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THE INQUISITION - INFORMAL (till @1200) and FORMAL (1200ff)

I have dealt with the "big" heretical movements over the past few weeks, now I will, more or less chronologically deal with the misselaneous heresies and heretics and how they were punished. To do this, we will divide into the way the church handled heretics before the "formal" inquisition began around 1200 and how they were handled ^{after} ~~before~~ that time. To do that, I will trace the changing attitudes of the church through the centuries.

The church did not begin by killing heretics, but in the course of the centuries Christians found different answers to the problem of heresy. But, we can trace a consistant line of mounting harshness, which ended in outright savagry

In the earliest church, the enthusiasm of faith, the gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells Peter to forgive 70 X 7. and to speak to one who disagrees with you, or the church, but give plenty of chance to bring reconciliation (Matt. 18).

Paul says that one should reprove a person who has done wrong but in a spirit of gentleness., Judge not that you be not judged (Matt. 6).

When the fire of primitave Christianity began to fade this attituded of mercy and mildness changed. This first took place in the struggle with the Gnostics. This is reflected in the Pastoral letters, (1,2 Tim & Titus) say "have no

more to do with the heretic. "do not even greet him". This marks the transition from the primitive church to the institutional church.

While for Paul, Christianity was a relationship with Christ and God, by the time of the pastorals and the letter of James, Christianity had become accepting a set of beliefs. This was the crucial shift.

Even so, Tertullian, Origen, and John Chrysostomus agreed that it is not permissible to kill heretics. Thus the strongest measure given was excommunication.

It was with Constantine and the Edict of Toleration in 312 that the church, once persecuted, was now upheld by the power of the state. The dramatic upswing that took place under Constantine impaired the spiritual structure of the Church to such an extent that it has never entirely recovered.

The Church forgot the tolerance it had once advocated and proceeded to persecute those who disagreed with it. Jerome argued that ruthless stringency toward heretics was true mercy. Augustine after his fight with the Donatist, favored using force.

The heretics themselves, when they were in the majority, had no scruples about declaring that might was right, as soon as it was to their advantage to do so.

The Arian's persecution of adherents of the orthodox church was upon occasion extremely cruel. In this respect, the church and the heretics have much in common

The emperor, Julian declared after his apostasy that no wild beast behaved so cruelly toward men as Christians toward other Christians. I will deal with him later in this lecture.

Once launched on this destructive course atrocity was inevitable. Before the end of the 4th century, in 385, the first execution of a heretic took place. In the city of Trier, the Spanish Christian Priscillian, who advanced a number of gnostic ideas, denied the trinity and resurrection, denounced marriage and the eating of meat, and cited various apocryphal writings. He was put to death with a number of his followers. The threat had been made before, but this was the first time it was carried out.

This created a tremendous stir and a cry of indignation rang thru the Christian world. Bishop Ambrose in Milan was horrified, calling it a criminal act.

Feelings ran so high that the authorities who had been responsible for the crime were forced to give up their offices. The case of Priscillian remained an isolated instance for centuries to come and was not repeated elsewhere.

But the fact remained and nothing could wipe it out. Christians had been cold bloodedly slaughtered by Christians because of their religious convictions.

The ruthless extermination of heretics was resumed at the end of the 12th century. After the year 1200 the campaigns of annihilation were accepted. Where the first

execution of heretics in the Early church had awakened unanimous protest, in the later middle ages butchery became an institution with the express blessing of the church.

There were a number of historical factors for this development. The number of heretics had swelled enormously. Before this, they had appeared sporadically but a vertible tide of heresy swept into all parts of the west. In some regions the heretics outnumbered the orthodox.

This was a direct outcome of the ugly conditions within the church. The unending struggles between emporers and popes for the domination of the world repelled the religious spiirts. The unchristian conduct of the church directly stimulated the growth of heresy, which in turn made the church feel that its very existence was threatened.

The church found, by experience, that heretics could not be vanquished by mere words. In fact, they had to forbid disputs with heretics to avoid defeats. Thus, in self defense, the church sought another approach, violence.

Ideologically, the church justified its conduct by claiming the new heresies, unlike the early ones, were not the product of any human founder but a direct manifestation of the devil. No consideration need be shown to the devil, and therefore the cruelest measures were permissible.

Now, before getting into the formal inquisition officially started by Gregory the IX in 1231 I want to cover the major heretics before this time, that have not already been covered.

