



Mark 14:36 "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me".  
The blood of the redeemer set off a spate of Martyrdoms in his followers (Fra Angelico)

### Bringing Jesus Down from the Cross

*As the Blood and the Vine,  
Jesus stands in the buskins of Dionysus  
Jesus was miraculous, and suffered the ultimate violence.  
Dionysus was the epiphany of miraculous dread (p 617),  
who inspired madness in his followers and carnage.  
Jesus was the ultimate Dionysus.  
His death, gave death dominion  
for two thousand years  
of religious blood.  
The buck stops  
here.  
Amen.*

### To Power the Descent from the Cross

As far as it lies in our power we should make Jesus climb down from the cross and go on living. In this way we can erase the image of a terrible God that matches the intellectual void of Christian Theology. This image of a God who wills the death of his own Son for the sake of a holy cause and who would if necessary also the death of other human beings, for other holy causes, grows pale and gives way to another

image of deity: the image of gentle deity, a deity of the living and not of killing (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 274).

Protestants and Catholics may disagree about many things but they are bound together in an inexorable blood brotherhood when it comes to the meaning of blood for redemption. They value the execution very highly and refuse to do without it. The human race cannot be redeemed without blood (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 274).

According to Christian tradition even the mother of the victim said yes to his execution: Archbishop Antoninus of Florence (d1459) "Had no one been prepared to carry out the crucifixion through which the world was redeemed, Mary would have been ready to nail her son to the cross herself. We may not assume she was inferior in perfection and obedience to Abraham, who offered his only son as a sacrifice." Pope Pius X said Mary didn't stand "lost in pain at this painful sight but joyfully by the cross of her son". John Paul II says that Mary "lovingly consented in a maternal spirit... to the sacrifice of the victim she had borne" (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 272).

"Over twenty years ago when ... ordained a priest, I didn't yet know how closely the clerics' image of God ... resembles the bloodthirsty-yet-bountiful god of the Aztecs Tonatiuh much more than it does the 'Father' of Jesus Christ" - An ex-priest "The heavenly Father does not hold back (as did the god of Abraham), he sacrifices his only son, his dearest and thereby himself for us ... Can anyone deny that the very concept of the sacrifice of reconciliation, at least in the popular mind, often gave rise to downright pagan misunderstandings,: as if God was so cruel, indeed so sadistic, that his rage could be mollified only through the blood of his own son?" - Hans Kung (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 280, 286).

"But the ultimate source of the doctrine of sacrificial death is not only particularly bloody, but also particularly archaic: It derives from the most ancient form of sacrifice, the kind so-long avoided, human sacrifice ... Pitiless righteousness now reckoned up the debts for which payment was demanded, and the Christs of the sacrificial death doctrine paid them with his innocent blood" - Ernst Bloch (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 291).

When Cardinal Ratzinger disclaims: "The principle of sacrifice is not destruction but love ... How should God find joy of his Son" and blames it on the Jews or human sin "The fact that the perfectly just man, when he appeared became crucified ... tells us bluntly what a human being is", Uta makes this reply "Two thousand years of Christian theology ... has frozen the crucifixion and petrified it into dogmatic edifice. It has built substructures under and superstructures over this death. It treats the crucifixion as a death without which there is no redemption ... Indeed it is not so certain that Christians are not losing their sense of compassion because of the doctrine of the cross. ... It is not so certain that with its inhuman theology of the cross, Christianity, instead of making humans more humane, hasn't just promoted man's inhumanity to man (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 295).

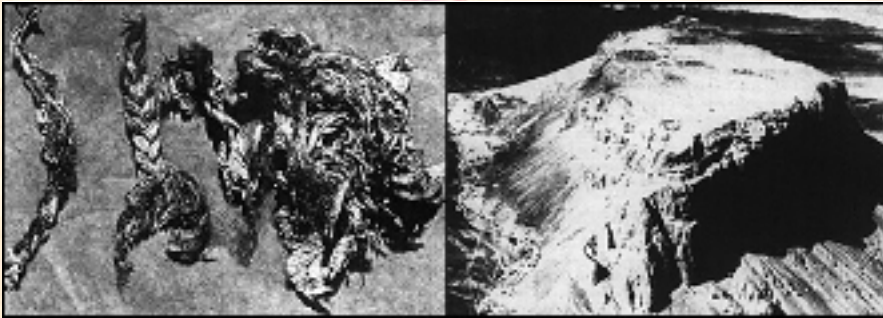
### **The Blood of the Redeemer and the Greater Blood of the Jews**

Jesus' accursed death by 'hanging on a tree' has become an archetypal death symbolizing guilt, atonement, pain and forgiveness but it should be seen in proportion to the history of his times. Jesus' plight in many ways was only secondary to that of many Pharisees and their entire families: Once when Alexander Jannaeus was officiating as high priest at the feast of Tabernacles the crowd pelted him with citrons



which they had brought with them for the celebration; this riot was quelled by the slaughter of six thousand Jews and resulted in a barrier across the Temple court. Afterwards there was a more serious rebellion. The Seleucid king Demetrius Eucerus wall called by the opposition to rescue them, but his initial success caused a wave of Jewish revulsion, leading to Alexander re-establishing his position. He celebrated his success with a great banquet at which eight hundred of the Jewish rebels - evidently as the sequel proves members of the Pharisee party - were crucified and their wives and children slaughtered before their eyes while they yet hung living on their crosses.

After his death, Alexander's widow Salome seized power. She had long disapproved of her husband's policy of brutal terrorism, and this fact had been known to the Pharisees. She relied on the support and guidance of the Pharisees allowing the return of exiles and imprisoned. Her reign is recalled in the Talmud as a time of universal prosperity when "the rain fell on the night before the Sabbath, so that the grains of wheat were as large kidneys and the grains of barley as olive stones and the beans as gold dinars". But when she was encouraged to put some of those implicated in the crucifixion of the 800 to death, Aristobalus one of those Idumaeans whom John Hyrcannus had converted to Judaism at the point of the sword only two generations before, and others threatened to take service under Aretas of Nabataea, gaining most of the fortresses.



Jewish woman's hair (left) from Masada (right) where 960 Jewish men women and children chose collective suicide rather than surrender to the besieging Romans (Wilson I).

### The Fall of Israel

Josephus estimated that 1.1 million people died in the siege of Jerusalem alone. Only 97,000 captives were taken. 11,000 died of starvation awaiting a decision. Combatants, the aged or infirm were dispatched. Many were sent to the mines or to the theatres to be killed by the sword or wild animals. Galilee, as the home of the Jewish resistance movement, became from end to end a scene of fire and blood. The Romans night and day devastated the plains, pillaged the property and killed all capable of bearing arms reducing the population to servitude. Later in the war in another slaughter "One could see the whole lake red with blood and covered with corpses, for not a man escaped. During the following days the district reeked with a dreadful stench and presented a spectacle equally horrible. The beaches were strewn with wrecks and swollen carcasses." (Schonfield 194).

*"Nor consider that it is expedient for us,*

*that one man should die for the people,  
and that the whole nation perish not.” (John 11:50)*

The true message of Christ's death was to end death. Jesus was the Messiah of Israel. Had more people listened to the message of the Prince of Peace the 'field of blood' would not have become an ocean. You could say this was the Pangs of the Messiah ... but the Kingdom?

At the beginning of the Jewish Revolt in AD 66, the hilltop fortress of Masada was held by a Roman garrison. This garrison was expelled by the Zealots, who maintained control of the fortress until 73, when it was finally conquered by the Romans. During the final siege, 960 Zealot resistors, men and women alike, committed mass suicide rather than live as slaves. Each slew his brother or sister in arms. The Jewish historian Josephus had at first organized the struggle against the Romans and had been a commandant. When the fortress of Jotapata was conquered by the Romans, he and forty companions saved themselves by taking refuge in a cistern. There Josephus argued that they should surrender to the Romans, whereupon his comrades wanted to kill him as a traitor. Then the decision was reached to commit mass suicide. Josephus delivered a speech to his men on the sinfulness of suicide and proposed they draw lots to decide the order in which each one had to kill his comrade. In the end the only two left were Josephus and another man. Since neither of them wanted to kill the other, Josephus convinced his companion to surrender to the Romans. Then Josephus prophesied to the Roman general Vespasian that he and his son would become emperors. When Vespasian did after Nero died in 68 he gave Josephus his freedom and awarded him all sorts of honours. We are as indebted to Josephus' uncanny tenacity for survival as we are to Jesus' uncanny instinct for his own death as sacrificial atonement.

### **Christian Martyrs**

“The idea that one should sacrifice to God the dearest thing of all, namely human life, is as alive among Christians as it was among the pagans. Instead of sacrificing one's firstborn ... in Christianity the idea of martyrdom takes over: the sacrifice of one's own life ... bloody martyrdom remains the supreme perfection” (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 292).

Living in Christ's example and eagerly anticipating the imminent Kingdom of God to be at hand, many of the early Christians strode eagerly to the death of the martyr in emulation of Jesus. Just as John was beheaded before him, so Stephen was stoned and Paul purportedly also. Saint James was dismembered slowly digit by digit. The evangelical eagerness of the Christians, came into conflict, first with the Jews and then with the Roman authorities, who saw the cult as a semi-cannibalistic flesh and blood consuming superstition which was disrupting the public peace. Many Christians bravely or foolishly went willingly to their deaths with such conviction that others who witnessed their unflinching resolution themselves became drawn into the vortex of Christian martyrdom.





Martyrdom by burning: Fra Angelico (Morante and Baldini)

Nero, looking for a scapegoat for a fire which swept Rome found the Christians an ideal choice. Tacitus records "Therefore to scotch the rumour [at the fire had taken place by his own order] Nero substituted as culprits and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 105). Suetonius list this as one of Nero's positive achievements: "First then, those of the sect were arrested who confessed; next on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the account of arson, but for hatred of the human race. And ridicule accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when the daylight had failed, were burned to serve as torches by night. Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle ..." "Nero's excesses aroused even Tacitus's compassion: "Even for criminals who deserve extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed." (Pagels 1979 94).

The Christian group bore all the marks of conspiracy. They were followers of a man executed for magic and treason. They were atheists who denounced as demons the gods, even the genius of the emperor himself. Finally rumour indicated their secrecy concealed atrocities; their enemies said they ritually ate human flesh and drank human blood. Although Trajan advised Pliny against accepting false accusations and endorsed freeing anyone who denied association, the lack of a real crime of substance in such charges led to abuse by anyone who bore someone a grudge.

Even when they tried to persuade the accused to come to their senses for their own accord, sometimes ordering a stay of execution for a month, the accused often preferred a gruesome death to having to atone later to Jesus for denying him, even as Peter himself had done. "You wish no time for reconsideration?" "In so just a matter, there is no need for reconsideration." Justin Martyr comments "no

one can terrify or subdue us who believe in Jesus Christ ... though beheaded and crucified, and thrown to the wild beasts, in chains, in fire, in all kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others, in larger numbers, become believers." Tertullian, who claimed the sight of Christians dressed to look like Attis being torn apart in the arena, or burned alive as Hercules, despite initially enjoying these ludicrous cruelties of the noonday exhibition, ultimately inspired his own conversion, a literal one "You must take up your cross and bear it after your master,... the sole key to unlock paradise is your life's blood."



The Martyrdom of 10,000 Christians on the orders of Hadrian and Antonius - Albrecht Durer 1508 (Fedija)

The hatred of heresy came hand in hand with the love of martyrdom. Some did recognize that perhaps this was against the will of God, since Jesus had died so they might not have to, particularly gnostic 'heretics' who were not so uniformly literal minded, but were instead diverse. Some supported it some opposed it on the grounds that it was no instant fix to replace realization. It is the irony of history that out of the orthodox churches collective solidarity in the face of the holocaust of martyrdom came also the eclipse of the gnostic 'inner path' (Pagels 1979 94-113).

