

Inquisition

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The Inquisition was *an ecclesiastical tribunal established by Pope Gregory IX c. 1232 for the suppression of heresy. It was active chiefly in northern Italy and southern France, becoming notorious for the use of torture. In 1542 the papal Inquisition was reinstated to combat Protestantism, eventually becoming an organ of papal government.* The infamous *Spanish Inquisition was an ecclesiastical court established in Roman Catholic Spain in 1478 and directed originally against converts to Judaism and Islam but later also against Protestants. It operated with great severity until suppressed in the early nineteenth century.*

Heresy is a belief or opinion contrary to orthodox religious (especially Christian) doctrine, or an opinion profoundly at odds with what is generally accepted.

We may ask ourselves if Pope Gregory IX intended what became of that which he established. My mother was fond of saying, *The road to hell is paved with good intentions.* If this is true or not I don't know. It is beyond my ken to judge the intentions of men's hearts. Something I, and the rest of

humanity, would do well to remember and practice each moment of our lives.

The easiest thing in the world for us to do, in our condition, is to judge *The Inquisitions*, condemning them and those who took part in them. When we do, we unwittingly take part in an ongoing Inquisition with which the lower prosecutes the higher. As happened with the *Salem Witch Trials* that took place in colonial Massachusetts *between 1692 and 1693. More than 200 people were accused of practicing witchcraft--the Devil's magic--and 20 were executed. Eventually, the colony admitted the trials were a mistake and compensated the families of those convicted.* Eventually the Church admitted *The Inquisitions* were a mistake. Today *The Inquisitions* and *Witch Trials* take on new, scientific names as well as more refined forms of prosecution, but the original intent remains the same, leading down to the same end; ignorance, prejudice and the ultimate violence of negative emotions spawned by a lack of understanding of the lower for the higher. These words will never be understood by the accusers and inquisitors because they come from a higher level. It is only after we reach that higher level in ourselves that we cease accusing.

Apart from *The Inquisitions*, and the *Witch Trials*, history is littered with examples of similar acts of violence against our fellows. War crimes, genocides, final solutions, religious and political pogroms and the general trend of man's inhumanity to man. The constant repetition of such personal and institutional insanity throughout recorded history right up to the present gives credence to Friedrich Hegel's observation that, *The only thing we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history*. There is however, another definition, a higher understanding of inquisition - *A period of prolonged and intensive questioning or investigation*. If this *prolonged and intensive questioning or investigation* is applied to ourselves, sincerely, internally, and properly guided, we have found a very important tool for our development. Turned outwardly, it is a cruel and violent abomination, spurred by fear, misunderstanding, petty self-emotions and ignorance of one's own acquired state. Turned inwardly however, it can cast the light of consciousness on the parts of ourselves that make these cruel and atrocious acts of violence against others like ourselves recur. This is the best and highest use of inquisition and the most rarely practiced in our world. If we could see what we prosecute on the outside is what we deny on the inside everything would be different. Only those with ears to hear will hear. The rest would do well to learn how to listen.