



NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
THE

# INQUISITION.

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PART I.

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BY  
SALADIN.

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## THE INQUISITION.

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THE Christian Church, which, in all essentials, was, and continues to be, the Church of Rome—Protestantism is a mere accident and temporary phase—has been the best managed institution that ever existed. Even yet there is no power in Europe so strong as the Papal power; and, like a veritable Methusaleh, it stands alone on the eminence of the Present, unattended by even a solitary athlete who started with it in the race. On that eminence it poses, deathless and weird as the Wandering Jew, and looks down into the valley below filled with the dust of kings, the skeletons of dynasties, and the ruins of empires. This Roman hierarchy began before most of them, more than held its own with the best of them, and has survived them all. The oldest political dynasty in Europe, compared with the hierarchical dynasty of the Vatican, is a thing of yesterday. That Rome has, therefore, had in her ranks the most commanding talent, the loftiest genius in Europe for the last ten centuries, goes without saying.

And yet the "Infallible Church" has been guilty of mistakes of policy which are remarkable as being made by her, the handmaiden of the Omniscient. She hounded on the Crusaders to give *esprit de corps* and solidarity to her organisation; and in this she was right as concerned the immediate, but wrong as regarded the not very remote future. It turned out that the Crusades had much to do with the fostering of Christian heresy and apostasy, and this consequence of pouring countless thousands against the "Infidel," who held the Holy Sepulchre, the Church evidently did not foresee. Christianity was a plant that throve well upon the soil of ignorant isolation, but which withered somewhat when brought into contact with the refined, opulent, and mysterious East. In self-sufficient bigotry the legions of Philip, Leopold, and

Richard dashed their battalia in vain against the Infidel armies of Saladin, till their intolerance and bigotry had to be modified; and Europe's high-handed barbarity, contrasted with Asia's chivalrous magnanimity, began to make the erewhon believers in him of Nazareth wonder whether if, after all, their little creed had the monopoly of Truth, and all the other creeds free trade in Error.

Torn away from the routine of the exclusive ideas by which they had previously been dominated, even the Christian defenders of the Holy Sepulchre itself defended the sepulchre of a God they mocked at and derided. Having come in contact with many men and many minds, the old cloud barriers of national dogma were broken down before the assault of cosmopolitan liberality and enlightenment. I have hardly ever seen a man who has travelled much and seen much, even if he be no student and a superficial thinker only, who has any religion worth speaking of. If you want to be religious, stay at home and confine your world to one narrow sect and set.

As I have said, the very Templars, whose order was instituted by Baldwin to defend the Holy Sepulchre, found the liberalising influences of travel play havoc even with the very roots of their faith. Such notorious Infidels did the defenders of the Holy Sepulchre become that Philip the Fair of France and Pope Clement V. felt compelled to adopt means to effect their extermination. Among the charges brought against them was that, in being introduced into the order, part of the inaugural ceremony was to *deny Jesus Christ and spit upon a crucifix*?\*

Before the last of the Crusades the times were gone by when, in the mysterious awe of learned ignorance, the monks sat in solemn conclave to investigate the nature of the light upon Mount Tabor on the occasion of Christ's Transfiguration, and laboured to demonstrate the existence of two eternal principles, a visible and an invisible God, by the closest inspection, for days and nights together, of *the human navel*! The very monks themselves were now sceptics, and the esoteric theology that attempted to extract theological hermeneutics from

\* *Vide* Rapin's "History of England," vol. i., bk. ix., p. 403.



the navel was now a subject for derision. The literature and ballads of the Saracens of Spain also contributed their quota to Christian disintegration, and the hard and barren asceticism of Christ was melting like snow in the thaw before the gay songs of the Troubadours and Trouvères. She of the Seven Hills was on her trial. Christianity was little more than a thousand years old, and she was dying. The death-rattle was in her throat; her feet were cold. Up to this time she had been kept fairly healthy by being carried on the shoulders of Ignorance, goaded on by the sword. But Ignorance had visited the East, and, in spite of Christianity on its shoulders, had not by any means had things all its own way; and now it began to consider whether it should carry the burden any longer or lay it down. The Church of Rome saw the critical juncture. She swore she would put Christianity again on her legs, and, by the living God, she did!