The story of one of the confessors in Lyons, the slave woman

Blandina, illustrates what it was like to be a Christian in a cost-cutting Roman holiday spectacle (Pagels 1979 101-2): "All of us were in terror; and Blandina's earthly mistress, who was herself among the martyrs in the conflict, was in agony lest because of her bodily weakness she would not be able to make a bold confessor of her faith. Yet Blandina was filled with such power that even those who were taking turns to torture her in every way from dawn to dusk were weary and exhausted. They themselves admitted that they were beaten, that there was nothing further they could do to her, and they were surprised that she was still breathing, for her entire body was broken and torn."

On the day set for the gladiatorial games, Blandina, along with three of her companions, Maturus, Sanctum, and Attalus, were led into the amphitheater: "Blandina was hung on a post and exposed as bait for the wild animals that were let loose on her. She seemed to hang there in the form of a cross, and by her fervent prayer she aroused intense enthusiasm in those who were undergoing their ordeal ... But none of the animals had touched her, and so she was taken down from the



post and brought back to the jail to be preserved for another ordeal ... tiny, weak, and insignificant as she was, she would give inspiration to her brothers ... Finally, on the last day of the gladiatorial games, they brought back Blandina again, this time with a boy of fifteen named Ponticus - Every day they had been brought in to watch the torture of the others, while attempts were made to force them to swear by the pagan idols. And because they persevered and condemned their persecutors, the crowd grew angry with them, so that... they subjected them to every atrocity and led them through every torture in turn.” (Pagels 1979 101-2) After having run through the gauntlet of whips, having been mauled by animals, and forced into an iron seat placed over a fire to scorch his flesh, Ponticus died. Blandina, having survived the same tortures, “was at last tossed into a net and exposed to a bull. After being tossed a good deal by the animal, she no longer perceived what was happening... Thus she too was offered in sacrifice, while the pagans themselves admitted that no woman had ever suffered so much in their experience.” (Pagels 1979 101-2)

Ignatius is a classic example of what Ranke-Heinmann (1992 207) calls “a reckless self-destroyer, a neurotic seeker of martyrdom, and a religious masochist ... [who] has stood sponsor to the morbid addiction to martyrdom of many Catholic saints’. He speaks for himself: “I long for the beasts that are prepared for me, and I pray that they may be found prompt for me ... let them come on me fire, and cross, and struggles with wild beasts, cutting and tearing asunder, rackings of bones, mangling of limbs, crushing my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil, may I but attain Jesus Christ!”

**An Immortal Shrine to Perpetua:** I offer a ‘widely popular true story of the time’ described by Elaine Pagels (1988 33-6) as a shrine to the way in which the Kingdom of the Father has led to precipitate and tortured death on the part of Christian believers. Whatever their courage and conviction, the prophesied Kingdom has been too long in coming to justify such needless loss of young life. This fallacy was shared by groups such as the Montanists. While it is equally sad in a male, it is even more poignant in a young girl because she is, in Christian eyes, the despised gender of Eve, who manifests the very physical aspect which the Kingdom of the Father seeks to end in one glorious judgement. Because her name is Perpetua I would like her to become a living symbol in her precipitate martyrdom of that physical immortality which is vested in the human germ line thanks to the bountiful nurturing fecundity of the feminine gender.

The story tells of a mistress and her personal slave who were convicted as Christians after they refused to revere the emperor's image. Together they were thrown to wild animals and slaughtered in the public amphitheater in Carthage in a spectacle celebrating the emperor's birthday. The aristocratic protagonist, Vibia Perpetua, fluent in both Greek and Latin, wrote about her experiences from the time of her arrest until the evening of her execution. Perpetua, twenty-two years old, recently married, and nursing her infant son, was arrested along with her friends Saturus and Saturninus and her personal slave Felicitas and the slave Revocatus. Perpetua and her companions were scourged and thrown into a stifling and crowded African jail. After her arrest, Perpetua's father, ... out of love for me,” she wrote, “was trying to persuade me to change my decision.” Refusing his pleas to give up the name Christian, Perpetua rejected her familial name instead, although

she says she grieved to see her father, mother, and brothers “suffering out of compassion for me.” At first, she wrote, “I was tortured with worry for my baby there,” but after she gained permission for him to stay with her in prison, “at once I recovered my health, relieved as I was of my worry and anxiety for the child.”

Then my brother said to me, “Dear sister, you already have such a great reputation that you could ask for a vision indicating whether you will be condemned or freed.” Since I knew that I could speak with the Lord, whose great favors I had already experienced, I confidently promised to do so. I said I would tell my brother about it the next day. Then I made my request and this is what I saw.



Martyrdom by beheading:  
Fra Angelico (Morante and Baldini)

There was a bronze ladder of extraordinary height reaching up to heaven, but it was so narrow that only one person could ascend at a time. Every conceivable kind of iron weapon was attached to the sides of the ladder: swords, lances, hooks, and daggers. If anyone climbed up carelessly or without looking upwards, he/she would be mangled as the flesh

adhered to the weapons. Crouching directly beneath the ladder was a monstrous dragon who threatened those climbing up and tried to frighten them from ascent. Saturus went up first. Because of his concern for us he had given himself up voluntarily after we had been arrested. He had been our source of strength but was not with us at the time of the arrest. When he reached the top of the ladder he turned to me and said “Perpetua, I’m waiting for you, but be careful not to be bitten by the dragon.” I told him that in the name of Jesus Christ the dragon could not harm me. At this the dragon slowly lowered its head as though afraid of me. Using its head as the first step, I began my ascent. At the summit I saw an immense garden, in the center of which sat a tall, grey-haired man dressed like a shepherd, milking sheep. Standing around him were several thousand white-robed people. As he raised his head he noticed me and said, “Welcome, my child.” Then he beckoned me to approach and gave me a small morsel of the cheese he was making. I accepted it with cupped hands and ate it. When all those surrounding us said “Amen,” I awoke, still tasting the sweet cheese. I immediately told my brother about the vision, and we both realized that we were to experience the sufferings of martyrdom. From then on we gave up having any hope in this world (Young 47).

Perpetua’s father, anticipating that the Christians were about to be given a hearing, returned to the prison “worn with worry” to plead with Perpetua to offer sacrifice



for the welfare of the emperors, kissing her hands as he spoke: "Daughter ... have pity on your father, if I deserve to be called your father, if I have loved you more than all your brothers; do not abandon me.... Think of your brothers; think of your mother and your aunt; think of your child, who will not be able to live once you are gone.... Give up your pride! You will destroy all of us. None of us will ever be able to speak freely again if anything happens to you." But Perpetua refused and, she said, "he left me in great sorrow." Then, she continued, one day while we were eating breakfast we were suddenly hurried off for a hearing. We arrived at the forum, and straightaway the story went about the neighborhood near the forum and a huge crowd gathered. We walked up to the prisoner's dock. All the others when questioned admitted their guilt. Then, when it came my turn, my father appeared with my son, dragged me from the step, and said: "Perform the sacrifice-have pity on your baby! "

Hilarius the governor, who had received his judicial powers as the successor of the late proconsul Minucius Timinianus, said to me: "Have pity on your father's grey head; have pity on your infant son. Offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors." "I will not," I retorted. "Are you a Christian?" said Hilarius. And I said: "Yes, I am. When my father persisted in trying to dissuade me, Hilarius ordered him to be thrown to the ground and beaten with a rod. I felt sorry for my father, just as if I myself had been beaten. I felt sorry for his pathetic old age. Then Hilarius passed sentence on all of us: we were condemned to the beasts, and we returned to prison in high spirits.

On the day before her execution, Perpetua wrote down another vision: She dreamed that she was led to the amphitheater, where enormous crowds waited to see her fight with a ferocious Egyptian athlete. "Then a certain man appeared, so tall that he towered above the amphitheater. He wore a loose purple robe with two parallel stripes across the chest; his sandals were richly decorated with gold and silver. He carried a rod like that of an athletic trainer, and a green branch on which were golden apples. He motioned for silence and said, 'If this Egyptian wins, he will kill her with the sword; but if she wins, she will receive this branch' Then he withdrew."

"My clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man." She fought and wrestled until she got him into a head-lock and so won the fight. "But when I saw that we were wasting time, I put my two hands together, linked my fingers, and put his head between them. As he fell on his face I stepped on his head. Then the people began to shout and my assistants started singing victory songs. I walked up to the trainer and accepted the branch. He kissed me and said, "Peace be with you, my daughter' And I triumphantly headed towards the Sanavivarian Gate. Then I woke up realizing that I would be contending not with wild animals but with the devil himself, but I knew that I would win the victory."

Perpetua concludes her journal with the words "So much for what I did until the evening of the contest. About what happened at the contest itself, let whoever write about it who will." Perpetua's slave Felicitas was pregnant when she was arrested and was in her eighth month as the execution date approached: "Felicitas was very distressed that her martyrdom would be postponed because of her pregnancy; for it is against the law for pregnant women to be executed." She feared she would have to survive her Christian companions and alone endure a later exe-

cution along with criminals. Two days before the execution the Christians prayed for her in one torrent of common grief, and immediately after their prayer the labor pains came upon her. She suffered a good deal in her labor because of the natural difficulty of an eight-month delivery.

One of the Christian women took the infant daughter to raise as her own, leaving Felicitas free to join her companions. As Perpetua had hoped, a fellow Christian continued the story, telling two anecdotes about her imperious response to the harsh treatment to which the Christians were subjected in prison.

Martyrdom by piercing with arrows: Fra Angelico

Perpetua dared speak directly to the tribune in charge, protesting, "We are to fight on the emperor's birthday. Would it not be to your credit if we were brought forth on that day in a healthier condition?" The officer, visibly disturbed, ordered improvements in the prisoners' treatment and granted increased visiting privileges for their families and friends. When the day arrived, Perpetua and



Felicitas, together with their Christian brothers Revocatus, Saturninus, and Saturus, were led out of the prison to the gates of the amphitheater. The officer in charge, following the common practice, ordered the men to dress in robes of priests of the god Saturn, and the women to dress in the costumes of priestesses of the goddess Ceres, as if they were offering their deaths in sacrifice to the gods. Perpetua adamantly refused, saying: "We came to this of our own free will, so that our liberty should not be violated. We agreed to pledge our lives in order to do no such thing [as sacrifice to the gods]. And you agreed with us to do this." Again her plea prevailed, and the officer yielded. But just as Perpetua and Felicitas were to enter the arena, they were forcibly stripped naked and placed in nets, so that even the crowd was horrified when they saw that one was a delicate young girl, and the other woman fresh from childbirth, with milk still dripping from her breasts. And so they were brought back again and dressed in loose tunics.

A mad heifer was set loose after them; Perpetua was gored and thrown to the ground. She got up and, seeing Felicitas crushed and fallen went over to her and lifted her up, and the two stood side by side. Then after undergoing further ordeals and seeing Saturus endure agonizing torture. Perpetua and Felicitas, along with the others were called to the centre of the arena to be slaughtered. A witness records that Perpetua "screamed as she was struck on the bone; then she took the trembling hand of the gladiator and guided it to her throat".



It is said in the Golden legend that Perpetua was devoured by a lion and Felicitas by a leopard.

### **Martyrdom becomes Murder: Crusade and Genocide**

Of course this violence, which in early Christian times was self-directed, as Christianity became a state religion of Rome, took on dark tones of violence to others as expressed in the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Witch-hunts and religious wars. By comparison, the frank violence of Dionysus and his Maenads was trivial and cathartic.

The word crusade derives from biblical injunction Matt 10:38: "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." The Crusaders continued an older tradition of the Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, often imposed as a penance. As early as 217 the Cappadocian bishop Alexander is recorded to have made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. For Christians, the very name of Jerusalem evoked visions of the end of time and of the heavenly city.

Jerusalem had been under Muslim rule since the 7th century, but pilgrimages were not cut off until the 11th century, with the rise of the Seljuk Turks. To help rescue the Holy Land fulfilled the ideal of the Christian knight. Papal encouragement, the hope of eternal merit, and the offer of Indulgences motivated thousands to enroll in the cause. Now, the crusaders assumed a dual role as pilgrims and warriors, regarded as a justifiable war, because it was fought to recapture the places sacred to Christians, a Christian jihad.

