



# The Burning of Giordano Bruno.

OR

## The Terrible Crime Against GIORDANO BRUNO (1548-1600)

What sort of man was Giordano Bruno that the Roman Catholic Church would inflict such an inhuman and fiendish death as burning him alive? What crimes did he commit? Was he a murderer? A thief? Was he a person of low and depraved character? No! He was none of these things. He was in fact an honest and gentle man, with penetrating thoughts and a fiery mind; a man of great ideas and strong convictions; a man who had outgrown the primitive fables that Catholicism uses to control kings, governments and nations; and to keep the common people in ignorance and superstitious slavery.

We must be honest: The criminal was not Giordano Bruno, the criminal was the Holy Inquisition and its master, the Roman Catholic Church.

Throughout its long history Christianity has committed the most heinous crimes that sick and criminal minds could imagine, and the Church of Rome has done more than its share of these awful crimes.

The Holy Inquisition was a direct part of the Roman Catholic Church for all the hundreds of years it was in operation. The Inquisitors were high Roman Catholic clerics, and under the direct command of the head of the Roman Catholic Church -- the Catholic pope. At any time during those long and horrible years of dungeon, torture and burning, any one of the many men that held the position of pope could have ordered the Inquisition stopped and dissolved. But that order NEVER came! As opposition grew and secular power became stronger, the Inquisition was forced to cease its brutal crimes, not from justice, kindness or pity, but from loss of wicked power.

The Office of the Holy Inquisition is still in existence, only the word "Inquisition" has been dropped, so today it is known officially as "The Holy Office" -- (Congregatio sancti officii). This slight change in name came about in 1908 when Pius X reorganized the Roman curia and dripped the word "Inquisition" from the title of the "Holy Office." This "Holy Office" is still charged with "maintaining the purity of the faith,"

and there is no doubt that if the Roman Catholic Church should again gain sufficient power the horrors of the Holy Inquisition will revive.

It is interesting to observe that the vast majority of the victims of the Inquisition were Catholics. The Inquisition was dedicated to preserving the "purity" of the Catholic belief system and anyone who doubted -- or was suspected of doubting -- the absolute truth of Catholic dogma, even after that dogma had been disproved by scientific progress, that person was brought before the Inquisition and was in danger of his or her life.

Never has any organization stooped to such murderous tactics to assure its continued political power. To maintain this power the Church was willing to defeat and destroy all hope of intellectual progress and human betterment.

We are concerned here only with the terrible murder of Giordano Bruno, but Bruno was but one of many thousands of victims of the Un-Holy Inquisition. And aside from those thousands of victims who were burned at the stake, there were hundreds of thousands more who had their property confiscated and their families left destitute while they wasted their life away in the dungeons of the Inquisition -- some things are worse even than death by fire, and the Holy Inquisition employed them all.

## **A Sketch of Giordano Bruno -- The Man They Burned Alive.**

Bruno, the greatest Italian philosopher of the Renaissance, was born near Nola in the village of Cicala, and was named Filippo at birth. Bruno took the name Giordano upon entering the order of the Dominicans at Naples when he was fifteenth years of age. Because of his views on transubstantiation and the immaculate conception Bruno was charged with impiety and suffered persecution early in his career. He finally fled from Rome about 1576, and wandered through Europe, he was in Geneva 1579, but Calvinism was not pleasing to him and he went on to Lyons, Toulouse and Montpellier, and arrived at Paris in 1581.

Everywhere he went Bruno spread the new thought that was creating a philosophical revolution at that time. He was a true man of the Renaissance who had discovered the natural universe behind the mists of Christian mythology that had so long darkened the world of thought. He

accepted the Copernican ideas that the Earth was not the center of the Universe, and this led him to question other systems of philosophy that was accepted simply because they had been handed down from antiquity. Like the old Greek philosophers, he looked at nature for himself. He had read deeply of the writings of the Renaissance, and of the ancient world, as his writings show. But he was no copier of ideas, his philosophy had a distinct flavor and fiery spirit that reflected the grand personality of Bruno himself.

Bruno's lectures on astronomy were well received, and at Paris he was offered a chair of philosophy at the University -- if he would consent to receive the Mass -- he refused.

