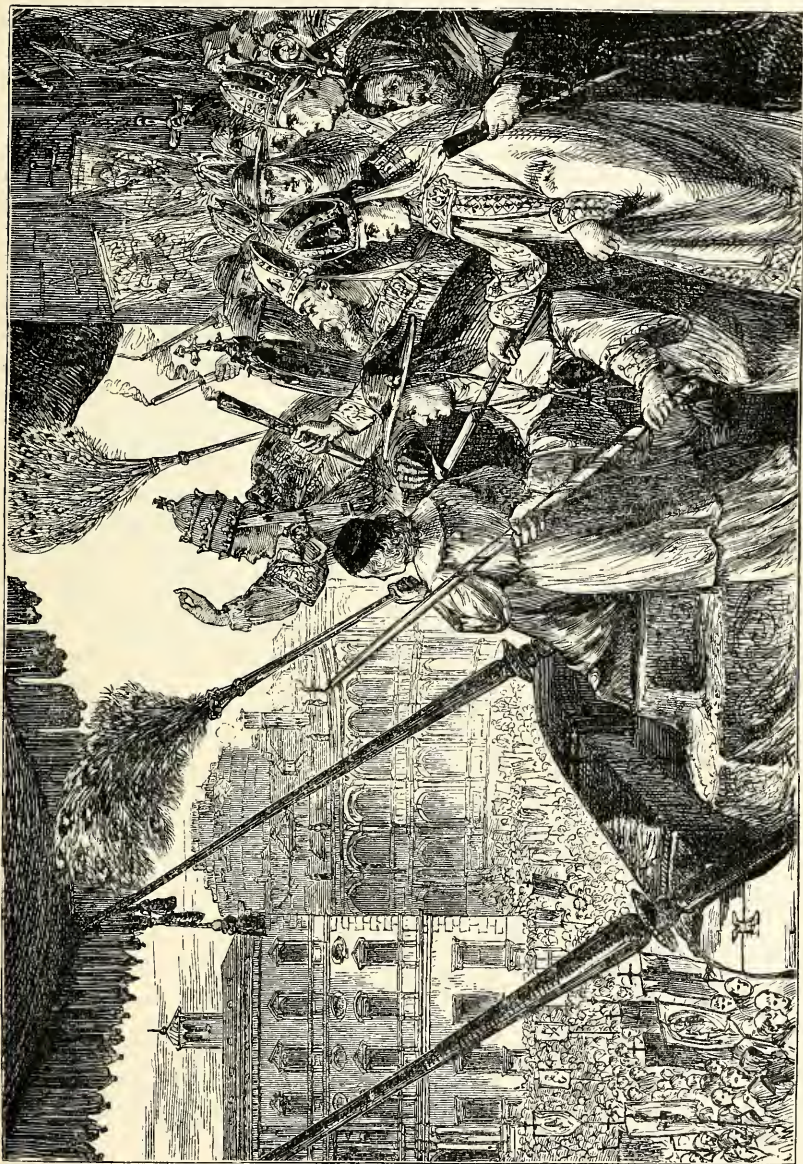
Another weighty expression of the enlightened spirit that manifests itself in certain quarters of the Roman Catholic Church comes from the lips of DeConaty, the new rector of the Catholic University at Washington, who on the occasion of his inauguration inculcated the principles of the religion of science, saying:

"Let the watchword of the Catholic university be, 'Revelation and science, religion and patriotism, God and our country.' . . .

"Truth is one as God is one, whether it be sought for in the moral or scientific order. There is no secret in nature which can offer danger to truth. The Church has always blessed true science and blesses it every day."

We could easily increase such quotations as these, which are symptoms of a healthy spirit and show that there are men bold

enough to be impartial, just, and progressive. There is, however, a reverse to the medal, for narrowness and bigotry, too, find ex-



POPE URBAN V. PROCLAIMING THE BULL *In Coena Domini*, A. D. 1362, CONDEMNING HERETICS.

pression and like to parade before the public as the genuine expressions of the true Church. There are, for instance, many Roman



Catholic historians who still defend the inquisition and even witch-prosecution as justifiable,<sup>1</sup> and even here in America a man rises in defence of this barbarous and irreligious institution. Mr. James A. Conway in the *Catholic Mirror* (we find it reprinted in the *Dominion Review*) characterises the blessed times of the Spanish inquisition in these words:

"The State made enactments and laws for government of its citizens; the Church inspired and seasoned them with justice and wisdom. All the laws, then, had a tinge of Catholicity, and they were carried out in a manner savoring of the principles of that universal religion. Consequently, it is evident that one who was a heretic then, was by that very fact in opposition to the spirit of the laws and customs of his country—in other words, a disturber of the public peace, and an underminer of civil society. And so it was that in the year 1184, when Lucius III. sat upon the throne of Peter, the Roman Inquisition was formally established to bring to trial the Cathari (the Albigenses). And at the same time bishops established special tribunals in different places to examine into the charges against other persons who were suspected or known to be heretics. . . .