Christianity was dying; but St. Dominic, St. Francis, and Pope Innocent III. poured brandy, or, rather, a river of blood, down her throat, and she got up from her bed of pain, some seven hundred and odd years ago, and, but for a slight illness, a mere touch of measles caught from Martin Luther and his friends, she has never looked behind her since. But the remedial dose that was administered to her was the most drastic and devilish that the sun ever looked down upon since the day he took his first whirl upon his axis. The name of the pill that revived Christianity was THE HOLY INQUISITION. If it did not give her real life, it gave her the best counterfeit of it that has ever been seen. Even yet she has Galvanised energy enough to carry her on for a century or two longer. All her enemies, except downright Infidelity, are dying. When, for the last time on earth, the air vibrates with the prayer of a Christian, that Christian will be a Roman Catholic.

But I pass to the drastic dose of THE INQUISITION, the administration of which raised Christianity from her death-bed to wade through blood, fire, and torture-room to a new life prolonged to centuries. To Dominic, born in 1170, is attributed the hideous glory of having been the founder of the Inquisition. He, too, like his God

and Carpenter, came squalling into the world through the mystic obsterics of an *Immaculate Conception*. He had a mother; but, like a certain other mother, she was a virgin; so Dominic was never dandled on the knees of an earthly daddy. His father was one of the prongs of the three-pronged fork of Deity. It is a curious fact in generation that no *man* has yet borne a child to the Ghost, Mars, or any one else. Let Mr. John Smith bear a child by one of the daughters of God, and I will seriously consider the theory of the Immaculate Conception. With God all things seem to be possible, except the bringing about of the *accouchement* of Mr. John Smith. Rhea Sylvia, Leda, Danæ, Mary, and scores of others have been honoured with mysterious visitations of deities of the masculine gender; but a variation upon this routine seems to lie outside even the power of Omnipotence. This Dominic not only dispensed with a terrestrial father (thereby escaping all paternal spankings), but he did his best to dispense with a mother, and to pose as the foster-child of the Virgin Mary. With no father at all, and with his foster-mother far off in heaven much engaged in attending to the prayers of devout Catholics, young Dominic grew up very much as he liked, and nobody who is permitted to grow up as he likes grows up quite satisfactorily. He organised a following of monks, friars, nuns, and tertiaries, and worked miracles with as much ease as you or I could say "knife." One of his miracles was the exorcising of Satan from three matrons. Satan fled out of the matrons in the shape of a great black cat, which ran swearing and spitting up the bell-rope and vanished, leaving the exdevilised maidens on their knees praising God and Dominic. A beautiful nun was tired of being the bride of Christ, and longed to escape from the convent to become the bride of something less ethereal. She blew her nose, and it dropped off into her handkerchief, her maker not having fastened it on over well. But Dominic prayed a furiously surgical prayer, and the nose walked off her handkerchief, and replaced itself on the maiden's face. This Dominic was, moreover, a great gun at raising the dead; but he died in 1221, and has not seen fit to raise himself, for which God be thanked.

The next luminary in the origination of the Inquisition was Sir Francis. He, too, had the advantage of a miraculous birth.\* His birth was so like that of Christ that I wonder Christ did not prosecute him for infringing upon his patent. His advent into the world was prophetically foretold. He was born in a stable (but should have been born in a knacker's yard or a slaughter-house). At the hour of his death angels went capering about in the air, doing aerial waltzes over the stable, waving their wings and singing, as only celestial poultry can, about "peace and goodwill" and other tarradiddles. A person, who answered to the name of Simeon, bore him to his baptism, and then, no doubt, snivelled out something about departing in peace, since his optics had been privileged to squint at salvation. If I had been Christ, and the person had imitated so closely my style of getting born, I should have kicked him to death in order that he might get "born again" on a new plan.

