

CHAPTER 50 : SPAIN AND PORTUGAL PRE-1775

The Protestant Reformation was stamped out of Spain and Portugal soon after it had begun. Valladolid and Seville enjoyed some Protestants. But the Spanish Inquisition terrified most from joining Protestant ranks. And many of those that did join, later recanted in order to save their skin. But there were some noble Protestants who loved Christ more than this world. One example is María de Bohorques. She was the natural daughter of Pero García de Xeres, a prominent citizen of Seville. She was a disciple of Cassiodoro de Reina, highly educated and thoroughly conversant with scripture. At aged 26 she was apprehended by the authorities for her Protestant faith. When the Inquisitors entered her cell that night, she received them pleasantly and expressed no surprise at their fateful message. It was in vain that relays of frailes sought her conversion--Dominicans following Jesuits and Franciscans succeeding to Carmelites. She met all their arguments with biblical texts, and defended her faith- unlike so many others that submitted. Thus she passed the night until summoned to the procession. On the staging former Protestant Ponce de Leon sought to convert her but she silenced him, saying that it was a time for meditation on the Savior. She treated the frailes who surrounded her as troublesome intermeddlers but, at three o'clock, she yielded to their entreaties. But later repenting, the Inquisitors put her to trial again, and she was burnt to death.

The Jesuits were especially successful on the Iberian peninsula, their founder having been born there. Ignatius Loyola breathed a spirit into the order which spread among the Spaniards like an infection. Some of the highest grandees enrolled themselves in its ranks. In the province of Valencia, the multitudes that flocked to hear the Jesuit preacher, Araoz, were such that no cathedral could contain them, and a pulpit was erected for him in the open air. From the city of Salamanca, where in 1548 they had opened their establishment in a small, wretched house, the Jesuits spread themselves over all Spain. Two members of the society were sent to the King of Portugal, at his own request: the one he retained as his confessor, the other he dispatched to the East Indies. This was that Francis Xavier who there gained for himself, says Ranke, "the name of an apostle, and the glory of a saint." At the courts of Madrid and Lisbon they soon acquired immense influence. They were the confessors of the nobles and the counselors of the monarch.

The Jesuits, working with the other Romanists, were quite successful in suppressing true religion in the region, having the complete assistance of the civil authorities. Both Spain and Portugal went to great efforts not only to stamp out Protestantism within, but also to seal out Protestant influences which might come from foreign nations. Spanish Protestantism was a mere episode, of no practical moment save as its repression fortified the Inquisition and led to the segregation of Spain from the intellectual and industrial movement of the succeeding centuries.

We have already considered Spain's vigorous efforts to extirpate Protestantism from foreign nations. She engaged in overt offensive actions as well as more subtle diplomatic efforts to achieve her ends. An example of the latter effort included a secret treaty, in 1656, between the wandering Charles II of England (waiting to take the throne from Cromwell's regime) and Philip. The treaty pledged the former to bring about "freedom

of conscience” in England, but was discreetly silent about toleration in Spain. As another example, Spain- along with France- sent financial aid at the beginning of the American Revolution to the American Revolutionaries, in order to weaken Protestant Britain and to undermine established Protestantism in English-speaking America.

Spain and Portugal paid a heavy price for their policies, not only in spiritual terms, but also in material terms. They descended from their places as the most powerful nations in the world, which they had earlier derived from their foreign colonies. For Spain, a series of long, costly wars and revolts began a steady decline of power. Controversy over succession to the throne consumed the country during the 18th century in the War of Spanish Succession.