"There were three classes of heretics, and three were the kinds of punishment meted out to them. The first class were the Jews, who were punished very lightly; the second class were the ordinary heretics, who were condemned to banishment or else imprisoned; the third class, however, those heretics who were at the same time open disturbers of the peace and enemies to society, were punished to the full extent of the law. The Church could suffer the pagans to worship, because they erred from ignorance; she could tolerate the Jews, because they were the living and most singular witnesses to the truth; but never could she countenance or encourage a formal heretic, a foe to civilisation, a barrier in the way to salvation, to scatter his poisons unmolested. But aside from the question of civil society, was the Church justified in punishing heretics for that reason alone? *Most assuredly.* The Church is the divinely appointed guardian of the revelations of Jesus Christ, and consequently has the right to rebuke those who, in any way, attack the purity of that faith."

Mr. Conway waxes warm when he considers the blessings of the Inquisition. He says:

"Again, they say that the Inquisition, during the time it existed, hung over Spain like a dark, heavy cloud, enslaving the spirit, robbing the poor country of the free manifestation of all that is dear to natural life. The truth is that, during the flourishing period of the Inquisition and shortly after, in the arts, the sciences, in knowledge and grandeur, in empire and dominion, Spain was the envy of the civilised world. No nation was more enlightened, more powerful, more extensive. In those days her sceptre swayed princes and potentates, and the muses seem to have deserted the rest of the earth and nestled only on her soil. Under their enlightened guidance, the illustrious Lope de Vega, the writer, employed his talents to delight all Christendom with his beautiful works; and the renowned Cervantes, the father of novel-writers, brought into the world his famous *Don Quixote*. Up rose the

<sup>1</sup> See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. XIII., p. 95. "And now again from 1875 to this day a crowd of defenders has risen up: Father Wieser and the Innsbruck Jesuits in their journal (1877) yearn for its re-establishment, Orbi y Lara in Spain, the Benedictine Gamis in Germany, and C. Poulllett in Belgium take the same tone," etc.

great Himenez, the statesman and orator ; and the heroic Columbus braved the unknown seas and opened up to the world a new-found continent. In the midst of the Inquisition was born the conqueror Cortez and the explorer De Soto. And scarcely had it ceased to exist when the church was enriched with Ignatius Loyola, Francis Borgia, Francis Xavier, and the great St. Theresa, the greatest warriors for the faith which Spain has begotten.