As St. Francis grew up he became not so painfully like Christ. He spent his money (or, rather, his father's money) with reckless prodigality. Now, Christ did not do this; his father,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of deity, seems to have been as poor as a church mouse, and his father, Joseph, was, quite likely, on the parish of Bethlehem-Judah, and under the necessity of pawning his jack-plane. But St. Francis *did* throw the money about among the poor, although to do so without discrimination and judgment is a folly and a crime. The father, to whom the money belonged, objected to it being thrown away upon every rascal and guberlunzie that liked to apply for it; and he asked the bishop to be good enough to remonstrate with his spend-thrift son. The bishop remonstrated, whereupon St. Francis stripped himself stark-naked before the people, and cried out, in his indecent nudity: "Peter Bernardini was my father; I have now but one father—he that is in heaven." And I hope this father in heaven felt proud of his son standing there so shamelessly in the light of the open day. This saint died in 1226. He had begun by imitating Christ, and he ended by imitating him. About two years before his death the jags of a crown of thorns were all over his head. From a very tidy gash in his side blood and water flowed, and the heads of

\* In 1182



crucifixion nails stuck out of his feet and the palms of his hands. All this was well vouched for, and met with general belief. It has as strong historic testimony as the story of the crucifixion, and is, perhaps, quite as true. To these two saints, St. Dominic and St. Francis, the former the founder of the Dominicans, the latter of the Franciscans, Humanity is indebted for the invention of the Holy Inquisition, hardly second in importance to the invention of "the leather botelle."

A real saint is an interesting phenomenon. I have seen only sinners, not saints; and, on account of my wicked pen, I am not likely ever to be on speaking terms with saints, unless they be of the salamander kind that can live in fire and foot the flame-waltz demoniacally. So it interests me to reflect on the subject of saints, and to keep in mind that the saint who rescued Christianity from death more than 700 years ago could see gods and fiends in a way that few saints and no sinners can. He saw Jesus Christ flying with six pairs of wings—a goodly number for a divine insect. On another occasion he met Christ and his mother, and had a chat with them; but it is not on record that he ever met either of Christ's two fathers, the Holy Ghost or Joseph the Carpenter. He had quite a knack for running up against Christ. One day a disgustingly repulsive-looking leper was sitting at the wayside begging, and so nauseating was he that few could venture near enough him to throw at his feet a coin or a crust of bread. But St. Francis ran up to the miserable mendicant, and clasped him in his arms; and, lo, he turned out to be none other than Jesus Christ! How the affairs of heaven got along while two-thirds of deity sat upon the Great White Throne, and one-third of deity sat at the road-side a leprous beggar, neither sacred nor profane history saith. If I were privileged to sit "in glory" at the right-hand of a God with no right hand, I should think twice before I consented to set myself down at the road-side as a starving and half-rotten beggar. But there is no accounting for tastes.

I have referred to the two saints, St. Dominic and St. Francis, and I shall now allude to the two sinners, Raymond, Count of Toulouse, and Frederic II., Emperor of Germany, who played a prominent part in

originating and establishing the Holy Inquisition. Of course, the saints and sinners did not act on the same lines in effecting the purpose of "divine providence," just as both fire and water are necessary to produce the thunderous and vaporous hiss which takes place when the firemen turn their torrents of water upon a fierce chaos of living flame. Count Raymond and the Emperor Frederic were the fire, Saints Dominic and Francis were the water, and the Holy Inquisition was the hiss of hell.

The new life of mental breadth and intellectual restlessness which the Crusades had awakened had, as I have before observed, almost ruined Christianity by breaking down its isolated ignorance. Through the length and breadth of the land strayed the gay troubadour with his trained voice and responsive harp. Soul-stirring were his lays of chivalry and daring; soft but tremulous with passion were his songs of love, and caustic and humorous his lampoons on the clergy and the Church, the shams of the faith, and the jolly frolics of the monks with women and wine. All the solidarity that was still left in Christendom looked on the crisis with the gravest apprehension. The troubadours were denounced as blasphemers and Atheists; but they were popular, and heresy was spreading like wildfire. The strongest pillar against which intellectual and moral revolt could at that time lean was Raymond, Count of Toulouse. So Pope Innocent III. and his cardinals attempted to deal a death-blow at the half-thoughtful, half-scoffing heresy of the age by striking down its most prominent man, Count Raymond. The Pope excommunicated him on the charge of protecting heretics and opening offices of emoluments to Jews. Raymond snapped his fingers at excommunication, regarding the fulminations of the vicar of God on earth much as he would regard the swearing of an exasperated cat.

