

**WERE 'HERETICS' EVER BURNED  
ALIVE AT ROME? A REPORT OF  
THE PROCEEDINGS IN THE  
ROMAN INQUISITION AGAINST  
FULGENTIO MANFREDI**

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Were 'heretics' ever burned alive at Rome? A report of the proceedings in the Roman inquisition against Fulgentio Manfredi by Richard Gibbings

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**RICHARD GIBBINGS**

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A REPORT

OF THE PROCEEDINGS IN

THE ROMAN INQUISITION

AGAINST

FULGENTIO MANFREDI;

TAKEN FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT BROUGHT FROM ITALY

BY A FRENCH OFFICER, AND EDITED,

WITH A

PARALLEL ENGLISH VERSION, AND ILLUSTRATIVE ADDITIONS,

BY THE

REV. RICHARD GIBBINGS, M.A.,

RECTOR OF RAYMUNTERDONET, IN THE DIOCESE OF RAPHOE.

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LONDON:

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1852.

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REPORT  
OF THE  
PROCEEDINGS,  
&c.

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WERE "HERETICS" EVER BURNED ALIVE AT ROME?

IN the *Dublin Review* for June, 1850<sup>1</sup>, in an article attributed to Cardinal Wiseman, it was boldly declared to be a "FACT," that "the Roman Inquisition,—that is to say, the tribunal which was immediately subject to the control and direction of the Popes themselves in their own city,—has never been known to order the execution of capital punishment." Is this *a fact*, or is the assertion *false*?

An opportunity shall now be afforded of determining this question by means of one example of what was nothing extraordinary until the object aimed at—the extinction of light—had been suffi-

<sup>1</sup> p. 457.

ciently accomplished. But, at the outset, it is to be observed, (and the remark may enable us to account for the degree of fearlessness exhibited in the foregoing statement,) that the policy of the papal Court, especially as compared with that of Spain, has always been to guard against needless publicity with respect to the punishment of criminals; and the efforts to prevent intimations of the truth from transpiring have been attended with so much success, that books are nearly altogether silent; and, during three centuries of incessant warfare between the Churches of England and Rome, a single document, similar to those which shall be presently produced, has never hitherto emerged from secrecy. The historian of the suppressed Reformation in Italy<sup>1</sup> "entertained no hope of finding access" to such records; and heartily lamented the difficulty of obtaining the slightest authentic information, "as the archives of the Inquisition are locked up."

The peculiar case of Manfredi is available for two distinct purposes. It furnishes a conclusive answer to the delusions of the *Dublin Review* relative to the infliction of the punishment of death in obedience to the sentence of the Inquisition; and it also presents to our notice an instance of violated faith, more directly chargeable upon the Church of Rome, and less liable to be pal-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mc Crie. See his Preface, and p. 271.

liated by her defenders, than the iniquitous dealings of the Council of Constance with Hus and Jerom of Prague two hundred years before. The first and principal division of this subject we shall arrive at an acquaintance with in due time: the consideration of the latter point may be fitly introduced by the citation of the following passage from the Bishop of Exeter's invaluable *Letters to Charles Butler, Esq.*<sup>3</sup> :—

“ Father Fulgentio, the friend of the illustrious Paul Sarpi, was prevailed with to come to Rome under a safe-conduct granted by the Pope. When there, he was treated as a heretic, and, on appealing to his safe-conduct, was answered, that ‘ *the conduct was safe for his coming thither, but not for his going thence.*’ After this, who will deny the strict fidelity of the Church of Rome to all its engagements with heretics ?”

Bearing in mind that the individual here mentioned was not the Servite, the biographer of Sarpi, but Fulgentio Manfredi, a Franciscan Monk and Priest, who, when resident at Venice, had “spared not to rebuke the vices of the Roman Court,” we have to reflect upon the circumstances which demonstrate the treachery of his enemies.

Early in the year 1607, the differences between the papal and Venetian governments were termi-

<sup>3</sup> p. 298. London, 1826.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters of Father Paul*, pp. 38, 39. London, 1693.