JULIAN THE APOSTATE (331-363)

The Church divides heretics into three groups; Apostates, schismatics, and teachers of heterodoxy. These may not cover all the nuances of heresy, but we'll accept it

The apostate, from the earliest time, the one who had accepted the faith and then turned away, was always persecuted with the most savage hatred. This, in fact, is the unforgiveable sin in the book of Hebrews, *according to the church.*

Apostasy is usually the outcome of a spiritual development extending over a considerable time, something that shakes the personality to its depths.

The most vivid historical example of apostasy, and of the tragedy connected with it is found in the life of Emperor Julian. There is a great deal of material @ him so we can get a good picture of the spiritual process that took place.

Julian was brought up Christian. His mother died shortly after his birth. When he was 6 a bloody palace slaughter took place by order of Constantius II. This occurred in Byzantine courts more than once. Julian's father, eldest brother, uncle and several cousin were among the victims. He was spared because of his age. This caused a trauma to him that was stamped forever in his mind.

His youth was lived under the fear of Constantius. Not a single bishop uttered a word of protest because the emperor was a Christian.

He was raised far from court and tutored in the Christian religion. He was baptized, and required to attend church. He even received consecration as a reader, the lowest clergy but active in the Christian community.

He never encountered a single Christian of stature ^{who} ~~had~~ might have made him feel the charismatic force of the gospel. Not a single Christian teacher could reveal to him the uniqueness of the person of Jesus.

The 2nd phase of Julian's life was marked by a spiritual influence of the sort he had looked in vain for in Christians. His tutor Mardonios found it easy to win his mind to the Greek classical tradition.

He was romantically enthralled with Greece, and Athens where he studied. As he studied, Julian really believed (and the belief is crucial) in the reality of the gods. He did not regard them as poetic fictions. His churchly enemies, in their hatred for him, refused to see that Julian possessed a great capacity for devotion. He was a deeply spiritual person.

Julian wanted to live constantly in the presence of the gods. and when, with ecstatic fervor, he opened his heart to Greek religion, he suddenly felt a call of the gods which transformed faith into vision. He was struck with a ray of illumination which filled his longing. All Julian's later actions can be explained by this mystic "call". This, along with the massacre he had witnessed as a child were the most important events in his life

After this vision, he met Maximus of Ephesus who introduced Julian into the cult of Mithra. Julian believed he had been commanded to return to the old gods. Like all converts, he was initiated into the cult believing he was moving forward toward truth, not falling away from it. In leaving Christianity Julian felt no sorrow.

The third phase of Julian's life was marked by publically professing paganism. When Constantius died suddenly, he became emperor and his views were no longer a personal matter.

In his unexpected ascension to the throne, he saw an obvious sign from the gods, which imposed an obligation upon him. He became the first person to strive for a renaissance of paganism and did everything in his power to bring @ the restoration of the old religion. He borrowed much from his Christian background, instructing his priests to practice charity, that all men are brothers, and the poor should be cared for, even the enemies.

What Julian envisioned was a pagan theocracy under the headship of a priest-king. His approach was more inconspicuous than his predecessors. He began by cutting Christianity off from the world of culture, not allowing them to hold positions of rhetoricians and grammarians. Their sons were excluded from all "instruction in poetry and philosophy." He also dismissed Christian soldiers from his army. He took away privileges given under Constantine.

Although he carefully did not shed Christian blood, his policy of humiliation and exclusion had worse effects than direct persecution. If he had lived longer, the church might have suffered a severe setback. However, he was anxious to win back Persia.

What happened for sure to end his life is not known, but it is known on unimpeachable authority that after receiving his death wound he chatted composedly with his friends, made no protest against his fate, and dropped away gently into his last sleep amid philosophical discussions of the future of the soul. He was barely 32.

Needless to say, Christians were ecstatic. The Christianity had already won, his apostasy pointed out the conflict that still exists, that is the relationship between Christianity and Greek philosophy. It was such a problem that Christians didn't have access to the philosophers again until the 12th century, when crusadors found the Moslems had preserved these writings in Spain.

Thus between Augustine in the 4th century and Thomas Aquinas in the 13th, Christians in the west had no access to Greek thought. This was, at least in part, due to Julian's apostasy.

The Eastern Church never went thru these "dark ages" in this sense as they never lost or suppressed the philosophical schools of Greece to the extent the west did. However, they did have to deal with its implications for Christianity and did in their own way, even if to refute it.

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HYPATIA of ALEXANDRIA (killed 415 CE)

She is a case of the intellectual woman hated--or at least--mistrusted by the institutional church. She was killed by a Christian mob in 415.