But was this contumely to be endured? By the thunders of Sinai and the keys of St. Peter, no! An army of half a million of men was launched against Raymond, and his castles and estates were to be divided among the leaders of the expedition against him. Impervious to the slashings of the sword of the spirit, Raymond was overpowered, and had to yield to the sword

of steel. His castles and estates were wrested from him. Stripped naked to the waist, and with a rope round his neck, he was led to the altar and whipped like a dog. The faith that could not be forced into his head by reason was flogged into his back with a scourge.

The army which had been hurled against this heretical peer was, for the most part, generalled by prelates and officered by monks, and, with the charity for which true Christians are celebrated, it determined not to disband till, from the plains of France, it had tinged the heavens with the red reek of human blood. Raymond was overpowered and vanquished; but this half million of military fiends, spurred on by bishops and monks of "the Prince of Peace," who came "not to bring peace, but a sword," clamoured madly for blood. They were the faithful; the land was swarming with heretics, and this was sufficient excuse for indulgence in the pastime of murder and the pleasure of plunder. Amid the indiscriminate carnage at the capture of Beziers, some one ventured to ask how the true Catholic was to be distinguished from the heretic. "Kill them all; God will know his own!" was the fierce response of the Abbot Arnold, the Papal legate. There was a church dedicated to the reformed (?) courtesan, Mary Magdalene, and in and around that church 7,000 human beings were massacred on the accusation that they had said: "*S. Mariam Magdalenam fuisse concubinam Christi.*" If this Christ had taken care to place Miss Magdalene's character above suspicion, by making her Mrs. Emanuel, these 7,000 lives might have been saved. How dangerous it was to put a natural construction upon the conduct of a carpenter-god who tramped the country with a quondam lady of easy virtue! In the town 20,000 human beings were slaughtered, and then the shattered dwellings and the huge carnage heaps were set fire to, and a hill of blackened stones and cinders of human corpses remained to mark how "our Father which art in heaven" loves his children, and how his children, inspired by him and his "Holy Scriptures," love one another. At Lavaur 400 persons were burnt to death in one huge fire. "They made," we are told, "a wonderful blaze, and went to burn everlastingly in hell." These incidents are only mere drops in the ocean of crime that

attempted to wash away the heresy of which the standard-bearer was Raymond of Toulouse.

Frederic II. of Germany was an even harder heretical nut to crack than Count Raymond of Toulouse. He was a man of marked individuality, of determined will, and possessed of learning, intelligence, and mental breadth unusual in his day, and unusual even in ours, among either kings or commoners. He had broken away from the cast-iron dogmas of Christian ignorance and credulity, and was no stranger to the resources of Arab learning and speculation. Learned Mohammedans and Jews were among the ministers of his court. He came mediately, if not immediately, under the influence of the celebrated Averroes of Cordova, the commentator on the writings of Plato and Aristotle, the translator of the "Almagest," a zealous and laborious astronomer, and said to be the first who observed the transit of Mercury across the sun. A man is known by the company he keeps: a strong-minded student and independent thinker is a dangerous companion for a Christian Emperor or a Christian crossing-sweeper. Leaden ignorance and mental asphyxia, not intelligence and mental activity, make the manure-heap upon which Christianity grows. It thrives among shrines and holy wells, and not among paintings, sculptures, and volumes. A Christian monastery, that of Alsace, contained a spot of the blood of our Saviour, a piece of the true Cross, a bottle of the milk of the Virgin Mary, part of the skeleton of John the Baptist, and the arm of the Apostle James. But the possessors of these treasures destroyed the following triumphs of heathen Art and Learning:—The bronze charioteers from the hippodrome; the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus; a group of a sphinx, river-horse, and crocodile; an eagle tearing a serpent; an ass and his driver, originally cast by Augustus, in memory of the battle of Actium; Bellerophon and Pegasus; a bronze obelisk; Paris presenting the apple to Venus; a statue of Helen; the Hercules of Lysippus; and a Juno from the temple of Samos. The bronzes were melted down to make filthy lucre, which Christianity could always appreciate, although she could not appreciate sculpture. She, at the same time, burnt thousands of parchments and MSS., thereby

pauperising the intellect of the world, and making straight the path for the ascendancy of her own brutal ignorance. Several of the writings of the most learned among the ancients were thus lost forever. Christianity was showing to great advantage in her particular rôle, as, with the one hand, she destroyed the monuments of ancient learning, while, with the other hand, she grasped the bottle of milk drawn from the *mamma* of "the mother of God."