The Crusades were a response to appeals for help from the Byzantine Empire, threatened by the advance of the Turks. The year 1071 had seen both the capture of Jerusalem and the decisive defeat of the Byzantine army. The hopes of the Papacy for the reunification of East and West, the nobility's hunger for land at a time of crop failures, population pressure in the West, and an alternative to warfare at home were major impulses. Many participants were lured by the fabulous riches of the East. The major European powers saw them as a means of extending trade routes.



Peter the Hermit with his army (Hallam)

The First Crusade was launched by Pope Urban II on Nov. 27, 1095. He appealed for volunteers to set out for Jerusalem and promised remission of ecclesiastical penances as an incentive. The response was overwhelming. With the cry *Deus vult!* ("God wills it"), thousands took the cross. Bands of poorly armed pilgrims, inexperienced and poor, set out for Constantinople under Peter The Hermit and Walter the Penniless even before the army gathered. Some began by massacring Jews in the Rhine valley. Many perished on their way east, and the rest were

destroyed by the Muslims when they crossed into Anatolia.

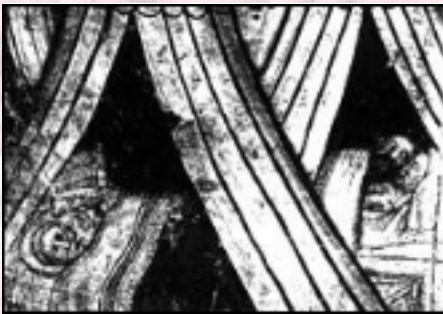
Christian greed was telling in the first crusade, when the men of Peter the Hermit's army had attacked the area around Nicea. Ten thousand French of utter cruelty had



plundered the territory, dismembered some of the babies, others they put on spits and roasted them over a fire, those of advanced years, they subjected to every form of torture. When the Turkish Sultan heard what had happened, he placed men in ambush on the route to Nicea, and knowing the Frank's love of money sent two energetic men to Peter's camp to announce the forces had captured Nicea and were dividing up the spoil. "It threw them into total confusion. They immediately set off along the road to Nicea with no semblance of order, all forgetting their military skill and discipline. They thus all fell to the Turkish ambushes and were miserably wiped out. Such a large number of Franks became the victim of the Turkish swords that when the scattered remains of the slaughtered men were collected, they made not merely a hill or mound or peak, but a huge mountain, deep and wide, most remarkable, so great were the pile of bones" (Hallam 67-8).

The main army, mostly French and Norman knights assembled at Constantinople captured Antioch and finally Jerusalem (July 15, 1099) in savage battles. By the end of the campaign, four Crusader states had been formed along the Syrian and Palestinian coast: Continuing rivalry, however, undermined any chance of consolidating these acquisitions almost from the beginning.

The second Crusade had its immediate cause in the loss (1144) of Edessa to the Muslims of Mosul and Aleppo. Louis VII of France and the German King Conrad III tried to lead separate armies through Anatolia. What remained of them joined in an unsuccessful siege of Damascus. The Christians failed to take Damascus in the second crusade because some men who had influence over the kings and pilgrim leaders were offered a vast sum of money to commit an act of treachery. They falsely advised the army to attack the city from the other side, where it was supposed to have far fewer defences, but when the army encamped there, they found they had little food or water. "The pilgrim leaders held counsel and decided to return home. The kings and leaders reeled in confusion and fear and their business unaccomplished because of our sins were obliged to return home" (Hallam 146).



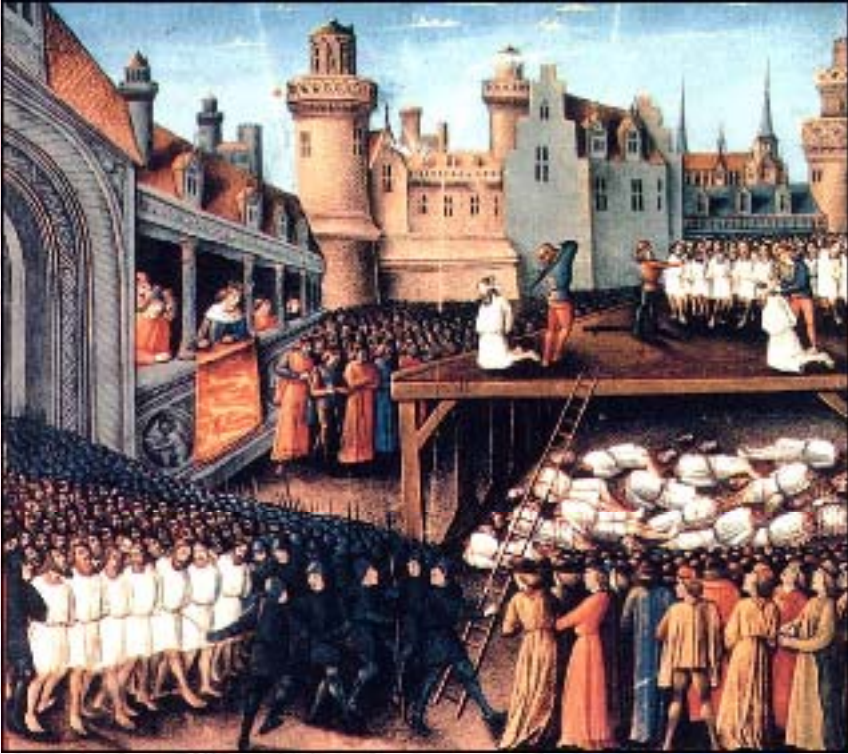
Conjugal tents of the crusaders (Hallam).

The second crusade had women riding astride horses in "a manner more masculine than the Amazons". It was said also that Eleanor of Aquitaine and the other court ladies caused an unchaste atmosphere of adultery to develop, and to slow down the army with the weight of their lavish supplies. Eleanor had had an affair with her uncle and even in one mythical account with Saladin. Eleanor was romantically involved with her uncle, Raymond of

Antioch, and wished to stay with him telling the king she was too closely related to him to stay married to him. The king, who loved the queen with an almost excessive passion was persuaded to force her to go with him to Jerusalem because guilt could hide under the name of kinship and because of the disgrace if he was deserted by his queen. Resentment rose in their hearts and did not recede. The king because of her unfaithfulness left early in secret from Antioch. He who had been received with such honour on his arrival left ignominiously (Hallam 146-7).



To encourage successive crusades, the Pope abrogated the right of women to object to their husbands leaving on crusade, causing many women to accompany their men. In the siege of Acre in the third crusade, many of the women attacked the Turks with huge knives, bringing back severed heads in triumph (Hallam 140-2). "Having to do with women is the birdlime of the devil. Therefore I do not agree with female participation in a major campaign to be carried out by men. However a territory stripped of its population cannot be restored without the presence of women, therefore including women in a crusade can be considered useful in order to resettle the conquered land with a new population" (Hallam 168).



Beheading the 2700 muslim men, women and children at Acre (Hallam).

The Third Crusade was a response to the conquest (1187) of almost all of Palestine, including Jerusalem, by Sultan Saladin, who had consolidated Muslim power in Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt. The Crusading effort disintegrated through attrition and lack of cooperation, although Acre was recaptured, Jaffa was secured, and Cyprus occupied. Richard the Lion-heart, beloved of Robin Hood, presided over the beheading of 2700 Islamic men, women and children of Acre at the beginning of the third crusade in 1191, illustrating the Christian will to religious genocide and a breach of faith. Upon their surrender after a three-year siege, Saladin arranged for an exchange of prisoners and the return of the relic of the True Cross, lost in the Battle of Hattin, but regrettably fulfilled his part of the bargain first.



By contrast with the treacherous Christians, Saladin was a man of honour."Once during the siege of the Battle of Hattin in 1187 when I was riding at the Sultan's side against the Franks, an army scout came to us with a sobbing woman beating her breast. She came from the Frankish garrison. Saladin asked his interpreter to question her. "Yesterday some Muslim thieves entered my tent and stole my little girl. I cried all night. My commanders told me the King of the Muslims is merciful: we will let you go to him and ask for your daughter back. Thus I have come and I place all my hopes in you. Saladin was touched and tears came to his eyes. He sent someone to the slave market to look for the girl, and less than an hour later a horseman arrived bearing the child on his shoulders. The girl's mother threw herself on the ground and smeared her face with sand. All those present wept with emotion. She looked heavenward and began to mutter incomprehensible words. Thus was her daughter returned to her" (Hallam 157). His physician was Maimonides (p 473) in the tradition of Islamic acceptance of Judaism.

In the Fourth Crusade (1202-04) Pope Innocent III attempted to reorganize the Crusading efforts under papal auspices. But lack of funds to pay for the passage of the 10,000 Crusaders in Venice forced a diversion of the mostly French army. At the request of the Venetians, the Crusaders first attacked the Christian city of Zara, in Dalmatia. Then they sailed on to lay siege of Constantinople. The Byzantine capital fell in 1204; it was looted - particularly for its treasures of relics.

There followed the tragic episode of the Children's Crusade (1212), in which thousands of children perished from hunger and disease or were sold into slavery on their way to the Mediterranean. The last Christian bastion on the Syrian coast, Acre, was stormed by the Mameluke sultan in 1291.

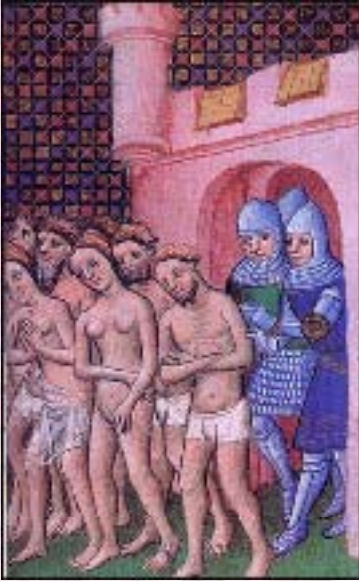
In religious terms, the Crusades hardened Muslim attitudes toward Christians leading to further jihad. At the same time, doubts were raised among Christians about God's will, the church's authority, and the role of the papacy. Religious fervor yielded to disinterest and skepticism. The Crusader states and the Latin Empire of Constantinople were short-lived. Only the military orders founded in the East (Hospitalliers, Templars etc.) had an appreciable influence on later European politics.

During the 13th century, Crusades were increasingly used by the papacy against foes in the West. A precedent had been set by the Crusade against the Slavic pagan Wends in Germany (1147) and the granting of Crusaders' indulgences for the fight against Muslims in Spain. These Crusades were followed by Crusades against the Albigenses (heretics in southern France; 1209-29) and the Baltic Prussians and Lithuanians. This use of Crusades as mere tools of power politics continued into the 14th and 15th centuries.

### **Crusade against the Cathars and Albigenses**

In the eleventh century, dissent spread from the Bogomils, a Balkan sect who believed, like the Manicheans, that the flesh and the material world was evil. Only the world of the spirit was without sin and the only hope of attaining it was to commune face-to-face with God. The idea took firm hold around Albi, in southern France. Soon, its adherents the Cathars - the katharoi, with an elite of perfecti or pure ones - controlled much of the Languedoc. They believed in two eternal principles of good and evil, did not acknowledge the sacraments, the doctrines of hell or purgatory, or the resurrection of the body and developed their own church and ritual, rejecting the authority of the Church.





The Cathars are Turned out of Carcassonne (Hallam 234)

They had lives of simplicity and penance in which salvation lay only in the Lord. The Pope became alarmed at the threat to his power and proclaimed a crusade against them. Thousands of Cathars were killed and many more tortured into accepting the true faith. Laws were passed to suppress the Albigensian heresy, and the first Inquisition established to ensure that they were applied. It set about its task with zeal. By 1244, with the fall of the fortress of Montsegur in the Pyrenees, the Cathars had been crushed.

Early in the war of the Catholic Church against the heretics of Languedoc, both Cathars and Catholics were besieged by an army of the Church within the walls of Beziers. On the day of the feast of Mary Magdalen they killed their viscount in the church dedicated to her name and were in turn horrendously punished on the same day for repeating the Albigensian heresy that she was Christ's concubine. It was, said contemporaries marvelling, a doubly miracu-

lous occasion (Haskins 135).