Daughter of a Greek mathematician in cosmopolitan Alexandria, she was taught by her father and assisted him in his writings and lectures in philosophy and mathematics, which in the greek tradition are closely intertwined.

She became a leading philosophy teacher in her own right and was considered the chief neo-platonist thinker in Alex. She was widely known and consulted by many leaders for her wisdom. She was described as beautiful but valued intellectual concerns over physical beauty.

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Several years before her death, hatred and violence began to increase between Alexandria's large Jewish community and the ever more power hungry Christians led by Cyril, their bishop (Cyril was the nephew of the bishop who had actively destroyed pagan temples and, worse, burned the famous library housed in the temple of Serapis, in 391).

Cyril wanted to make Alexandria a purely Christian city. He felt Orestes, the Roman prefect, was hampering him so brought 500 fanatical monks in from the desert, mobbed his carriage accusing him of paganism (he was a nominal Xian

Orestes had attended some of Hyatia's lectures, so when one of the monks was killed, Cyril declared him a saint on the spot and used the "saints" death to whip up more anger at Orestes. He was too powerful to attack so others were turned on. Hypatia, during lent, was seized in the street,

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dragged into Cyril's own patriarchal church, stripped,
beaten and stabbed to death with peices of broken pottery.

Her body was hacked into peices, carried triumphatly
thru the streets, and later burned. Orestes, for whatever
reason, didn't punish anyone for her murder.

Both her sex and her position as a spokeswoman for the
type of Pagan intellectualism that was increasingly in
disfavor, made her vulnerable when she was drawn into the
Christian - Jewish factional conflict.

By the 370's the puritanical bishop Epiphanius was
attacking heresy and greek philosophy alike in his Panarion
(the medicine chest, against all un-Christian groups)
Around this time, the collection known as the NAG HAMMADI
Library was hidden in the Egyptian desert and by the early
400's, admitted Pagans were being excluded from high
administrative and milatary posts by a series of Imperial
edicts.

Pagan intellectuals were increasingly quietly
withdrawing from society or exiling themselves to nations
outside Christendom, such as Persia.

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HOMOSEXUALITY AS A HERESY

Although accepted in most of the Mediterranean regions where Christianity arose, homosexuality was almost universally condemned by Christian leaders, and by the middle ages homosexuals were liable to be tried and executed as heretics.

Christian condemnation comes from both the old and new testaments. Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13-14 call it an abomination where both should be put to death. Jesus says nothing about it, but Paul calls it "shameful passions" and lists them among adulterers, drunkards etc.

This associating homosexuality with heresy began with Epiphanius, mentioned before, for he associated it with gnosticism. This because many gnostics favored any sexual practice that did not produce children.

During the later middle ages, Catholic theologians expanded the idea that homosexuality was a "crime against nature." and many heretics were accused of it, including the Knights Templar, which we'll discuss later. The Beguines and beghards were also accused of this as well.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, many European cities passed laws against homosexual acts between both men and women. Dante (1265-1321) gave "sodomites" their ^{own} ~~own~~ section in Hell.

"Penitentials" --handbooks for priests who heard confessions, gave absolution, and prescribed penance for sins depending on what was done.

However, sometimes the punishment went beyond prayers or fasting. Richard von Hohenburg, a 15th century German knight, was executed in Zurich on the charge of the heresy of homosexuality.

In Medieval art, animals stood for moral qualities. The hare, hyena, and the weasel became symbols of homosexuality because of the various bizarre legends @ their genital organs.

It is possible the term faggot for homosexual came from the practice of burning heretics at the stake in fires made from faggots, or bundles of sticks tied w/ flexible twigs.

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ORLEANS HERETICS (1022)

The case of the Orleans heretics who included priest, nuns and laypeople, is significant because of the range of participants. This may be the first instance in the middle ages of the charges of devil worship leveled against heretics. They were also charged with being Manicheans, which simply meant, dualistic.

At the core of this group were 10 priests attached to the Cathedral of Sainte Croix in Orleans, France. The heresy was unwittingly disclosed by one Heribert, a priest who was the private chaplain to a northern French Noble named Arefast.

In 1022, Heribert journeyed to Orleans and met two of the priests who were considered wise and holy. He began to take instruction from them.

When he conveyed this doctrine to Arefast--a knight who took serious interest in theology-Arefast realized his chaplain had "strayed from the path of righteousness". He informed his feudal lord of the spread of heresy in Orleans. Duke Richard of Normandy informed King Robert who asked Arefast to investigate in person. He was advised to take communion everyday to protect him from the false doctrine he would hear.