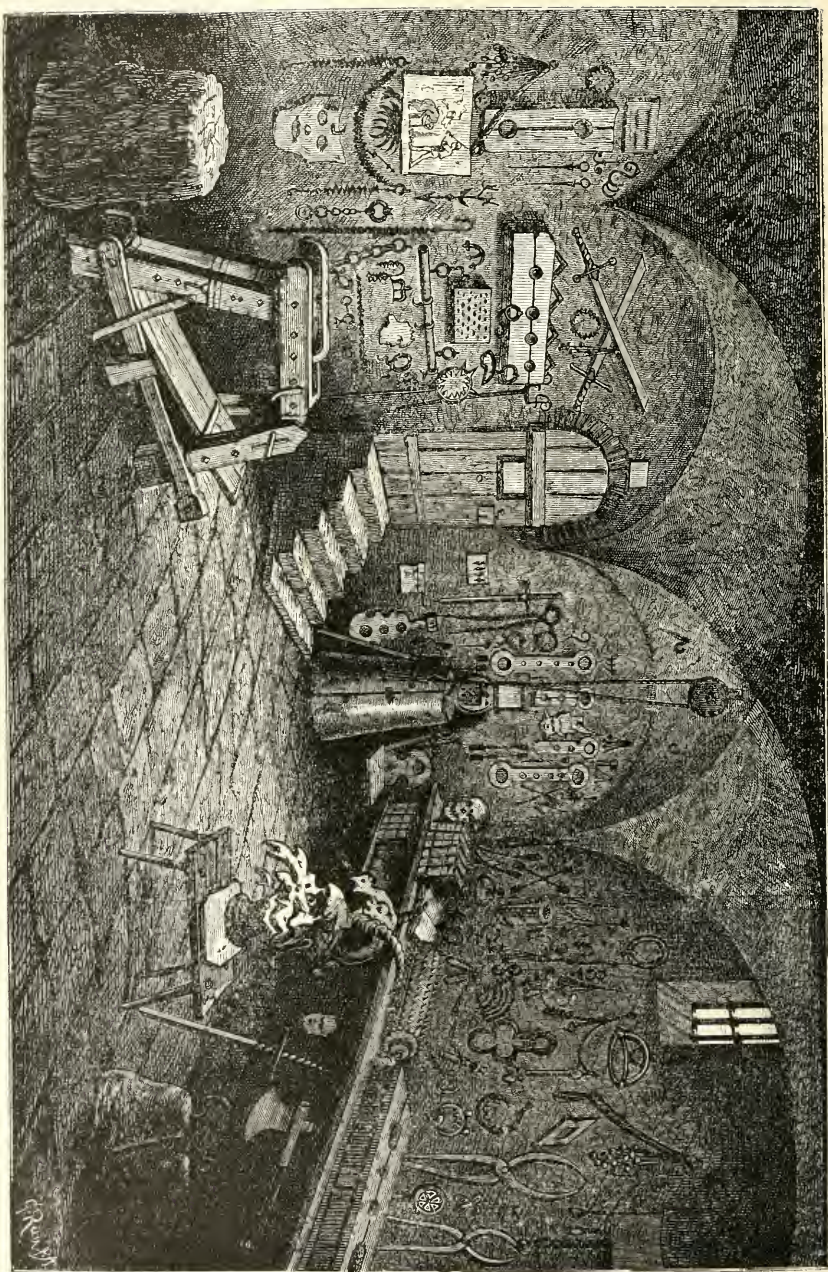


THE FIRST PAGE OF THE *Dialogus Miraculorum* BY CÆSARIUS HEISTERBACH, which spread the belief in witchcraft and other superstitions.<sup>1</sup>

"O Spain, beautiful, smiling Spain, loaded with calumny, held down beneath the scorn of thy sister nations, struggling and struggling, yet in vain, to regain thy long-lost grandeur; fair mother of saints, warriors, heroes, discoverers, explorers,

<sup>1</sup> The original, which is preserved in the Royal Library at Düsseldorf, is artistically colored in red. The piety that appears in the initial is genuine and should not be put down as hypocrisy. The superstitions of witch prosecution and heresy trials would never have reached their terrible dimensions had they not been carried on in a deeply religious, albeit misguided, spirit.





The Torture-Room at Nuremberg. (After C. Rau. Reproduced from B. E. König.)



land of chivalry and conquest ; who could but admire and extol thy greatness and fame ? ”

There is no need of refuting the arguments of Mr. Conway, but we may state that his opinion will scarcely be endorsed to day by the Roman Catholic Church, as such. At any rate, the number



AGNES BERNAUER DROWNED AS A WITCH AT THE REQUEST OF ERNEST, DUKE OF BAVARIA.

(Wood cut by G. Dietrich. Reproduced from B. E. König.)

Shows how the unscrupulous availed themselves of the extraordinary power of witch tribunals

of those Roman Catholics who would protest against a justification of the Inquisition in any form will not be small. The Inquisition may be excused through the ignorance of the times, but it can never be defended. We can learn to understand how it was possible that such outrageous mistakes could be made, but there is no



point of view from which we can justify its proceedings or suppress the condemnation which later ages have pronounced upon it.

What is, in spite of the famed unity of the Roman Catholic Church, the reason of this contrast of opinions? It is not far to seek. The Church is a unity by dint of its hierarchical discipline, as an ecclesiastico-political body, not in its spiritual evolution. There is, to be sure, a unity of doctrine, but this unity of doctrine is more in words than in the meaning of words, and it is very loose considering the liberty that is afforded to its members to interpret



WITCHES CONJURING A HAIL-STORM.  
(After an old German print.)



THE DEVIL OF CONCEIT SEEN BY A CLERGYMAN  
ON THE DRESS OF A FASHIONABLE LADY.

the dogmas as best they can. The Church as such interferes officially with the interpretation of dogmas only when the peace of the Church is disturbed and the infallibility of the Pope, which is relative and not absolute, serves as a means to prevent a schism. The truth is that Roman Catholics, in spite of the unity of their church government, are very different all the world over, and the Roman Catholics of the United States and of England may be regarded as the leaven in the dough which in the long run will make its influence felt even in the haunts of the darkest mediævalism of continental Romanism.



THE WITCHES' SABBATH. (After Packard.)