When the city fell, the commanding general was asked who to slaughter: heretics, his men assumed, must surely be separated from believers. Their leader's reply was simple: it presaged, in more brutal terms, what may become the attitude of the legal system. "Kill them all," he said, "the Lord will know his own"; if there is any doubt about who has sinned, then all must be punished to ensure that the guilty do not escape (Jones 223,241). Our forces spared neither rank nor sex nor age. About twenty thousand people lost their lives at the point of the sword. The destruction of the enemy was on an enormous scale. The entire city was plundered and put to the torch. Thus did divine vengeance vent its wondrous rage (Hallam 232).

After discussion, our men entered the town of Carcassonne with the cross in front. When the church had been restored they placed the Lord's cross on top of the tower ... for it was Christ who had captured the town and it was right that his banner should take precedence. ... The venerable abbot of Vaux-de-Cernay went to a great number of heretics who had gathered in one of the houses wishing to convert them to better things, but they all said with one voice "Why are you preaching to us? We don't want your faith We deny the church of Rome. You are wasting your time" Neither life nor death can turn us from the beliefs we hold." He then went to see the women gathered in another building but the female heretics were more obstinate and difficult in every way. Simon de Montfort first urged the heretics to convert, but having no success, he dragged them out of the castle. A huge fire was kindled and they were all thrown into it. It was not hard for our men to throw them in, for they were so obstinate in their wickedness that they threw themselves in. Only three women escaped whom a noble lady snatched from the flames and restored to the Holy Church. When the heretics were burned all the others who were in the castle renounced the heresy and were restored to the Holy Church (Hallam 234).

Pope Innocent III - one of the first to make acceptance the death penalty a dogma (Hallam)

In 1223 Pope Gregory IX charged the Dominican Inquisition to undertake the final extirpation of the Albigensians. Laymen were forbidden to possess a bible or any book of religious ritual in the vernacular. Every parish had a team of heretic hunters.

### **The Inquisition**

Barabara Walker (436-448)

The 12th Cent Albigenses and Waldenses first led to the episcopal Inquisition, after a crusade was first led against them. Along with public disgust at the church's avarice, there was a growing suspicion - sparked by Gnostic philosophies from the east - that rejected the church's myths of the garden of Eden, the fall, original sin, heaven and hell, the virgin birth, the meaning of salvation, the flesh and blood eucharist.



The papal Inquisition was formally instituted by Pope Gregory IX in 1231. Following a law of Holy Roman Emperor Fredrick II, Gregory ordered convicted heretics to be seized by the secular authorities and burned. The power of the Inquisition was established and enlarged by a series of papal bulls. That of Pope Innocent IV, May 15, 1252, authorized seizure of their goods, imprisonment, torture, and, on conviction, death, all on minimal evidence. Papal edicts prescribed imprisonment and confiscation of property as punishment for heresy and threatened to excommunicate princes who failed to punish heretics. (Grollier)

Notoriously harsh in its procedures, the Inquisition was defended during the Middle Ages by appeal to biblical practices and to the church father Saint Augustine, who had interpreted Luke 14:23 "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled;" as endorsing the use of force against heretics. However the version of this parable in Thomas 64 says no such thing: "The master said to his servant, 'Go outside to the streets and bring back those whom you happen to meet, so that they may dine'." (Grollier 93)

Historian Henry Charles Lea, called the Inquisition "a standing mockery of justice - perhaps the most iniquitous that the arbitrary cruelty of man has ever devised.... Fanatic zeal, arbitrary cruelty, and insatiable cupidity rivalled each other in building up a system unspeakably atrocious. It was a system which might well seem the invention of demons."

St. Bernard deplored the church's greed: "Whom can you show me among the prelates who does not seek rather to empty the pockets of his flock than to subdue their vices?" Bulgarian writers said the priests of Rome were given to drunkenness and robbery, and "there is none to forbid them." Priests were a



privileged class, but their privileges were more and more resented. In the 12th century, monasteries made themselves into wine shops and gambling houses; nunneries became private whore-houses for the clergy; priests used a confessional to seduce female parishioners.

Frere Raymond Jean was executed for preaching against the church's abuses. He said bitterly, "The enemies of the faith are among ourselves. The Church which governs us is symbolled by the Great Whore of the Apocalypse, who persecutes the poor and the ministers of Christ." Nicholas de Clamanges, rector of the University of Paris, declared: "The priesthood has become a misery reduced to profaning its calling.... Who do you think can endure, among so many other abuses, your mercenary appointments, your multiple sale of benefices, your elevation of men without honesty or virtue to the most eminent positions?" "

In 1325 Pope John issued the bull *Cum inter nonnullos*, which "infallibly" declared it was heresy to say Jesus and his apostles owned no property. Inquisitors were ordered to prosecute those who believed Jesus was a poor man. The Spiritual Franciscans, who did so believe, were taught an immediate lesson when the pope had 114 of their number burned alive.

Along with public disgust at the church's avarice, there was a growing suspicion-sparked by Gnostic philosophies from the east - that the church's myths of the garden of Eden, the fall, original sin, heaven and hell, the virgin birth, the meaning of salvation, and so on, were literally untrue. Because people refused to believe the eucharistic bread and wine were literally flesh and blood, the papacy lost all of Bohemia.

Despite being prominent among the crusaders, the Knights Templar were systematically eliminated in the inquisition. They form a case study. With the loss of Acre the Order became vulnerable to attack on the grounds it had failed to protect the Holy Land. The Templars were wealthy in money and land, especially in France and their goods were a temptation. Jacques of Molay the last grand master of the Temple was burnt at the stake in Paris in 1314 after a long ordeal lasting seven years. He had been hastily condemned as a relapsed heretic after retracting his confessions that the Templars had denied Christ and spat on the cross, during obscene reception ceremonies. Although these were the work of agents of the French King Philip IV the fair, they were technically carried out by the Papal inquisitor. The Pope Clement IV clearly doubted that an Order which had shed so much blood for the Church militant could be so riddled with heresy and corruption, but was presented with a *fait accompli*. Philip IV's devotion to the monarchical cult and morbid religiosity could have been exploited by counsellors with more material motives.

The Spanish inquisition was particularly severe and selected out ex-Jews and ex-Moslems who had previously been forced to convert to the Christian faith. Mass burnings on the Iberian peninsula were known as 'acts of faith'. They were held once a month on the average, usually on a Sunday or holiday so all could attend; to stay away was thought suspicious. Sometimes the spectators were invited to participate, as in the diversion genially known as "shaving the new Christians." This meant setting fire to the hair or beards of those waiting their turn at the stake.



Templars burned at the stake (Hallam)

### **Torture Confiscation and Death**

The violence of the Inquisition was its ultimate weapon. Modern apologists say the Inquisition served some good purposes, like helping secular courts bring criminals to justice. Only a few decades ago, even Catholic manuals mendaciously claimed the Inquisition was a purely civil tribunal. Actually, the Inquisition was uninterested in secular crimes, except insofar as they could provide a basis for a charge of heresy or witchcraft.

With the arrival of the inquisitors in a locality, a period of grace was proclaimed for penitent heretics, after which denunciations were accepted from anyone, even criminals and other heretics. Two informants whose unknown to the victim were usually sufficient. The court then conducted an interrogation, and tried to obtain a confession, frequently through physical torture. This practice probably started in Italy under the impact of rediscovered Roman civil law and made use of such painful procedures as stretching of limbs on the rack, burning with live coals, squeezing of fingers and toes, or the *strappado*, a vertical rack. (Grollier)

Suspects and witnesses had to swear under oath that they would reveal everything. Unwillingness to take the oath was a sign of heresy. If a person confessed, the judges prescribed minor penances like flogging, fasts, prayers, pilgrimages, or fines. Denial of the charges without counter-proof, obstinate refusal to confess, and persistence in the heresy resulted in life imprisonment or execution



accompanied by total confiscation of property. Since the church was not permitted to shed blood, the sentenced heretic was surrendered to the secular authorities for execution, usually by burning at the stake. (Grollier)

After the arrest, the property of the accused was instantly confiscated. Nothing seems to have been returned. The popes publicly praised the rule of confiscation as a prime weapon against heresy. Affluent Italy made its inquisitors incredibly rich in the 14th century. "When I have you tortured, and by the severe means afforded by the law I bring you to confession, then I perform a work pleasing in God's sight; and it profiteth me." Sometimes confiscation took place even before confession. Accused persons were expected to pay the expenses of their own imprisonment, even of their own torture. In England, accused witches were sometimes acquitted; yet they were kept in prison until they paid the expenses of their unlawful imprisonment. The Inquisition's prisoners had to pay for their own food in prison. Without money they starved.



The Pope portrayed as the anti-Christ (Cohn)

Lea commented: "There is something so appallingly grotesque in tearing honest, industrious folk from their homes by the thousand, in thrusting them into dungeons to rot and starve, and then evading the cost of feeding them by presenting them to the faithful as objects of charity" (Walker 436)

The entire financial network of European society was strained by its religious masters. "No creditor or purchaser could be sure of the orthodoxy of him with whom he was dealing.... The practice of proceeding against the memory of the dead after

an interval virtually unlimited, rendered it impossible for any man to feel secure in the possession of property, whether it had descended in his family for generations, or had been acquired within an ordinary lifetime." Families of the accused were left destitute, and no one dared help them for fear of falling under suspicion. The Inquisition established the law of property seizure for suicides, which remained the rule in most European countries and the British Isles until 1870.

The witch's or heretic's trial was a mockery. The accused had no lawyer; Pope Boniface directed that trials must be conducted "simply, without the noise and

form of lawyers.”

Officially, the rule was that torture could be applied only once. But, by a semantic quibble, it could be “continued” any number of times, even over a period of years, each pause being considered a suspension,” not an end. There are records of some victims tortured over fifty times. Those who died under torture either “committed suicide” or were slain by the devil. Having confessed under torture, the accused was compelled to repeat the confession outside the torture chamber, knowing he would be returned thereto if he didn't obey; nevertheless, this was recorded as a confession given “freely and spontaneously, without the pressure of force or fear,” and court documents often claimed the accused had confessed without torture. Sometimes confessions were described as “voluntary” if they were obtained after the first degree of torture-binding and racking. Some victims were listed as “confessed without torture” after exposure to only one instrument, a spiked iron press that crushed the legs.

Bernard Delicieux, was excommunicated, arrested, tortured, and burned alive for expressing the opinion that St. Peter and St. Paul, if tried by the Inquisition's methods, would certainly be convicted of heresy. Inquisitors were placed entirely above the law by Pope Innocent IV in his bull of 1252. Every ruler and citizen must assist them on pain of excommunication.

Torture was officially sanctioned in 1257 and remained a legal recourse of the church for five and a half centuries until it was abolished by Pope Pius VII in 1816. The victims in those five and a half centuries were literally countless. Official burnings were only a beginning. There were also the disrupted, starving families; unrecorded suicides; unofficial lynchings; hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, who died unnoticed in the papal crusades against heretical groups.

Inquisitors were empowered to absolve each other, their officers, torturers, and executioners, of blood guilt for their victims' deaths. They also forced the condemned witches to recite: “I free all men, especially the ministers and magistrates, of the guilt of my blood; I take it wholly upon myself, my blood be upon my own head.” (Walker 440)

One inquisitorial judge, Dietrich Flade, experienced a revulsion for his life work and dared to say openly that the confessions wrung from his victims were false, due only to their agony. His archbishop had Flade arrested and put on the rack himself until he admitted having sold his soul to Satan; then he was burned.

Another inquisitor-saint was Peter Martyr (Piero da Verona), whose case has never been adequately explained. He was so zealous in Lombardy as to embarrass even the church. In 1252 he was assassinated, and within a year he was canonized. His killers were captured but not prosecuted. One of them later became an inquisitor himself. Another entered the Dominican order, died in old age, and was canonized as St. Acerinus.