Arefast, pretending to be an earnest seeker, sought out these heretical priests. He was readily accepted. They supposedly told him they had to drive out the absurd teaching he had received in order to be able to receive the purity of their teaching bestowed by the Holy Spirit.

These teachings, according to Paul the chronicler, included that the sacraments of baptism and Holy communion were of no value and that Christ was not born of a virgin, nor had he risen from the dead--apparently it was a form of Docetism *or humanism, ie, Jesus was a human like us.*

These priests claimed to believe only what they could see with their own eyes and to be guided by the Holy Spirit. With true spiritual understanding, a person would no longer be misled by "fictions written on animal skins" (parchment)

According to Paul of Chartres this was not all. He accused them of holding sexual orgies, summoning demons, and ritually cremating babies, born as a result of their indiscriminate sexual intercourse. They preserved the babies ashes in the way Catholics venerated the consecrated hosts.

These accusations were the stock and trade of those wanting to discredit groups and has a long history in Europe and North America. The vary same accusations were made by pagan Romans against the Followers of the Mystery religions (such as Dionysius) and against the early Christians. Also by Orthodox Christians against Gnostics, ~~etc.~~, In the past 2 centuries, the same accusations have been made by Christians against Satanist and witches, and still is today.

When the Orleans heretics were brought before King Robert and the bishops on Christmas day, 1022 in the Cathedral of Sainte Croix they were examined on doctrine, not on the other charges.

Arefast was among them, and when the priests tried to evade questions, he spoke out disclosing his role as informant. He was released as planned and the bishops bore down harder on the priest. They were caught in their evasions and finally admitted their beliefs, that Christ didn't suffer on the cross, etc.

Defiantly they said, "to us, however, who have the law written upon the heart by the Holy Spirit (and we recognize nothing but what we have learned from God, creator of all), in vain you spin out superfluities and things inconsistent with the Divinity."

After nine hours of cross-examination, only 2 heretics, one priest and one nun, abandoned their doctrines. Late in the day a lynch mob attempted to break into the Cathedral but Queen Constance faced them down

When the heretics were led to the execution site, Constance struck her confessor with her staff blinding him in one eye because of her anger at his betrayal of trust.

The heretics were burned outside the city walls on 28 december 1022. Apparently most of the heretical priests lay followers had recanted. Somewhere between 10 and 14 clerics were executed. It is said they went to the pyre laughing.

Not content with that, the king ordered the bones of another clerical follower who had died 3 years earlier, dug up and scattered away from consecrated ground.

The judgement of history sees these Orlean's heretics as neither devil worshipers or manicheans but rather as skeptical intellectuals and their heresy as one of many early attempts at reforming what had already become a worldly and corrupted church.

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PETER ABELARD (1079-1142)

The last, but not least, of the pre-Inquisition heretics we will cover set the stage for the later scholastic movement and is thus quite important in the history of the church.

Peter Abelard was the first heretic to write an autobiography, "The story of my calamities". Although he is better known for his famous love affair with Heloise, the teenaged neice of a Paris priest, he was condemned for his theological views.

He escaped execution for heresy but was denounced by two church councils, ordered by Pope Innocent II to stop teaching and writing, and forced to retire to a monastery.

Born to a noble family in Brittany, he turned to the church as an outlet for his intellect. He took minor orders, ie, a term covering acolyte, exorcist, reader, and doorkeeper, but not deacon or priest.

He studied philosophy and theology in Paris and elsewhere with the leading thinkers of his day. At age 37, as a leading professor of Philosophy, he was invited into a canon Fulbert's house to tutor his beautiful neice, Heloise. She was 17 or 18 and, despite his clerical vows, he fell in love with her.

They tried to keep the relationship secret, but Heloise became pregnant and the Canon learned what was going on. As scandal threatened, Abelard sent her to stay with his relatives in Brittany, where she gave birth to a son.

Heloise, judged by her letters, (their correspondence has been preserved to this day), considered love more important than marriage. She desired nothing of Abelard but his pure love and declared that she would follow him to hell itself.

Abelard wanted to marry Heloise to pacify her angry and politically powerful family. but, he also wanted to retain his teaching post-for which he must be single. He persuaded Heloise to marry him in Paris, but understanding they would not live together and it would be a secret. To guard the secret he arranged for her to live in a nearby convent.

Heloise was willing to meet his conditions, but canon Fulbert and her other relatives were seething. From their perspective, the scholar had seduced a young woman but refused to acknowledge her publically.

The priest hired a group of men to ambush Abelard at night in a deserted street. They beat him severely and then castrated him.

