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THE CHURCH vs WITCHES

A thread

There was a time in the past where the Church was fully in control of the then known modern world, that era is best known as the Dark Age because that was the time where anything that resemble progress and enlightenment was met with persecution and death.

At the top of the list of people who really suffered at the hands of the Church were "Witches"

Now, everything you know about witches, or what you think you know, was heavily shaped by the events that took part in the Dark ages, events that I'm about to break down as clearly as I can.

To better gain prominence, Christianity began by demonising other religions that already existed. They demonised Mediterranean gods, the gods of Celts, Teutons and any other religion that could pose a threat to their expansion.

These calculated moves made it possible for the worshippers of these gods to be called Devil Worshipers.

Church leaders promoted the persecution of such people, claiming that they were powerful malignant agents of Satan. And so, this marked the beginning of the Dark Age, an age where violence and death were the currency.

Countless thousands of people whose only crime was to reject Christianity were judicially killed in Europe over the course of several hundred years. One particular person who really turned on the genocide was Pope Gregory IX.

To further cement their growing control, the Church started to label anyone and anything that stood against it as WITCHES.

Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 called for action of the utmost severity against witches. He wrote that witches were hindering men from performing the sexual act and women from conceiving

The Pope commissioned two Dominican inquisitors in northern Germany to write the book *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches). A book that detailed very despicable methods of extracting confessions from 'witches' through torture.

The book was also full of sexual fantasy: witches flying through the air to meet the Devil and copulate with him; dismembered human sex organs living like chicks in birds' nests...

....demons copulating with men, then changing gender to copulate with sleeping women, and impregnating them with human sperm illicitly acquired from their earlier male partners

Basically, confessions of witchcraft were guaranteed by the use of torture, and these confessions confirmed the reality of witchcraft. The reality of witchcraft promoted terror of witches. Terror generated accusations. Accusations called for torture.

More torture produced more confessions and even more accusations. It was a vicious circle, a huge terrible wheel powered by the authority of the Church.

The questions asked were not whether offences had been committed, but where and when the offences had been committed, and who else had been involved. Guilt was assumed. It was merely the details that needed filling in.

In 1524 alone, more than 1,000 people were convicted and burned in the district of Como. Between 1587 and 1593 the Archbishop of Trier had 368 witches burned. Between 1623 and 1631 the Bishop of Würzburg (Philip Adolf von Ehrenberg) burned more than 900, many of them children.

CHILDREN

A witch-burning count as high as 900 was not unusual for a top inquisitor. Some inquisitors lost count. The Bishop of Bamberg (Johann Georg II) had a famous witch-house built, complete with cells and torture chambers.

It contained common instruments of torture: thumbscrews, leg vices, whipping stocks fitted with iron spikes, scalding lime-baths, racks, strappados and other devices. Weights were sometimes attached to the victim's feet or testicles to make the pain unbearable.

The techniques used by the torturers (Inquisitors blessed by the Church) were so demented that reading about it makes you sick to the stomach. Basically, this is how they worked

1.

If the witch had led an evil life she was obviously guilty, but if she had led a good life this was equally damning, since witches were known to deceive by appearing especially virtuous.

2.

When she was put in prison a similar double-edged argument was applied. If she showed fear when she heard others being tortured, she was obviously guilty. If she did not then this too was proof of guilt, since witches were known to mimic the

innocent and present a bold facade

3.

Anyone who gave assistance to the accused or protested about the procedure was labelled a supporter, so that everyone kept silent for fear of the consequences. Replies given by the victim were not even recorded, so that even if she had a perfect defence it could be ignored.

4.

If she grimaced while being tortured the torturers said she was laughing. If she passed out they said that she was asleep or bewitched. If she died under torture, they said that the Devil had broken her neck.

In short, there was no way out. Confessing led to death. Refusing to confess also led to death

Sometimes, when torture failed, evidence had to be forged and this came in the form of signed unbelievable methods. One individual called Urbain Grandier, a French priest accused of witchcraft at Loudan.

Grandier was acquitted at his first trial but at a second trial the prosecutors appointed by Cardinal Richlieu produced two pacts signed by Grandier and Satan himself, and sealed by a number of demons - Lucifer, Beelzebub, Astori, Elimi, and Laviathan.