The key to all problems of the authority of churches, of the respective merits and demerits of tradition, of crimes committed in good faith through the prevalence of errors and superstitions, must



THE MATERIALISTIC SOUL-CONCEPTION PREVALENT AMONG THE UNEDUCATED EARLY CHRISTIANS.  
(From ancient MSS.<sup>1</sup>)

be sought in evolution. All organised life, including spiritual and religious life, develops in a progressive unfoldment and passes through successive phases. Ideas are not solely the thoughts of in-



BALTHASAR BEKKER.<sup>2</sup>

A clergyman of the Reformed Church and author of *De betoverde Weerelde*. (Reproduced from an old wood cut.)

dividuals; they partake of a superindividual life migrating from individual to individual, from generation to generation, and waging a struggle with other hostile ideas which is finally decided according to the law of the survival of the fittest. The Christian idea of the immortality of the soul, contains a great truth, but ideas originate and pass in their development through a state of infancy and are subject to measles, chicken-pox, and other children's diseases. The truth that the soul is as different from the body as thoughts are different from

the ink with which they are written, led to a dualistic interpretation of life which represented the soul materialistically as a sep-

<sup>1</sup> See Bastian's *Verbleibs-Orte der Seele*, Plate I. Reproduced from *Allerlei aus Volks- und Menschenkunde*, Vol. II., Plate XVII., 5 and 7.

<sup>2</sup> Born 1634 as the son of a clergyman in Western Frisia, became pastor of a Reformed Church at Amsterdam. His famous work, *The Enchanted World*, was the first bold attack on the superstition of magic and witchcraft. He died 1698.

arate being consisting of a mystical soul-substance. Dualism leads to the belief in magic and witchcraft, implying at the same time the ethics of asceticism. Evil is conceived to be a personal being who can make contracts with people and assist them with demoniacal power. This notion naturally leads to witchcraft prosecutions which were begun in a spirit of piety, but became quickly



FRIEDRICH SPEE VON LANGENFELD.<sup>1</sup>

The Jesuit author of *Cantio Criminalis*. Ardent abolitionist of witch prosecution.  
(After an old oil painting.)

the means of unscrupulous men who used the verdict of witch tribunals as a convenient instrument to satisfy their passions of hatred and revenge. It is true that the Roman Catholic Church inaugu-

<sup>1</sup> Born 1591 or 1595, and died 1635; he joined the Jesuits 1610 or 1615, was professor of philosophy and morals at Cologne, and wrote his *Cantio Criminalis* in Franconia when his pastoral duties brought him in frequent contact with wizards and witches whom he had to prepare for death. He takes high rank as a poet of Church hymns which appeared under the title *Trutznachtigall*.





*Christianus Thomasius*

CHRISTIAN THOMASIIUS, (Born 1655, died 1728.)  
Professor of Law at the University of Halle, who succeeded in the abolition of witch prosecution. (After an old oil painting.)

rated and continued the prosecution of heretics, wizards, and witches officially through its popes, but it is also true that the Protestants did not hesitate to follow their example<sup>1</sup>, and the arm of the worldly powers was ready to serve as an instrument of religious fanaticism. Even our own country witnessed scenes which now make us blush to think what crimes our ancestors committed in the superstitious conviction of increasing the glory of God. Nor must we forget that among the abolitionists of heresy trials and witch prosecutions there were clergymen like Bekker, a Presbyterian, and Spee, a Jesuit, who took a prominent part.

We become lenient judges if we learn to understand the spirit of the past and trace its superstitions to their various causes, as a physician would describe the development of the successive phases of a disease. But while we thus may recognise the subjective sincerity of such characters as Torquemada, the old Grand Inquisitor of Spain, we must not blind ourselves to the terrible dangers of errors if they take hold of the guiding spirit of an age, be they the authorities of church and state or the masses of the people in republican countries.

Error is the poison of our spiritual life; and there is no royal road to truth. Religious revelation is not given us in an easy way, either in the Bible or through the authorities of the Church. In all things we have to make efforts ourselves to shun error and find the truth. We commit a sorry mistake, nay, more than a mistake, a grievous sin, if we accept any belief unthinkingly and blindly on authority. One of the highest religious duties consists in the courageous search for truth. Says Marcus Aurelius :

*“δοκεῖ σοι ἑλᾶσσαν ἰσχύειν τὸ διεφθυσμένον, ἢ τὸ χόλιον τῷ ἰκτεριῶντι, καὶ ὁ ἰὸς τῷ λυσσοδῆμτῳ;”*

“Dost thou think that to be in error has less power than the bile in the jaundiced or the poison in him who is bitten by a mad dog?”

The lesson of this chapter in history is that the confidence in science has already become a religious conviction with the leading nations of the world, although the fact is not as yet definitely and openly acknowledged; and any sectarian faith that endeavors to set forth its claim to recognition does it and can do it only on the ground that it is one with scientific truth. For there is nothing that can be declared to be universally true, nothing that is truly catholic, nothing genuinely orthodox, except such truths as are demonstrated by science.

<sup>1</sup> Be it said to the honor of Luther that he is a noteworthy exception.