Abelard joined the monastery of St. Denis in Paris. Ironically, his castration disqualified him from ever becoming a priest, since the Catholic church won't ordain eunuchs. With his emasculation, his whole attitude toward Heloise changed. Her glorious lover became an embittered man who answered her outpourings of affection with sermons. Heloise became a nun at age 20 and remained so until her death.

ABELARD, PART II

The course Abelard took in the second half of his life, which ended in heresy, was like a repetition of his love affair on another plane. This was on the intellectual plane and he lost, at least in the beginning, but in the long run it had not only personal but also far-reaching social consequences.

The 12th century was a turning point in many ways for the west and what dawned in that century was one day to lead to the opening of a new epoch. Abelard contributed decisively to this new element. Abelard is the heretic who fought for the application of reason in religious questions.

Something fundamentally new began with Abelard. He extended the dialectic method taken over from classical antiquity, and introduced it into the medieval schools. This method had previously been the property of lawyers and Abelard was the first to apply it to theology. He believed it would make the defense of Christianity more sensible.

Since Christians were no longer endowed with the power to work miracles, Abelard argued that no other method for proving the truth of their religion remained except the logical proof based on the dialectical method.

He pointed out that logic came from the Logos which had become incarnate in Christianity. His mind was a critical one and his true concern was freedom of investigation, freedom to examine tradition. This dealt some severe shocks to faith in authority.

Abelard was aware of this and cited some 1800 biblical and patristic passages grouped under 150 headings, which showed that both scripture and the Fathers of the church had contradicted one another over questions of faith.

He deliberately pitted authority against authority in order to demonstrate the inadequacy of the purley authoritarian approach, and show that humans had to make their own rational decisions.

In doing this, Abelard created the scholastic method, for this consists in arguing from both sides and then offering the writer's own view. Thus, a heretic laid the cornerstone of the great structure of scholasticism.

However, this, at the time, was a great shock to authority, a revolutionary blow. With good reason, they regarded his procedure as a serious threat to the existing conceptions of religion. His opponents cried "heretic" and he was accused of reviving the errors of Pelagius & Arius.

The problem was, his contemporaries could not object to his views for the heretical element consisted less in particular formulations than in Abelard's whole method. The dialectical approach to theological questions was felt to be an undermining of Christianity.

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX vs. ABELARD

Bernard was Abelard's greatest adversary. He was looked upon as a miracle-working saint whose prayers sustained the world. He developed the ascetic ideal of the Cistercian order and was venerated by Dante above all other humans.

Bernard was a mystic, a God-intoxicated spirit whose immortal sermons on the "Song of Songs" created the language of Christian ecstasy. He coined the dictum "burning is more than knowing" so one can see the gulf between Abelard and Bernard..

Bernard was quick to perceive the dangerous tendency in Abelard's endeavors. A mystic like himself could not help but mistrust the vanity of reason in Abelard. As Bernard saw it the kind of thing Abelard was doing was destructive of all religion. It distressed Bernard to see the eagerness with which young students greeted Abelard's writings.

Bernard was not alone in his fear of the dangers in Abelard's work. The battle between Abelard and his opponents was passionate.

Abelard was first called to an accounting at the synod of Soissons. He was sure he was intellectually superior to his opponents and could win the argument. But, Debate was not even permitted. They simply condemned him and compelled him to cast his book on the fire, then forced to read aloud the Nicean creed, like a student. He could hardly do so because of choking on his tears.

He continued plunging into the thick of the theological battles and seems not to have learned his lesson for on Bernard's instigation a new trial was held at the synod of Sens. The decision was pre-arranged--as has happened at many church councils and Bernard wielded the decisive influence.

Abelard was a broken man. He spent his last 6 months in the monastery at cluny where Peter the Venerable brought some reconciliation between Peter and Bernard. When he died, the abbot wrote Heloise and she requested his body be buried at her convent. It was, and when she died 22 years later, she was buried with him.

Abelard's advocacy of reason was indispensable to the progress of humanity. The movement from myth to reason could no longer be checked. Abelard must be counted among the pioneers who founded scientific thinking.

Bernard and others were right to some extent, that using the dialectic method as the only approach to faith won't work as this has to be grasped emotionally.

One of the most curious aspects of his turbulent life was this, that his doctrines had to be defeated before they were accepted. A hundred years later his way of thinking was universally accepted, for the "summas" of the scholastics were written according to his method.

Viewed in terms of the present, the essence of Christianity was involved in the struggle between Abelard and Bernard. For Christianity needs both the rational and the symbolic way of thinking. For religious truth is always a synthesis of cognition and faith.

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