Lea says, “All the safeguards which human experience had shown to be necessary in judicial proceedings of the most trivial character were deliberately cast aside in these cases, where life and reputation and property through three generations were involved. Every doubtful point was decided ‘in favor of the faith’ ...



Had the proceedings been public, there might have been some check upon this hideous system, but the Inquisition shrouded itself in the awful mystery of secrecy until after sentence had been awarded and it was ready to impress the multitude with the fearful solemnities of the *auto da fe*." (Walker 440)

The Inquisition's long survival can be attributed to the early inclusion of offenses other than heresy: sorcery, alchemy, blasphemy, sexual aberration, and infanticide. After Pope Innocent's reign, it was heresy not to believe in witchcraft. No one was allowed to speak against the extermination of witches. The number of witches and sorcerers burned after the late 15th century appears to have been far greater than that of heretics. (Grollier)

### **The Free Spirit Movement and the Inquisition**

Many people associate the inquisition particularly with witch hunts, but it is very important to realize that the gnostics as represented by the Cathars and Albigenses and later the long-lasting Free Spirit movement (p. 559) of the Beguines and Begherds suffered just as much as the so-called witches. Again this was a movement espoused significantly by women but it was also a movement of anarchistic gender and sexual reunion. In lamenting the repression by patriarchal authority of femininity it is essential to realize that the reunion of freedom between the genders was repressed just as severely as women.

### **Marguerite Porete - Gnostic Mirror of Self-realization**

Perhaps even more significant in spiritual history and certainly more steadfast than Joan of Arc, was the Beguine Marguerite Porete and her "Mirror of the Simple Soul" (p. 559), a 'gnostic' work in the vision of the Free Spirit movement which describes the realization of Christ-nature in the realization of God in full power in the living self in visionary peak experience. It was extremely popular throughout Europe and translated into many languages. Marguerite like Joan was burned at the stake, around 1310 tried on the basis of her writings as a heretic. Really it is to Marguerite we should turn to if we want to understand the full meaning of the violent collision the Inquisition represented, for she stands as a light of inspiration to male and female alike in steadfast confirmation of the vision of natural enlightenment and complete freedom of spirit which unites male and female alike in the spontaneous knowledge of the divine.

### **Witch Trials**

Barbara Walker Womens Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets 1076-1090

*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live Exodus 22:18*

Witchcraft was allowed through the first half of the Christian era. It was not called a "heresy" until the 14th century. In 500 A.D. the Franks' Salic Law recognized witches' right to practice. In 643, an edict declared it illegal to burn witches. In 785, the Synod of Paderborn said anyone who burned a witch must be sentenced to death.

The first major witch-hunt occurred in Switzerland in 1427. The persecution of witches reached its height between 1580 and 1660, when witch trials became almost universal throughout western Europe. (Grollier)

No certain figures exist for the exact number of people who were killed but some scholars put it as high as four million. Significantly, 85 percent of those killed were women, varying in age from young children to old women. Certainly some of these women were witches or thought they were, but by far the larger number were victims of false accusations based on an excessive misogyny sanctioned by Christianity. (Young)

Traditional theology assumed that women were weaker than men and more likely to succumb to the devil. It may in fact be true that, having few legal rights, they were more inclined to settle quarrels by resorting to magic rather than law.

Geographically, the center of witch-burning lay in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, but few areas were left untouched by it. No one knows the total number of victims. In southwestern Germany alone, however, more than 3,000 witches were executed between 1560 and 1680. Not all witch trials ended in deaths. In England, where torture was prohibited, only about 20 percent of accused witches were executed (by hanging); in Scotland, where torture was used, nearly half of all those put on trial were burned at the stake, and almost three times as many witches (1,350) were killed as in England. Some places had fewer trials than others. In the Dutch republic, no witches were executed after 1600, and none were tried after 1610. In Spain and Italy accusations of witchcraft were handled by the Inquisition, and although torture was legal, only a dozen witches were burned out of 5,000 put on trial. Ireland apparently escaped witch trials altogether. (Young)

The chronicler of Treves reported that in the year 1586, the entire female population of two villages was wiped out by the inquisitors, except for only two women left alive. A hundred and thirty-three persons were burned in a single day at Quedlinburg in 1589, out of a town of 12,000. Henri Boguet said Germany in 1590 was "almost entirely occupied with building fires (for witches); and Switzerland has been compelled to wipe out many of her villages on their account. Travelers in Lorraine may see thousands and thousands of the stakes to which witches are bound." In 1524, one thousand witches died at Como. Strasbourg burned five thousand in a period of 20 years. The Senate of Savoy condemned 800 witches at one time. Param stated that over thirty thousand were executed in the 15th century. Nicholas Remy said he personally sentenced 800 witches in 15 years and in one year alone forced sixteen witches to suicide. A bishop of Bamberg claimed 600 witches in 10 years; a bishop of Nancy, 800 in 16 years; a bishop of Wurtzburg, 1900 in 5 years. Five hundred were executed within three months at Geneva and 400 in a single day at Toulouse. The city of Traves burned 7,000 witches. The Lutheran prelate Benedict Carpzov, who claimed to have read the Bible 53 times, sentenced 20,000 devil-worshippers. Even relatively permissive England killed 30,000 witches between 1542 and 1736. The slaughter went on throughout Christian Europe for nearly five centuries.

A directive published in 1599 said judges were bound under pain of mortal sin to execute witches; anyone who objected to the death sentence was suspected of complicity. On one occasion, magistrates of Brescia objected to burning a number of condemned witches without having examined records of their trials. But the inquisitors kept their records sequestered, and the pope declared the magistrates' reluctance a scandal to the faith. "He ordered the excommunication of the magistrates if within six days they did not execute the convicts" (Walker 443).



Some witches even were made to repudiate the more impossible confessions extorted by torture, as a suicidal device: "Through the temptation of the devil I made up that confession on purpose to destroy my own life, being weary of it, and choosing rather to die than live." These abject recitations preceded the trip to the stake, for it was common practice to silence witches on their way to execution, either by wooden gags, or by cutting out their tongues, to prevent communication with the crowd. Inquisitors didn't want to give witches a chance to reveal that they had been raped in prison, the usual practice of torturers and their assistants during preliminary "stripping."

It can hardly be doubted that a major driving force of all witch hunts was sadistic sexual perversion. Torturers liked to attack women's breasts and genitals with pin-cers, pliers, and red-hot irons. Under the Inquisition's rules, little girls were prosecuted and tortured for witchcraft a year earlier than little boys - at 9, as opposed to 10 for boys. Witch hunting generally was directed against the female sex, and the abject helplessness of imprisoned and tortured women invariably encouraged sexual abuse along with every other kind of abuse.



Witch burning (Schultes and Hofmann 1979).

From ruthlessly organized persecutions on the continent, witch-hunts in England became largely cases of village feuds and petty spite. If crops failed, horses ran away, cattle sickened, wagons broke, women miscarried, or butter wouldn't come in the churn, a witch was always found to blame. A woman was convicted of witchcraft for having caused a neighbor's lameness-by pulling off her stockings. Another was executed for

having admired a neighbor's baby, which afterward fell out of its cradle and died. Two Glasgow witches were hanged for treating a sick child, even though the treatment succeeded and the child was cured. Joan Cason of Kent went to the gallows in 1586 for having dry thatch on her roof, which sparked when burnt (Walker 1078).

### **Hammer of the Sorceress**

The *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Sorceresses), appeared in Germany in 1486 and became the authoritative handbook describing the activities of witches and how to convict them. It was written by two Dominican Inquisitors, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger. The misogyny of this text is hysterical in tone and its authors are fixated on sexuality. Its publication in 1486 helped to accelerate the killing of so-called witches in three ways: (1) by increasing the number of people who could be accused of witchcraft, (2) by increasing the geographical area of the

persecution to include most of Europe, and (3) by focusing attention especially on women. (Young 79)

"There are also others who bring forward yet other reasons, of which preachers should be very careful how they make use. For it is true that in the Old Testament the Scriptures have much that is evil to say about women, and this because of the first temptress, Eve, and her imitators; yet afterwards in the New Testament we find a change of name, as from Eva to Ave (as St. Jerome says), and the whole sin of Eve taken away by the benediction of Mary. Therefore preachers should always say as much praise of them as possible. But because in these times this perfidy is more often found in women than in men, as we learn by actual experience, if anyone is curious as to the reason, we may add to what has already been said the following: that since they are feebler both in mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come more under the spell of witchcraft. ... And proverbs xi, as it were describing a woman, says: As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion. ... But the natural reason is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives. For Cato says: When a woman weeps she weaves snares. ... And it is clear in the case of the first woman that she had little faith; for when the serpent asked why they did not eat of every tree in Paradise, she answered: Of every tree, etc.-lest perchance we die. Thereby she showed that she doubted, and had little faith in the word of God. And all this is indicated by the etymology of the word; for Femina comes from Fe and Minus, since she is ever weaker to hold and preserve the faith. And this as regards faith is of her very nature; although both by grace and nature faith never failed in the Blessed Virgin, even at the time of Christ's Passion, when it failed in all men." (Malleus Maleficarum 44.)

"To conclude: All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. See Proverbs 30: There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, a fourth thing which says not, It is enough; that is, the mouth of the womb. Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils" (Malleus Maleficarum 47).

The Malleus Maleficarum said the accused witch must be "often and frequently exposed to torture. If after being fittingly tortured she refuses to confess the truth, he [the inquisitor] should have other engines of torture brought before her, and tell her that she will have to endure these if she does not confess. If then she is not induced by terror to confess, the torture must be continued." If she remained obdurate, "she is not to be altogether released, but must be sent to the squalor of prison for a year, and be tortured, and be examined very often, especially on the more Holy Days."



