

**TWO LECTURES ON THE  
INQUISITION, DELIVERED IN  
SPRING ST. CHURCH,  
MILWAUKEE, MARCH, 1853, PP.  
5-75**

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**JOSEPH G. WILSON**

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TWO LECTURES  
ON  
THE INQUISITION,

DELIVERED IN  
SPRING ST. CHURCH,

MILWAUKEE,

BY REV. JOSEPH G. WILSON,  
PROF., MILWAUKEE UNIVERSITY,

MARCH, 1853.

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## A CARD.

PROF. WILSON:

There is great interest expressed in your able and instructive Lectures on the *Inquisition*. We are desirous to see them in a permanent form, that those who did not hear them, as well as ourselves, may have the pleasure and profit of their perusal.

We therefore respectfully solicit a copy for publication.

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Milwaukee, March 30, 1853.

Milwaukee, April 4, 1853.

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GENTLEMEN:—After some hesitation, I have decided, as soon as my professional engagements will permit, to place a copy of the Lectures which you have expressed a desire to publish, at your disposal.

Yours respectfully,

J. G. WILSON.





# LECTURE I.

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## THE INQUISITION.

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The right of every man to perfect liberty of Religion and of Conscience, a right guaranteed by the Creator, as the sacred heritage of the soul, inseparable from its existence and indispensable to its responsibility, has been maintained and defended by all good Governments, Civil and Ecclesiastical, in every age of the world; and is restrained only by tyrants.—Persecution for the exercise of the rights of Conscience, is repugnant to the profound mysteries of human life, and to the inviolable principles and order of Nature. All the refined instincts of the human soul cry out against it; and the only apology that can be presented in extenuation of the atrocities of a former age, must be derived from the ignorance and barbarism of those by whom they were enacted.

Opinions may be confuted without prejudice to right; but freedom of thought and of expression may not be suppressed without sin in the sight of God, and violence against man.—Within the domain of Conscience, no Potentate nor Priest has a right to enter; and the intruder within that sacred enclosure should be expelled, as the apostate angels were rejected from the Courts of Heaven.

A Church “out of which there is no salvation,” has no divine warrant for enforcing the true faith upon unwilling disciples; for Jehovah himself, in all the merciful discipline of Providence and Grace, recognizes and respects the moral

freedom and personal responsibility of his people. The Government, therefore, or Hierarchy, which pronounces sentence of proscription upon opinions or doctrines to which millions of men, enlightened and honest, conscientiously adhere, is a bold, presumptuous usurpation of the prerogative of Jehovah—an assumption of despotic power, inconsistent with the rights of man and the peace of the world; for should a whole nation agree to worship according to the ritual of the Grand Lama, or Sovereign Pontiff, to-day, they may be burned to-morrow for having done so, either by the capricious monarch, or by his unprincipled successor.

Those persons, whether Catholics or Protestants, who, in contempt of personal interest, and in the face of danger, endure persecution, are martyrs to their convictions of truth—the world's true noblemen, worthy of a better fate than exile or imprisonment; to whose memory we might appropriately, in emulation of the spirit of antiquity, erect altars and statues, as having displayed the highest efforts of human virtue.

American citizens hold in reprobation the principle of Inquisitorial persecution, and the artful appeals of Priestcraft cannot reconcile them to the diabolical policy of tyrants.—The American guaranty of the freedom of Conscience, in the Constitution of the United States, is not merely an arrangement of policy, but the expression of a fundamental principle, of universal adaptation—founded upon the nature of man and the Law of God; and every coercive measure, in violation of this principle, by Church or State, by Catholics or Protestants, calls for the reprobation of the whole civilized world.

Violent exceptions do not destroy the principle—flagrant fanatical outrages do not justify its repudiation, and even the

Italian States should be required, by the moral force of civilized nations, to pay respect to this primary article of the Christian faith. Every Roman Cathedral and humble Chapel in the country is a monument of the Catholic liberality of the founders of our Government; for had they imitated the example of the Sect of Rome, freedom of Conscience would have been accorded only to the dominant majority. Every free government, and every truly Catholic Church, respects and cherishes the rights of minorities.

American citizens in Italy, and protesting Catholics, should be permitted to exercise the rights of conscience, even in sight of the Vatican, as do the vassals of the Pope, under the protecting Ægis of the Constitution of the United States; and the burning indignation of the world should be aroused against the State or Council, Civil or Ecclesiastical, which subjects God's freemen to torture, imprisonment or death, for non-conformity to prescribed religious dogmas or ceremonies. The despotism which makes non-conformity a penal offense, is a disgrace to the governing party, and an outrage upon the governed. The Church which cannot be saved without so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of its Priesthood, deserves to die—and it will die, for it is blasted by the breath of the Almighty, and its ghostly officials shriek in agony at the entrance of the light, and burn the Bible which reveals to the perishing tribes of earth the way of Life.

Freedom of thought, of speech, and of worship, is an inalienable right; because the relation of man to the Creator is prior and paramount to that which he sustains to society, and cannot be affected by the changing relations of social and political life. To establish and enforce any system of worship, transcends the lawful prerogative of an accidental majority, or of a permanently dominant party. The careless and