This is not a joke. They killed a man based on signatures of the devil and his demon generals, and that shit was admissible in their little court. Grandier was burned alive in 1634.

Almost any activity could count as witchcraft, if the perpetrator was unpopular or an outsider. Old people, women especially, were killed in numbers over this...sounds familiar?

Every old woman with a wrinkled face, a furrowed brow, a hairy lip, a gobber tooth, a squint eye, a squeaking voice or scolding tongue and a dog or cat by her side, is not only suspected but pronounced a witch.

Young boys were burned alive for reciting doggerel that was reputed to have the power to raise the Devil. To deny the efficacy of witchcraft, or even to be seen to be less than zealous in their detection and punishment invited danger.

The Church didn't stop there. To further instill fear and force people into Christianity, family members of the accused would also be put on trial by association and burned at the stake, every single one, even newborn babies.

The next people to be targeted were midwives...any midwife who was involved in a still births was put to death.

The argument used here was that stillborns were unbaptized which meant they immediately went to hell where Satan used them for his own rituals. This automatically meant that the midwives were in cahoots with the devil. Just like that.

It reached a point where whole towns would lack a single midwife, all killed, and this led to more child birth deaths. And where was the almighty in all this?

The craziness didn't slow down. It got worse. In 1550 a woman was sentenced in Basle to burn as a witch for having kept a doll.

In 1583 at Vienna a 16-year-old girl suffered stomach cramps. Over a period of eight weeks a team of Jesuits succeeded in exorcising 12,652 demons from her body. They discovered that her grandmother had kept these 'demons' in glass jars disguised as flies.

Of course granny confessed under torture, that she was a witch and that she had engaged in sex with the Devil. The holy men of God watched granny being dragged off to the stake, burned alive

In 1586 the Archbishop of Trèves had 118 women and two men burned for making incantations that lengthened the winter. Old women of 90, young girls of 6, all were agents of the Devil, and all deserved death and damnation

Protestants were not any different, they greatly differed with Catholics on so many things, but one of the things they seemed to agree on was the burning of witches. Luther himself personally set 4 women ablaze for practicing witchcraft in Wittenburg

Another protestant honcho called Calvin, he of the famed Calvinism, was active in proceedings. He personally laid information against sorcerers and in 1545 was involved in actions against people accused of spreading the plague.

Some of the men were sentenced to have their flesh torn off with pincers, and women to have their right hands cut off before being burnt at the stake. Calvinists exported witch-hunting to the Puritan American colonies culminating in the famous Salem episode of 1689-93.

The same situation continued to flourish in Europe. In 1749 a nun came under suspicion at Würzburg. Other nuns testified that they had seen her adopt the form of a pig and climb over the convent walls. In that form she drank the convent's best wine.

In the form of a hare she would milk the convent's cows dry, and in the form of a cat she would prowl around the convent annoying the sisters. For these crimes she was burned alive in the local market place.

But the award for the dumbest and the most bizarre is reserved for the Christians in Scotland. A book called Demonologie was adopted by King James VI. The book described a water divination method that could be used to detect witchcraft

The accused had their right thumb tied to their left foot, and their left thumb to their right foot. They were then cast into open water

If they floated they had been rejected by the water on behalf of God, and were thus proved guilty. If they sank then they were innocent, but here's the catch, they had to drown first to prove that the water had not rejected them...let that sink in for a minute

Another method was to weigh the accused against a large bible. Heavy people were pronounced innocent, light ones found guilty.

Imagine being called a witch because you weigh less than a book.

Another way of establishing that someone was a witch was to isolate that person in a room. Any animal that came into the room established guilt — anything from a fly to a pet cat

An estimated 70,000 people lost their lives to this divine stupidity, the same that many of you still worship to this day.

Thanks to education, the one thing that the Church hated, witchcraft is now treated as a joke, but belief in it and the persecution of people continues in many religious societies. As usual, the church has never fully apologised for the genocide it committed.

Christians don't care either because as far as they are concerned, those deaths were done in the name of their all knowing perfect God who's never wrong.