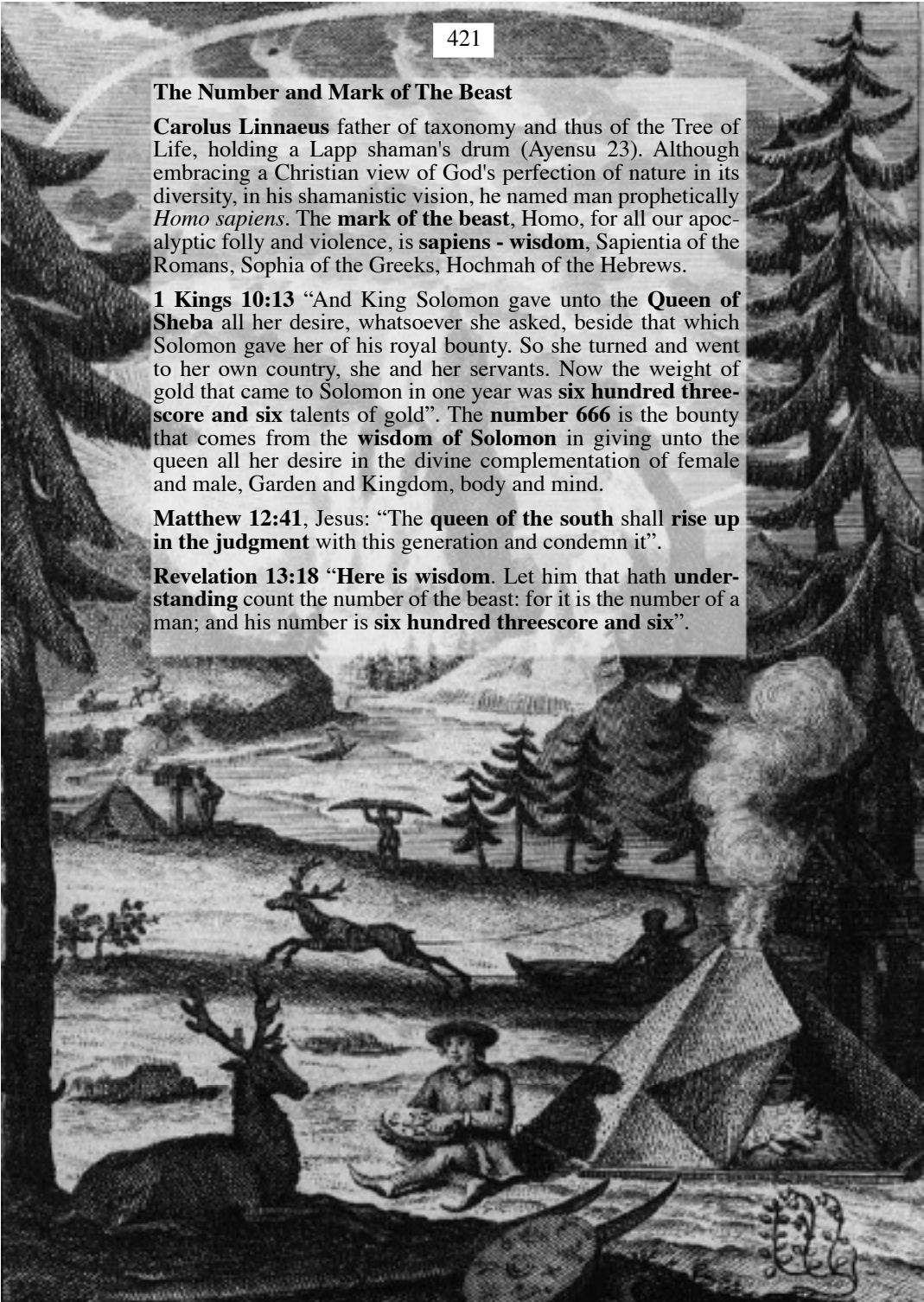
## The Number and Mark of The Beast

**Carolus Linnaeus** father of taxonomy and thus of the Tree of Life, holding a Lapp shaman's drum (Ayensu 23). Although embracing a Christian view of God's perfection of nature in its diversity, in his shamanistic vision, he named man prophetically *Homo sapiens*. The **mark of the beast**, Homo, for all our apocalyptic folly and violence, is **sapiens - wisdom**, Sapientia of the Romans, Sophia of the Greeks, Hochmah of the Hebrews.

**1 Kings 10:13** “And King Solomon gave unto the **Queen of Sheba** all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants. Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was **six hundred threescore and six** talents of gold”. The **number 666** is the bounty that comes from the **wisdom of Solomon** in giving unto the queen all her desire in the divine complementation of female and male, Garden and Kingdom, body and mind.

**Matthew 12:41**, Jesus: “The **queen of the south** shall **rise up in the judgment** with this generation and condemn it”.

**Revelation 13:18** “**Here is wisdom**. Let him that hath **understanding** count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is **six hundred threescore and six**”.



## Doctors, Midwives and Healers

The *Malleus Maleficarum* served to put a large number of women into immediate jeopardy by stating that the activities of midwives can reveal signs of witchcraft. "That witches who are midwives in various ways kill the child conceived in the womb, and procure an abortion; or if they do not this offer new-born children to Devils." At this time in history the great majority of births were attended by midwives, women familiar with childbirth and herbal cures. In other words these women were healers. They were also the confidants of women who wanted to have children and those who did not want children, so they had some knowledge of birth control and abortion. They were experts in sexual matters in a society dominated by a celibate clergy that had confounded sexuality with devil worship. Once the *Malleus Maleficarum* made the association of midwives with witchcraft these women could be brought before the Inquisition for questioning. Few were found innocent. Thus begun, the witch burning craze continued into the eighteenth century. (Young 79)



A Basque witch applies flying salve of tropanes (Rudgley) Witchcraft was associated with hallucinogenic potions applied with ointments and broomsticks (p 110).

Up to the 15th century, women's "charms and spells" were virtually the only repository of practical medicine. Paracelsus said witches taught him everything he knew about healing.<sup>1</sup> Agrippa von Nettesheim thought witches superior to male practitioners: "Are not philosophers, mathematicians, and astrologers often inferior to country women in their divinations and predictions, and does not the old nurse very often beat the doctor?" Scot observed that a male "conjurer" was permitted to cure disease by magic arts, whereas a woman was condemned to death for doing so (Walker 1082).

Officially, women were often forbidden to do any kind of healing. In 1322 a woman named Jacoba Felicle was arrested and prosecuted by the medical faculty of the University of Paris for practicing medicine, although, the record said, "she was wiser in the art of surgery and medicine than the greatest master or doctor in Paris." Witches were convenient scapegoats for doctors who failed to cure their patients, for it was the "received" belief that witch-caused illnesses were incurable. When the church declared war on female healers, healing became a crime punishable by death if it was practiced by a woman. Women were forbidden to study medicine, and "if a woman dare to cure without having studied, she is a witch and must die." Alison Peirsoun was so famous as a healer that the archbishop of St. Andrews sent for her when he was sick, and she cured him. Later he had her arrested, charged with witchcraft and burned.<sup>2</sup>

## The Pagan Origins of Witches

The extent to which pagan religion, as such, actually survived among the witches



of the 16th and 17th centuries has been much discussed but never decided. Dean Church said, "Society was a long time unlearning heathenism; it has not done so yet; but it had hardly begun, at any rate it was only just beginning, to imagine the possibility of such a thing in the eleventh century." In 15th-century Bohemia it was still common practice at Christmas and other holidays to make offerings to "the gods," rather than to God.

European villages still hid many "wise-women" who acted as priestesses officially or unofficially. Since church fathers declared Christian priestesses unthinkable, all functions of the priestess were associated with paganism. Bishops described pagan gatherings in their dioceses, attended by "devils ... in the form of men and women." Pagan ceremonies were allowed to survive in weddings, folk festivals, seasonal rites, feasts of the dead, and so on. But when women or priestesses played the leading role in such ceremonies, there was more determined suppression. John of Salisbury wrote that it was the devil, "with God's permission," who sent people to gatherings in honor of the Queen of the Night, a priestess impersonating the Moon-goddess under the name of Noctiluca or Herodiade. Others taking flying potions invoked Diana (p 110).

Martin of Braga said women must be condemned for "decorating tables, wearing laurels, taking omens from footsteps, putting fruit and wine on the log in the hearth, and bread in the well, what are these but worship of the devil? For women to call upon Minerva when they spin, and to observe the day of Venus at weddings and to call upon her whenever they go out upon the public highway, what is that but worship of the devil?" The Dominican Johann Herolt declared in the 15th century: "Most women belie their catholic faith with charms and spells, after the fashion of Eve their first mother, who believed the devil speaking through the serpent rather than God himself... [A]ny woman by herself knows more of such superstitions and charms than a hundred men."

Scholars aren't sure how much pagan religion survived in the form of actual group worship, at the beginning of the era of persecution. Pico della Mirandola's *La Strega* (The Witch) described a cult in northern Italy where a pagan Goddess presided over sexual orgies; she was said to bear a close resemblance to the Mother of God." Another group at Arras was said to have centered on "a prostitute" called Demiselle, or The Maiden. Her consort was the Abbot of Little Sense, otherwise known as the Prince of Fools, a composer and singer of popular songs-in other words, it was a cult of minstrelsy.

### **Fear of Witches**

Pope Innocent declared that witches could blast crops and domestic animals, cause disease, prevent husbands and wives from copulating, and in general "outrage the Divine Majesty and are a cause of scandal and danger to very many. "Churchmen took it upon themselves to carry out God's vengeance, which developed into a hideous nightmare artificially hastening the Day of Judgement. They fostered the public delusion that witches were engaged in a vast secret plot, under the devil's guidance, to overthrow the kingdom of God on earth. They created and embellished the concept of the black mass, and made laymen believe it frequently occurred, whereas it was largely a fraud supported only by spurious "evidence" from the torture chamber.

Persecutors said it was heretical to consider witches harmless. Even in England, where witches were not burned but hanged, some authorities fearfully cited the “received opinion” that a witch's body should be burned to ashes to prevent ill effects arising from her blood. Numerous stories depict the persecutors' fear of their victims. It was said in the Black Forest that a witch blew in her executioner's face, promising him his reward; the next day he was afflicted with a fatal leprosy. Inquisitors' handbooks directed them to wear at all times a bag of salt consecrated on Palm Sunday; to avoid looking in a witch's eyes; and to cross themselves constantly in the witches' prison.

Scot said witch-mongers gave the witches as much power as Christ, and even more, when they claimed witches could raise the dead, as Christ raised Lazarus; they could turn water into other fluids, like wine or milk; they could control the weather, the crops, animals, men; they could see into the past and future. Reading of witches' trials, he said, you shall see such impossibilities confessed, as none, having his right wits, will believe.” Churchmen, however, viewed the impossibility of witches' miracles as perfectly good ground for believing them, “because the performance of the impossible proved that demons were at work.”

A derogatory portrait of Calvin by Giuseppe Archimboldo of Milan (Jones 225).

Dr. Blackstone, England's ultimate authority on jurisprudence, wrote: “To deny the possibility, nay, actual existence of Witchcraft and Sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed Word of God in various passages both of the Old and New Testament; and the thing itself is a truth to which every Nation in the World hath in its turn borne testimony.”

Although the Inquisition was Catholic on origin witch-hunts were also a protestant affair. When skepticism about witchcraft seemed to be on the rise, John Wesley cried bitterly, “The giving up of witchcraft is in effect the giving up of the Bible. “Calvin and Knox also protested that denial of witchcraft meant denial of the Bible's authority.



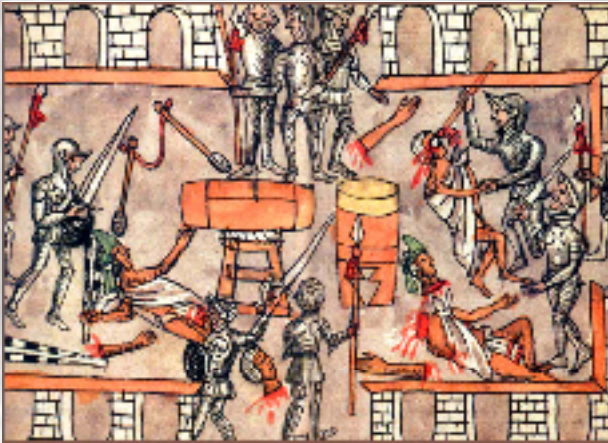
As late as the 1920s a rector of four parishes in Norfolk could still write: “If I were to take a census of opinion in all four villages I am certain that I should find a majority of people seriously professing belief in witchcraft, the policy of the ‘evil eye’, and the efficacy of both good and evil spells.” In the 1940s, Seabrook estimated that “half the literate white population in the world today believe in witchcraft”; and the nonliterate nonwhite population attains a much higher proportion. A Gallup poll taken in 1978 showed that ten percent of all Americans believe in witches.

The church distinguished between sorcery, which was generally acceptable, and



witchcraft, which was heresy. Von Nettesheim's books of sorcery were published under church auspices, accompanied by a statement of ecclesiastical approval; indeed, his instructor in magic had been John Trithemius, an abbot. What the distinction between sorcery and witchcraft boiled down to was that men could practice magic, women could not.

In Central and South America, "heathen" natives were tortured and burned for crimes against the true faith, such as not believing in it. Mayan scribes in Central America wrote: "Before the coming of the Spaniards, there was no robbery or violence. The Spanish invasion was the beginning of tribute, the beginning of church dues, the beginning of strife." Catholic fathers of the mission of San Francisco burned many Indian "witches" before the tribes were sufficiently subdued to accept God's word. Missionary teams included an inquisitor.



Early in the conquest the notorious dismemberment and slaughter of Aztec musicians celebrating a heathen festival (Gruzinski).

All the aspects of witchcraft crossed over to the Americas with European colonists. In the reports that in Spanish and French territories cases of witchcraft were under the jurisdiction of church courts, and no one suffered death on this charge. However the

church also technically remained free of blood in Europe causing civil courts to pass sentence. In the English colonies about 40 people were executed for witchcraft between 1650 and 1710, half of them in the famous Salem Witch Trials of 1692.