In 1583 Bruno crossed over to England where he remained for about two years. His writings show that he found the pomp and superstition as bad at Oxford as it had been in Geneva, and the brutality of English manners even worse. At that time any Oxford professor that dared to differ from Aristotle was fined five shillings for every point of difference. And Bruno detested Aristotle.

However it was in England that Bruno did his best Works; 'The Cena de le Ceneri,' (Ash Wednesday conversation) was printed there in 1584, and also his strange 'Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante,' (Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast) and two of his metaphysical Works. His 'Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast' was an allegory treating chiefly of moral philosophy, but giving therein the essence of Bruno's philosophy. The gods are represented as resolving to banish the constellations from the heavens, which served to remind them of their evil deeds. In their places are put the moral virtues. The first of the three dialogues contains the substance of the allegory, which, under the disguise of an assault on heathen mythology, was a direct attack on all forms of man made religions.

From a philosophical point of view the first part of the second dialogue of his 'Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast' is the most important. Among the moral virtues which take the place of the beasts are Truth, Prudence, Wisdom, Law and Universal Judgment, and in the explanation of what these mean Bruno unfolds the inner essence of his own system. Truth is the unity and substance which underlies all things; Prudence or Providence is the regulating power of truth, and includes both liberty and necessity: Wisdom is providence itself in its

supersensible aspect -- in man it is reason which grasps the truth of things; Law results from wisdom, for no good law is irrational, and its sole end and aim is the good of mankind; Universal Judgment is the principle whereby men are judged according to their deeds, and not according to their belief in this or that catechism.

Mingled with Bruno's allegorical philosophy are the most vehement attacks upon the established religion. In his travels Bruno saw the results of entrenched religion, and in his writings he passed severe judgement on what he had observed: The monks are stigmatized as dogmatist who would destroy the joy of life on earth, and who are themselves greedy, dissolute and the breeders of eternal dissension and squabbles. The mysteries of faith are scoffed at. The Jewish records are put on a level with the Greek myths, and miracles are laughed at as magical tricks. Through all this runs the train of thought resulting naturally from Bruno's fundamental principles, and familiar in modern philosophy as Spinozism. These principles include the denial of any particular providence; denial of the doctrine of the uselessness of prayer; the need for a sense of liberty and necessity, and an appropriate definition of good and evil.

In 1585-1586 he returned to Paris from England, but he was soon driven from this refuge, and he goes to Marburg and Wittenberg, the headquarters of Lutheranism. It is said that here, or in England, he embraced Protestantism but nothing in his writings would indicate this. Several of his logical Works appeared during his stay at Wittenberg, among them, 'De Lampade combinatoria Lulliana,' 1587 and 'De Progressu et Lampade venatoria logicorum,' 1587). In 1588 he went to Prague, then to Helmstadt. In 1591 he was at Frankfort where he published three important metaphysical works, 'De Triplici Minimo et Mensura'; 'De Momade, Numero, et Figura'; 'De Immenso et Innumerabilibus.'

After Frankfort he went to Zürich, where he accepted an invitation to go to Venice from Giovanni Mocenigo; it was a fatal decision. At Venice he was betrayed to the Inquisition by Mocenigo and was thrown into prison. In 1593 he was taken to Rome and there he spent Seven years in confinement. On the 9th of February 1600 he was excommunicated, and on the 17th was burned at the stake.

For more than two centuries Bruno did not receive the recognition he so justly deserved, however on the 9th of June 1889, as a result of the International Freethought movement, a statue to him was unveiled in Rome in the Campo dei Fiori. (See 'The Memorial to Giordano Bruno in the Campo dei Fiori at Rome' on this CD-ROM.)

Bruno's writings have been much neglected but now many scholars believe that Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz and others were indebted to him for their main principles. If these later philosophers did not get their principles directly from Bruno, it is undeniable that their main principles are nearly identical with those of Italian philosopher. That Bruno's Works was known to later scholars is evident in that Schelling named one of his works after him, '*Bruno*.'

This then is the man so brutally murdered by the Holy Inquisition of the Roman Catholic Church in the Campo dei Fiori at Rome on the 9th of February 1600.

It is the duty of every human being to question the beliefs, claims, results and History of the Institutions and ideals they embrace, to be sure those Institutions and ideals are likely to produce goodness and not evil in the world.

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