To Christianity it was a small matter that she destroyed for ever portions of the writings of Polybius, Dio, Diodorus Siculus, and Livy, as long as she retained, at two different abbeys in France, two different crowns of thorns, and yet each of them the identical crown of thorns which encircled the brow of Jesus at the Crucifixion! The parchments of the olden sages, when not burnt, were washed clean, that missals and Christian drivel might be copied thereupon. To this pious erasing of the writing on the ancient parchments, that the monk might jot down his feeble inanities about a Ghost and a Virgin, and a Son that was born to them, we owe the loss of the missing books of Livy. Learning and the faculty of subtle reasoning were more than a fault in their possessor; they were a crime. If you had the very rudiments of a free intellect, you were bound to reject the Christian faith, which Frederic had characterised as "a mere absurdity;" and, if you rejected it, what then? No Christian proper but despised learning and hated argument. "A man ought never to dispute with a misbeliever, except with his sword, which he ought to drive into the heretic's entrails as far as he can," was the dictum of Christianity's then and now representative man, St. Louis. The *venue* has changed in degree, but not in kind: instead of the sword in the entrails, there is now the cell in Holloway Gaol. Christianity does not *burn* the heretic now; but she does her best to *starve* him for his honest doubt. There is more learning, genius, and sincerity in this one journal than there is in the entire Christian press. Yet out of the profits of one paper for Christian "babes and sucklings" the editor runs a couple of carriages; out of the profits of labour by day and night upon this journal no writer can afford to run a couple of wheelbarrows. Thus Chris-



tianity still manages to register her hatred of inquiry as opposed to credulity, and of doubt as opposed to faith. And yet, as of old, the heretic stands bravely to his post. Wealth, preferment, and the most of that which makes life worth living are on the side of orthodoxy; and yet, thanks to the inherent honesty and courage in human nature, from the days of Arius and Donatus to the days of our own contributors, Heresy has not been without her heroes and Truth without her witnesses.

The Emperor Frederic had associated with learned Jews, Saracens, and non-religionists, like Averroes, and, as a consequence, did not care over much for either "the mother of God" or her milk. A former Pope, Honourous III., had made Frederic marry Yolinda de Lusignan, heiress of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, with a view to making perfectly certain that he should be a Christian bulwark against the Infidel. But even the nuptials with Yolinda could not convince Frederic that his mission was to surrender the breadth and sweep of the mental arena in which he moved, and tack himself on to the coat-tails of the ignorant Galilean and his little coterie of illiterate fishermen and go out to Palestine to stand foot-to-foot in the death-jig against a people, in most respects, superior to his own.

"Be off to the Crusades," quoth Pope Gregory IX. to the husband of Yolinda. But the party thus commanded threw a hundred difficulties in the way of his compliance; his real friends were among the learned and inquiring Arabs, and not among the superstitious Christian cut-throats he was expected to lead on to plunder and carnage. The pressure to paint the cross upon his shoulder and murder valiantly for Jesu's sake at length became irresistible, and off Frederic sailed for the Holy Land to rescue the sepulchre of a personage more fabulous than Merlin or King Arthur. In three days Frederic returned, resolving that who liked might go and fight for Bethlehem and its manger and Calvary and its cross-sticks, but that he would not. "Won't you? Then, by the thunders of God, I'll excommunicate you!" hissed the octogenarian Gregory IX. through his broken and senile teeth, and excommunicate him he did.