Portugal had already declined by 1755. But in 1755 God let loose an earthquake upon Portugal which devastated it, and which the world has rarely seen the likes of. Modern geologists estimate that the Lisbon earthquake approached magnitude 9 on the Richter scale. The earthquake struck in early morning of November 1, the All Saints Day Catholic holiday. Contemporary reports state that the earthquake lasted for three-and-a-half minutes, causing gigantic fissures five meters wide to rip apart the city center. The survivors rushed to the open space of the docks for safety and watched as the water receded, revealing the sea floor, littered by lost cargo and old shipwrecks. Moments later an enormous tsunami engulfed the harbor, and the city downtown. In the areas unaffected by the tidal wave, fire quickly broke out, and flames raged for five days. Lisbon and all the south of the country were affected and destruction was generalized. Of a population of 275,000, about 90,000 were killed. Eighty-five percent of Lisbon's buildings were destroyed, including its famous palaces and libraries. Several buildings which had suffered little damage due to the earthquake were destroyed by the fire. The brand new Opera House, opened only six months before, was burned to the ground. The Royal Palace was destroyed by the earthquake and the tsunami. Inside, the 70,000-volume library and hundreds of works of art were lost. The precious royal archives concerning the exploration of the Atlantic and old documents also disappeared. The earthquake destroyed also the major churches of Lisbon, namely the Cathedral of Santa Maria, and the Basilicas of São Paulo, Santa Catarina, São Vincente de Fora, and the Misericordia. The effects of the earthquake were felt all over Europe, though principally in Portugal. Many contemporary writers, such as Voltaire, mentioned the earthquake in their writings. The Lisbon earthquake made many people wonder about the existence of a God who permitted these events to happen. This in turn helped further fuel the fires of secularist revolution, which we shall examine in later chapters.

Following the earthquake, King Joseph I of Portugal gave his Prime Minister, who was later given the title Marquis of Pombal, more power, turning Sebastião de Melo into a kind of dictator. As his power grew, his enemies increased in number, and bitter disputes with the high nobility became frequent. In 1758 Joseph I was wounded in an attempted regicide, alleged to be by various nobles and the Jesuits. The Jesuits, whose wealth in Portugal and its colonies was considerable, were expelled by the Marquis of Pombal from the country, and their assets were confiscated by the crown. Other Roman Catholic

nations in Europe would do the same. But it was not accompanied by any Biblical Reformation in the country, so the nation remained captive to Romanism and humanism.

God thus greatly judged both Spain and Portugal for their wickedness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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This second volume in a two-part series on church history is primarily an edited version of the following works on church history and Biblical interpretation:

James A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism* (Cassell & Company, Limited: London, Paris & New York. 1878). (see electronic version at <http://www.whatsaiththescriture.com/Fellowship/James.A.Wylie.html>)

Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA, 1997). (see electronic version at <http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/About.htm>)

J. Parnell McCarter, *Sabbath Bible Survey Tests and Assignments* (PHSC: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003). (see electronic version at <http://www.puritans.net/curriculum/>)

J. Parnell McCarter, *Let My People Go* (PHSC: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003). (see electronic version at <http://www.puritans.net/curriculum/>)

The on-line resources of Historicism Research Foundation at <http://www.historicism.net/> also proved invaluable for my understanding of Biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy concerning Christian church history, especially as revealed in the book of Revelation, serves as the foundation upon which all church histories should be based.

Other references especially consulted for this chapter include:

Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain Volume Three*, THE LIBRARY OF IBERIAN RESOURCES ONLINE, <http://libro.uca.edu/lea3/8lea3.htm> .
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spain#History>
<http://nisee.berkeley.edu/lisbon/>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1755_Lisbon_earthquake
http://www.xs4all.nl/~kvenjb/madmonarchs/maria1/maria1_bio.htm

Here is a most insightful quote from Lea's book concerning the change in the Roman Catholic Church from the Middle Ages to the Protestant Reformation:

“Before the Lutheran revolt there was much liberty of thought [412] and speech allowed throughout Catholic Europe. Neither Erasmus nor popular writers and preachers had scruple in ridiculing and holding up to detestation the superstitions of the people, the vices, the greed and the corruptions of the clergy, and the venality and oppression of the Holy See. The Franciscan, Thomas Murner, who subsequently became the most virulent reviler of Luther, castigated the clergy, both regular and secular, with more vigor if with less skill than Erasmus. Erasmus himself, in his *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, or Manual of the Christian Soldier, did not hesitate to stigmatize, as a new Judaism, the reliance reposed on external observances, which had supplanted true piety, causing the teachings of Christ to be neglected--and the *Enchiridion* had been approved by Adrian VI, at that time the head of the University of Louvain.

When, however, it became necessary, in order to cure these universally admitted evils, to strike at the dogmas of scholastic theology, of which these evils were the outcome; when Northern Europe was rising almost unanimously in Luther's support, and when the curia recognized that it had to deal, not with a mere scholastic debate between monks, but with a rapidly developing revolution, the necessity was soon felt of a rigid definition of orthodoxy, while the licence which had been good-naturedly tolerated, so long as it did not threaten the loss of power and wealth, became heresy, to be diligently inquired into and relentlessly punished.”