



...cont'd from last week. Part III

So what happened? In this case the state started the Inquisition and the Pope did not want the state to be in charge of it so Pope Gregory IX set up the Inquisition (Emperor Frederick II is the one who set up the Inquisition). Frederick II was an odd character. He threatened the Pope that he would convert to Islam if the Pope didn't do what he wanted. Such a situation would be terrifying during those times if the Holy Roman Emperor converted to Islam. Frederick set it up but there was no way the Pope was going to allow him to do that. He used the assistance of the Mendicant orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans. These were two orders which almost universally and almost without exception exercised or took care of the Inquisition.

What went on during an Inquisition? What happened? These orders were picked because the Mendicant orders were considered to be less worldly. They had less property unlike the big monasteries and abbey's, and were less politically connected. They also had that freedom from worldly motives and they also had more learning. They were appointed to the job also because you need people who know theology well, knew what heresy is and what it isn't and also those who knew moral theology well for they had to know what people would be responsible for and what they are not responsible for.

To these Tribunals were also given cases that involved immorality, breaking of private contracts and the profanation of churches. So they just didn't handle heresy cases but also some other practical moral issues that could really ruin a small town. So what happened? The Inquisition comes into town, Dominican Father let's say, and he has some assistants with him. Some public announcements are made with the assistance of the parish priest; the announcement is made that those who have professed or were involved in this heresy of Albigensianism should confess their fault and receive an appropriate penance. They would have the grace period of one month to confess. I'm just describing the historical facts. If someone came forward and admitted to going to their meetings or it was someone who was dating an Albigensian and she didn't want to marry because she didn't want to have children (they also had to be vegetarians in order to reach perfection) well, then they would confess and receive a penance like fasting for one day or do something to make up for what they did. A jury was set up of the clergy and lay people of the town. The parish priest would take care of bringing in the accused. The accused was given counsel, but admittedly counsel then was not as we see it now. The counsel's principal job was to make sure that justice was done. It was not to defend you or to get you off the heresy charge. If you were guilty he had to say that you are guilty; he couldn't say, "I plead the 5th amendment," as that didn't exist back then. Then he had to have two witnesses. The names of the witnesses were not revealed in the beginning. Why? It's an interesting fact. The accused was asked to give a list of his enemies, anyone in the town who had something against him and why. These people were ordinarily excluded (unless there was a preponderance of the evidence) against the person.

Let's say that it is a fact that a person was guilty of heresy but did not confess and is not sorry then he is sent to jail because heresy is a crime. Nowadays we don't think of heresy as a crime in our society. We think of religion as something completely personal and that nobody has any business telling us what to believe and not believe; that's our culture. This is the way we think. Back then they did not think that way. They thought the religion revealed by God is the highest good of society and if it is undermined then everything will fall apart. People will begin to live immoral lives and become unfaithful to their duties and their families; everything will be a mess. That was the basic rationale for all of this.

We live in a society where we are willing to go to war in the name of freedom. We say our enemies hate freedom. That is, they hate the ideas upon which this country is supposed to be founded. President Lincoln said, "Our founding fathers founded this country dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." We say we will go around the world and tell certain states what they may or may not do, and that they will have to reckon with us if they don't favor this nation. Whether we are sincere or not is another thing. It's a doctrine of life and society. Our nation of freedom is a belief not shared by many people on the face of the earth and yet we are willing to kill and be killed in order to defend it. That's a fact.

Final part next week. Phillip Bellini, DRE>