Frederic treated the anathema of the Pope as he would have done the curse of a scolding beldame. All curses are, in themselves, alike good; but the beldame's curse would, most likely, extrinsically, not have been allied with anything more formidable than ten furious fingernails; whereas the curse of his Holiness was, extrinsically, emphasized by huge battalia armed to the teeth. No wise man, not even an infallible Pope, curses and then leaves God to carry out the conditions of the curse. If you cannot both pronounce the curse and see it carried into effect, you had better leave cursing alone.

Frederic felt that a papal curse was no trifle, and he levied troops wherever he could, recognising that God Almighty and his vicegerent on earth combined could not, practically, curse a heretic who had more and better steel blades than they, and more and stronger arms to wield them. The strength of God is Tommy Atkins. God's muscles are dollars; God's bones are bayonets. Frederic the heretic knew this well. The Pope, in God's name, pronounced upon the Emperor a second, and even more terrible, curse and excommunication; but Frederic, warding off the curse with swords, faced both the Pope and God—hurled the former off the chair of St. Peter and expelled him from Rome, and what the latter thought of the matter is not on record. But the expelled Pope still hated and cursed Frederic, with his science, his giving freedom to the slaves, libraries, universities, and other things detested by the Christian Church—a Church for bats, and not for men. Bitterly Christ's cursing vicar proclaimed, "Out of the sea a beast has arisen, whose name is written all over, 'BLASPHEMY.'" The Pope had the modesty to declare as follows:—"We are no mere mortal man: we have the place of God upon earth." But, curiously enough, when the "no mere mortal man" came in contact with the "beast" arisen from the sea, the "beast" had the best of it. For thirty years his name who was written all over "Blasphemy" successfully confronted him who occupied "the place of God upon earth;" and when, at last, Frederic was carried to his tomb his Holiness exclaimed: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad!"

Even during the life of Frederic several of his heretical sympathisers had had their bodies burned to save their souls; but, now that he was gone, the jackall of "the living God" ventured out of his lair and yelled for all the blood in Europe that touched the brain with the daring of Thought or warmed the vein with the pulse of Freedom. The tomes of Academia gave way to the corpses of Aceldama. Meaner heretics had found strength and courage under the æges of Raymond and Frederic. They had left their mantle behind them. A voice from their grave called the serfdom of the world up to higher levels and more exalted ideals. If this voice could not be silenced, woe unutterable to Rome. The gnomon of time threw a shadow athwart the dial of her doom. She must strike or perish! and she struck. The incarnation of Authority, the friend of Faith, the enemy of Reason, she crushed Reason under her heel and supported Faith with the axe, the dungeon, and the stake.

"I came not to send peace, but a sword."\* "I am come to send fire on the earth."† "If any man hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple."‡ In the proximate destruction of the universe, and other vaticinations, he of Nazareth was a false prophet; but he amply atoned for that by prophesying with diabolical truth anent his mission to bring "sword" and "fire" and "hate." Through the length and breadth of Christendom the sword dripped with gore, the air was hot and stercorous with the fires that consumed human flesh, and the bonds of society were broken with the rancour of human hate. Over the graves of Raymond and Frederic malediction hissed and anathema thundered, and the orders of Dominic and Francis, the mendicant friars, proved of inestimable value in furthering the kingdom of God and blasting the kingdom of Man.

Intellectual revolt must not be combatted with intellectual weapons, but must be baptised in fire and drowned in blood. The Church well knew from what source the revolt arose, from inquiry as against credulity. The study of the physics and metaphysics of Aristotle, which

\* Matt. x. 34. † Luke xii. 46. ‡ Luke xiv. 26.

had come to Christendom through an Arabic channel, was suppressed. The devilishly sinister practice of auricular confession was instituted so that the charge of heresy could be wormed out of the mother against her own son, from the son against the mother, or from the wife against the husband of her love. Jesus Christ was the means of introducing to the earth a new line of industry, a new manufacture. Tall chimneys did not arise, wheels did not fly round, and spindles birr; but busy hands were piling the fagots round the stake, the torture-engines creaked and crunched, the thumbscrew, the scavenger's daughter, and the iron virgin were in full play, and the dungeons were filled with the cries of agony. The Inquisition was now fairly on its feet, and the hope of Europe was fairly on its back.

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