Salem: Remembered in Arthur Miller's *Crucible* (Schultes and Hofmann 1979)

### Joan d'Arc: Saint and Witch of God

From: Holland-Smith

Through her visions and voices Joan (c1412-1431) came to believe that she was called by God to drive the English out of France and she set out to do so. At the time of her first visions, when she was about thirteen



years old, France was engaged in both a civil war and a war with England. Though initially successful in her military exploits Joan was eventually captured by the British who turned her over to an ecclesiastical court to try her as a heretic and a witch.

Since Joan had grown up in a peasant family with stronger ties to the folk religion of her region of France than to the orthodox church that would judge her, she was particularly vulnerable. This complicated religious background came out during her trial when she admitted she may have danced with other young girls at a 'fairies' tree which was located near a spring believed to heal sickness. In their minds, Joan and her neighbors were just doing what they had done for generations but, for the church, these were pagan practices. This is brought out in the excerpts when she is questioned about her Godmother who was said to have seen fairies.

Joan was accused of three crimes. The first involved her 'voices' - voices she said came from St. Catherine and St. Margaret but which her inquisitors thought were coming from evil spirits. Essentially Joan was convicted of witchcraft because she listened to these voices, in other words she consorted with the 'familiar' spirits associated with witches, the fairies of the Celtic Tradition. Secondly, she refused to submit to the authority of the church saying her voices had a higher authority. Her third crime was that she, a woman, dressed as a man.



Joan remains a symbol of French politics and protest (NZ Herald).

### **Her final trial and burning**

On 28 May, the judges went to the prison and found Joan dressed in male clothing. They asked her when she had put it on and she replied that she had just done so. They asked her why, and repeated the question several times, receiving a different answer each time. First she said that she had done it from her own choice, because "she liked men's clothing better than women's". Then she said that "she had put it back on again because it seemed more proper" in a prison staffed by men. Later she claimed she had done so "because they had not kept their promise, that she might hear mass and receive the body of the Lord and be taken out of chains, but if they would promise that

she could go to mass and be taken out of chains, she would do all the church required" ... but the chief reason (in her own scale of motives) she kept to herself, till someone asked her the key-question had she heard her voices since last Thursday?

'Yes. They had said God was warning her through them that she stood in great danger of perdition because she had made that abjuration and renunciation in order to save her life: she was damned for having done so. "Till last thursday", she added, "her voices had told her what to do and she had done it. And on the scaffold itself,



the voices had told her she had answered the preacher most boldly: he was a false preacher, and said that she had done several things which she had never done ...” She had to mention their praise of her, to salve her pride and self-respect-and perhaps to give herself a moment to steel herself for what she had to say next which would inexorably entail her execution. Manchon, the clerk to the court, stolidly took it down: “Item: she said that were she to say that- ‘If I were to say that God sent me, I shall be condemned. But God really did send me. Since Thursday, my voices have been telling me that I have done and am doing a great injury to God by making myself say that what I did was not well done ... All I said and abjured, I did for fear of the fire.’ A little later, she claimed that she had never intended to renounce St Catherine and St Margaret, and repeated that what she had said, she had said for fear of the fire, adding that if she had repudiated them, it had been ‘contrary to the faith’”. Finally, in a phrase in which defiance and despair seem blended in equal measures, she said that she would rather do penance (by dying) than remain in prison any longer. If she could not have the world back as it had been, with her voices, her friends, encouraging her, praising her, applauding her, she would rather be dead.

At Rouen Castle there were only enemies and, by persuading her that she should defy Cauchon, putting on a man's clothes once more, her voices betrayed her into their hands. Cauchon wasted no time. The following evening he himself read this account of the action he took into the trial record:

“On Tuesday 29 May we, the Bishop of Beauvais, caused the doctors and other clergy in great number to come together in the chapel of the archbishop's palace. And we revealed to them that the said Joan ... [had abjured the previous Thursday but] now, persuaded by the devil, said that in the night [following] and for several nights thereafter .... her familiar had returned to her and said many things to her; and similarly that she was not satisfied with female clothing and had resumed male clothing, finding that acceptable. And the previous day the Lords judges, having heard a rumour, had returned to her and seen her in male clothing again and reminded her what was in ... her abjuration. The judges then deliberated on these new crimes and their votes were recorded ...” (Holland-Smith).

“In all forty judges voted. Some ruled her ‘presumptuous, contumacious, disobedient, and without hope of life in this world’. A few - including some of those who might have been most inimical towards her, the Englishmen expressed regret at having to find her relapsed and said that she ought to be remitted to secular justice with recommendations of mercy. According to Martin Ladvenu who was waiting in the crowd outside the chapel Cauchon was delighted with the result. Coming out of the meeting he called to a group of Englishmen standing there, ‘Farewell-farewell Il en est fait!’ -which might mean ‘That's done for her!’.” (Holland-Smith).

An essential element in her myth is illustrated by the opposite reactions to her of this man and his superior. Magnets attract and repel. During the course of the trial Magistri, the vice-inquisitor, felt his repulsion growing day by day till he feared her as much as Cauchon hated her, but by the time of her execution Ladvenu and his fellow Dominican Isembart de la Pierre were ready to follow her anywhere. By his own account, de la Pierre actually did follow her to the very edge of the fire.

In deciding that she was a relapsed heretic this latest court was admitting that the

church had failed with her and the devil had won: there was nothing for it but to admit the defeat and rid the world of the danger of contamination by her. The church itself could not execute her. She was to be 'remitted to secular justice'. Secular justice showed how it intended to deal with her by spending the night building a suitable pyre for so notorious a witch, setting up a stake and building a low stone barricade around it, so that the wood could not fall in on her and quicken her death.

According to Ladvenu she was allowed to make her confession to him and receive holy communion, just as though she had been a Christian in good standing and not about to be declared an excommunicated heretic and burned to death. She had been begging to be allowed to do so ever since her trial had begun. She received the body of Christ humbly and devoutly, and with so many tears ... Why was she allowed this mercy? The reasons were never disclosed, though it was against all the precedents in such cases.

She had always had a horror of fire and now broke down crying piteously *doloreusement et piteusement*, "Alas that I should be treated so horribly and cruelly; that my whole body, never yet corrupted, should today be consumed and burned to ashes! Ha! Ah! I would rather be beheaded seven times, than thus be burnt. At that moment Cauchon came in, when she said instantly "Bishop, I die through you".

There are several accounts of Joan's last hour. They are not all compatible in detail, but the general course of events is clear. Early in the morning, Joan was brought out from Rouen Castle, walking in the middle of a company of soldiers, wearing a penitential gown and the mitre of the condemned. She was led to the Old Market, where soldiers were keeping a great crowd back from the scaffold and the platform erected for official witnesses, assessors and judges. Many of those who had taken part in her interrogation were there, together with Robert Gilbert 'Chapel Deacon to our Lord the King (Henry VI)' and the king's secretary, John Tressart. At about nine o'clock Nicolas Midi began to preach on the theme of the corporate nature of the church and the danger that infection would spread unless cauterized, taking his text from 1 Corinthians, 'If one member suffers, all suffer with him'. The sermon was followed by explanations and justifications of what was about to happen and then Cauchon read the final sentence - the second 'definitive sentence' Joan had heard against her in a week: "We, Peter, by divine mercy the humble bishop of Beauvais- And we, Brother John Magistri, vicar to the inquisitor into the faith - being competent judges in this case- in as much as you, Joan, called La Pucelle, have been found to have fallen back into various errors and crimes of schism, idolatry, invocation of devils, and other misdeeds, ... we judge that whereas once in full possession of your mind and with faith unfeigned you withdrew yourself from those errors ... as is recorded in a paper by your own hand, you did thereafter fall immediately back into them as a dog will return to its own vomit - a fact we record with great sorrow- for this reason we declare you to have incurred the sentence of excommunication in which you were formerly embroiled, ... and by this sentence ... we rule that like a rotten limb you be cut off and rejected from the unity of the church and we remit you to secular justice, the which we beg to deal with you gently and honorably whether it be by loss of life or of some limb." (Holland-Smith).





Joan of Arc at the Stake: 'La Pucelle' - the unmarried woman  
or 'Virgin Goddess' (Walker 827).

"There the preliminaries ended, and the church having abandoned any further responsibility for Joan's body or soul, Cauchon, Magistri and the other judges left the platform with Joan standing there, apparently silent and still incredulous'. this was the moment from which her voices had sworn that she would be spared. 'And the Bailiff of Rouen, an Englishman, being there, commanded with no further trial, and without giving any sentence against her, that she be led to the place where she was to be burned - the which command being heard by the said Joan, she begin to cry out and groan so pitifully that she moved the people and all who were there to the point of tears ... She uttered pious and devout lamentations and invocations of the blessed Trinity and the blessed and glorious Virgin Mary and all the blessed saints of paradise ... asking people of every sort, of her own party as much as other, most humbly to forgive her, and asking also that they would pray for her, forgiving them the evil that they had done her.'" (Holland-Smith).

In front was a board painted with the words "Jehanne who called herself la Pucelle, liar, pernicious, deceiver of the people, sorceress, superstitious, blasphemer of God, presumptuous disbeliever in the faith of Jesus Christ, boastful, idolatrous, cruel, dissolute, invoker of devils, apostate, schismatic and heretic."

English hands seized her and roughly propelled her towards the scaffold where the stake and faggots were waiting. Instead of the crown of thorns, a tall paper cap like a mitre was placed on her head, bearing the words "Heretic, relapsed, apostate idolatress". Meanwhile they bound her to the stake and some of the English laughed as she called in a loud voice on St. Catherine, St. Michael and St. Catherine. "Ah Rouen! jáy grant paour que tu ayes á souffrir de la mort!" "And immediately," Manchon adds, "the bailiff ordered that the fire should be set. And this was done." It has

always been held against the bailiff that he hurried Joan to her execution immediately the church had relinquished her into the custody of the state. So the second of the Dominicans attending Joan that morning, Isembart de la Pierre, told the commission for her rehabilitation "The lay judge pronounced no condemnation to death or the stake ... She was handed over to her executioner, and devoted to the fire [the judge] saying 'Do your duty' without any other sentence."

As it was, thanks to the stone parapet around the stake, Joan took long enough to die. "She asked for a cross and hearing this an Englishman who was there made a little one from wood at the end of a pole which he gave her" Ladvenu said. This she first kissed and then put against her breast, between the flesh and her gown. By Isembart de la Pierre's account, "she bore witness to so great and astonishing contrition, and made utterance in words so devout and catholic that she made the vast crowd present weep, and even the Cardinal of England and many English".

"Moreover, he said that he 'being beside her there till the end she asked him humbly to go to the nearby church and bring the cross, and that he held it standing before her till her death, before her eyes so that she could see it always and unceasingly. Then as flames crackled and rose, she called out loudly and repeatedly on Jesus; her head sank forward, and it was the last word she was heard to pronounce. The executioner said that the fire was so hot he could not stand near enough to hasten the end. She choked on the smoke; because of the wall, the heart and other parts did not burn.'" (Holland-Smith).

"Secretary Tressart cried out, 'We are lost: we have burned a saint.' 'And it was,' Secretary Manchon wrote, 'a wonderous cruel thing.' So cruel, in fact, to all the eye-witnesses that they were overcome by it, and reduced to near hysteria. None of the accounts tally because none of them were seeing what happened, though they were all watching. Strange things were seen to happen. The name of Jesus leaped written across the flames, and an English soldier who had sworn to throw a faggot on the pyre declared that he saw a white dove fly out of the flames and wing away in the direction of France. Jean Alespee wished openly and with tears that his soul might be where he believed hers to be. That no possible doubt could exist that the witch was dead - for the English greatly feared a rumour of her escape might arise the executioner was ordered to part the flames and show her charred and naked body hanging on the stake." (Holland-Smith).

"Afterwards, they remembered what they imagined they had seen, or wished (as in the case of Isembart's cross) that they had done to help her. When the fires had died down, the ashes and unburned remains were collected meticulously and thrown into the Seine, by the executioner, so that there should be no relics for use either in religious or magical practices. 'And many people of property as well as common people,' Manchon noted, 'muttered much against the English'. And the executioner became very frightened and very contrite, saying he was damned, having burnt a saint, and that God would never forgive him." (Holland-Smith).

The English knew they were right to have executed Joan-but they did not expect anyone else to believe it. They would have preferred Joan not to have relapsed into heresy-although that made her execution certain-because once she had so relapsed, once she was ready to die defending her voices, the whole question of whether she was 'from God' or not was re-opened for those willing to think that a church court,



directed by the English, could make a mistake. Their only hope of scotching the rumour that Joan's voices were genuine (and therefore her king also genuine) was if she could be shown to have repudiated them at the end. They used Joan's manifest anguish in her last hour for that purpose. The irony is that though they were justified, they failed. In the very long term, the verdict of orthodox Catholics was both that Joan's voices were genuine revelations, and that it was Cauchon and his associates who were disloyal to the church.

The story leaves us with "all its deeper implications unexplained. It arouses many questions, which if we could answer them would carry us far along the road to a solution of many mysteries. ... She makes us think she makes us question; she uncovers dark places where we may fear to look. Does God on occasion manifest Himself by direct methods? Is the visible world the only world we have to consider? Is it possible for mortal man to get into touch with beings from another world? Is it possible that unearthly guidance may be vouchsafed to assist our human fallibility? Is it possible that certain beings are born with a sixth sense, a receptivity so far beyond, that in order to explain it we take refuge in such words as miraculous or supernatural?"

She was finally canonized in 1920 and remains a symbol of the far right and a protest symbol of those opposed to them. In remembering the burning of Joan and her ironical canonization, we should recognize that the true vision of realization came earlier and in great steadfastness from Marguerite Porete, who remains the inspiration of freedom of spirit to us all.

### **Aftermath and Implications of the Inquisition and Witch Trials**

Witch trials declined in most parts of Europe after 1680; in England the death penalty for witchcraft was abolished in 1736. In the late 17th and 18th centuries one last wave of witch persecution afflicted Poland and other areas of eastern Europe, but that ended by about 1740. The last legal execution of a witch occurred in Switzerland in 1782. The Inquisition remained active until 1834.

The institution and its excesses have been an embarrassment to many modern Christians. In anti-Catholic and anti-religious polemics since the Enlightenment (for example, Voltaire's *Candide*), the Inquisition has been cited as a prime example of what is thought to be the barbarism of the Middle Ages. Despite all efforts at understanding the institution in the light of social, political, religious, and ideological factors, today the Inquisition is generally admitted to belong to the darker side of Christian history. (Grollier)

Even in the present century, Catholic authorities have tried to present the Inquisition in an undeservedly flattering light. Cardinal Lepicier, expressly supported by Pope Pius X, declared the church's reign of terror was right, just because the church did it. "The naked fact that the Church, of her own authority, has tried heretics and condemned them to be delivered to death, shows that she truly has the right of killing.... [W]ho dares to say that the Church has erred in a matter so grave as this?" (Walker 447).

Leland wrote: "When people believe, or make believe, in a thing so very much as to torture like devils and put to death hundreds of thousands of fellow-beings, mostly helpless and poor old women, not to mention many children, it becomes a

matter of very serious import to all humanity to determine once for all whether the system or code according to which this was done was absolutely right for ever, or not" (Walker 447).

The cultural backgrounds of the past and current generation political dictators provides interesting material for speculation. Mussolini, Franco, Salazar, Hitler, Peron and almost without exception the Latin-American dictators were or are Roman Catholics, at least in their education and upbringing. And Stalin had considerable training for the priesthood of an equally dictatorial church. Confronted with such facts one is compelled at least to ask himself what kind of causal sequences are here suggested... In both Islam and Christendom the naive believers have over long periods been taught that it was their duty to slaughter the unbeliever, or whoever refused to accept their particular version of divine guidance (Walker 448).

It is unsettling to realize that such powers for mischief could yet be revived. The edicts that established the Inquisition have never been repealed. They are "officially still part of the Catholic faith, and were used as justification for certain practices as recently as 1969." Julian Huxley deplored the "pestilent doctrine on which all the churches have insisted, that honest disbelief in their more or less astonishing creeds is a moral offense ... deserving and involving the same future retribution as murder and robbery." In his opinion, the worst visions of hell would seem pale beside a comprehensive vision of Christianity's gory history. Such history should be remembered, on the old principle that those who cannot remember their history are condemned to repeat it (Walker 448).

### **Vatican Opens the Inquisition Files**

Rome Jan 98: The Vatican permitted scrutiny of one of the most notorious periods in Roman Catholic Church History yesterday when it opened the archives of the department once known as the Inquisition. The secret files, date between 1542 and 1902. The department later became the Holy Office and its successor now is called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which controls the orthodoxy of Catholic teaching.

Opened alongside the Inquisition archives was the infamous Index of Forbidden Books, which Catholics were forbidden to read or possess on pain of excommunication. They showed that even the Bible was once on the blacklist. Translations of the holy book ended up on the bonfires along with other 'heretical' works because the Church, whose official language was Latin, was suspicious of allowing the faithful access to sacred texts without ecclesiastical guidance. Protestants, who split from Catholics during the Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries, were allowed to read holy works directly. The Index of Forbidden Books and all excommunications relating to it were officially abolished in 1966.

### **The Little Flagellant Flower who tried to Take Jesus Down from the Cross**

Saint Therese of Lisieux, (1873-1897), is one of the most popular saints of the Roman Catholic church. Born Therese Martin, one of nine children of a devout Catholic family, she entered the Carmelite convent at the age of 15. Her life was marked by its simplicity and goodness, and after her death her spiritual autobiography, *The Story of a Soul* (1898; Eng. trans., 1958), aroused great interest. Known as the "Little Flower of Jesus," she was canonized on May 17, 1925, and her shrine



at Lisieux has become a major place of pilgrimage (Grollier).

St Mary Magdalen scourging herself Elizabethette Sirani 1663 (Haskins).

St Therese de Lisieux entered the Carmelite order at the age of fifteen and died after a hard life in religion at the age of 24. She writes in her autobiography: "And above all I wished to be a martyr! Martyrdom! it was my youthful dream, and in the little Carmelite cell this dream grew in inner strength. I don't long for only one kind of torment. I long for them all. Like you, my divine bridegroom, I would like to be whipped and crucified.... Like St. Bartholomew I would like to be flayed, to be plunged into boiling oil with St. John, to be torn by the teeth of wild beasts like St. Ignatius of Antioch, so that I could be found worthy bread for God. With St. Agnes and St. Cecilia I wished to offer my neck to the executioner and with Joan of Arc to whisper the name of Jesus while burning at the stake" (The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux. The Story of a Soul, trans. John Beavers New York: Doubleday, 1989 209). (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 292)"



"During my postulancy certain external penitential practices that were customary in our convents struck me as very hard. But I never gave in to my aversion. It seemed to me as if I saw the Crucified in the Garden of the Cross looking down at me with a pleading look and begging [Therese's emphasis] for these sacrifices" (Beavers 223, Ranke-Heinmann 293)). Another former Carmelite nun described how she had to whip herself on her hips once a week and every day on Holy Week for as long as it took to recite a penitential psalm. After Holy Week she could no longer sit or lie down.

Nine years after entering the Order, she died of tuberculosis. The story is told of the 'little Therese', that once when she was sick with a high fever, she tried to remove the nails from a crucifix to save Jesus (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 275).

### **A Shrine to those who have suffered Death by Exorcism**

In the little town of Klingenberg in the 1970s a supposedly possessed girl student was exorcised upon recommendation of the Bishop of Wurzburg. Herbert Haag in "Helpless in the Face of Evil?" quotes another bishop: "If the evil one does not exist, then man alone is responsible ... Can God have created man such a monster? ... No he can't because he is love and goodness. If there is no devil then there is no God." Haag notes: "The bishop seems to have forgotten for the moment that according to the Church's teaching, the devil too is a creature of God ... and therefore God has made a monster after all". On 24 April Der Spiegel quoted the following words from the Hamburg Bildzeitung: "The public prosecutor awarded the four accused [of participating in the lethal exorcism] a lesser degree of accountability - because of their deep religious faith." (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 59-60).



Jewish People ostensibly practicing the sacrifice of a Christian male child (Cohn 1957).

### **Christian Holocaust of the Jews and Jericho**

“The Christians, brought up on the Gospels, have never been able to forget that the Jews rejected Jesus and demanded his death. For centuries - as I learn from a Jewish historian, Dr. Cecil Roth - they could not imagine that the Jews believed in good faith that their Judaic theology, their ritual and their law, were the true ones, given them through

Moses by God; the Christians were convinced that the Jews knew better, and that their failure to accept the Christian faith was due to a stubborn perversity that must have the Devil behind it. It was for centuries a Christian objective to convert the Jews to Christ, and since they almost invariably failed in this, the Christians became very bitter against them. Even - as in Spain and Portugal - when they extorted the forms of conversion, the Jews would go on practising Judaism, and to the Christians it seemed that their counter-religionists were still in the same state of mind that had led them to crucify Jesus, that they would willingly crucify him again. This gave rise to the legend of the ritual murder of Christian children at Passover, a symbolic perpetuation of the Crucifixion” (Wilson 1969 104)

“The reciprocal Jewish legends connected with ritual murder - such as those about Rabbi Loew of Prague - show that as late as the sixteenth century the dwellers in the European ghettos lived in continual terror of being framed for this crime by the Christians: the great rabbi is always rescuing them; and trials for ritual murder were still occurring in Central Europe through the turn of the nineteenth century. In the meantime, the assumption of Jewish depravity had been giving the followers of Christ carte blanche - not merely with a quiet conscience but with fervour and exaltation-to penalize, tax, torture and slaughter the Jews, under the sign of the crucified Jesus” (ibid.).

“On the Jewish side, the moral sense was outraged, and the resentment to some extent still lingers, that the communicants of a religion whose Deity is a God of Love and whose Saviour brings salvation through mercy, should, for example, inaugurate a crusade to the Holy Land for the purpose of rescuing the tomb of this Saviour by massacres of their Jewish compatriots. If the Christian has never ceased to be horrified by the callousness of the Jews toward Jesus, the Jew has never ceased to be shocked by what seems to him the hypocrisy of the Christians.”

[Hitler] said it was one of the most important tasks to guard Germany's coming



generations from the same political fate (that struck the country from 1918 to 1933), to keep vigilant in them the awareness of racial danger. For this reason alone the Oberammergau Festival [the re-enactment of the crucifixion] would absolutely have to be preserved. For hardly ever had the Jewish danger, as seen in the example of the ancient Roman empire, been so graphically illustrated as by the character of Pontius Pilate in the Festival. He appeared as a Roman whose racial and intellectual superiority is so great that he seemed a rock amid the swarming rabble of the Near East. In recognizing the enormous importance of the Festival for the enlightenment of future generations as well, he [Hitler] said he was an absolute Christian. (Rolf Hochhuth, *Der Stellvertreter*, historische Streiflichter 1980, 247)

Burning of  
Jews 1390  
(Cohn 1957)

The Roman Church remained silent in acquiescent knowledge of the holocaust. Pope Pius XII refused to make comment on the holocaust (p 205) and attended



German official occasions of state (see holocaust chapter). (New Yorker Apr 7 97)

*"There will be a Jewish problem as long as the Jews remain"*  
Primate of Poland August Cardinal Hlond 1936

However we should remember that it was the Jews who brought genocide into the religious literary paradigm. John Hartung (p 473) notes that the ten commandments apply to Israelites but not heathen people ... genocide was as central, a part of God's instructions as morality at Jericho: "And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. ... And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword ... And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein." (Josh 6:17) This was holy war- *jihad*. When Achan takes a few accursed possessions they are defeated at Ai and Achan is sacrificed. Ai is destroyed and her king sacrificed like Jesus "wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide (Josh 8:26). The same at Hazor (Hathor): "And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire" (Josh 11:10).

In ironic echo, the Palestinian people (p 666) have become millennial Philistines, a Canaanite fate of captivity in the drive for a 'final solution' of Zionist apocalypse.