

The the most rigorous
and bitter torments.

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The Spaniard Quietist Miguel de Molinos. Factors. The Church, since its origins has suffered from the attack of heretics and their heresies which have caused many controversies and schisms within it. However, many of the conflicts are the result of other than heresies. There are cases where conflicts arose because of ambition of power, lack of moral, and intrigues, other because of lack of wisdom and a poor theological understanding.

One of the instances in which a mixture of the elements mentioned above were present was the case of the Spaniard quietist Miguel de Molinos during the XVII century. Molinos was accused by the Church with charges of heresy as well as of immoral misconduct. His main work *La Guia Espiritual* ("The spiritual Guide") was placed in the Index of the Church, and Molinos himself was condemned to life imprisonment, "to be perpetually clothed in the penitential garb, to recite the Credo and one third of the Rosary, and to make confession four times every year". Molinos recanted publicly. His admirers said that he was behaving consistently with what he believed and taught.

His accusers said that his recanting was a proof of his guilt. What were real motives why Molinos admitted his "guilt"? Molinos once said: "The true quietists are always quiet, serene and even-minded in Graces and in extraordinary favors as also in the most rigorous and bitter torments. No news causes them to rejoice, no event saddens them".

Was Miguel de Molino trying to be consistent way with his mystical teachings of total passivity?, or was he really guilty as charged? Was Molinos a victim of the jealousy of the Jesuits? Was his fall caused by "the machinations of a

corrupt clergy who saw that they would lose their living if his plain and simple method of devotion were generally adopted"? Did he ever have any other options than recanting his culpability? Was martyrdom his only other option? II. Protagonist Molinos was a man of noble character and a "brilliant and widely cultured mind". His reputation of director of consciences and spiritual guide granted him the admiration and esteem of all kinds of people among whom was Cardinal Benedict Odescalchi who later became pope Innocent XI. At his arrest those who knew him close were very distressed. His servants kissing his feet and calling him "a saint" were convinced that all was a mistake.

When all this took place in 1685 Molinos was fifty-seven years old, (he was born in 1628). Although when arrested he lost control, during the trial he showed no apprehension, "he was a quietist by conviction". The pope Innocent XI (former Cardinal Benedict Odescalchi and personal friend of Molinos) was born in Como (Italy) and pursued his studies in Geneva, Rome, and Naples. He was elected pope by the Cardinal College in 1676. He is portrayed by Catholic historians as pope that was committed to keep an honorable life, which was hard to do in his age - and office -. He made reforms in the Church specially in relation with the abuses of nepotism. In order to be consistent with his convictions he kept his own nephew away from the Roman Curia.

Because of his campaign against King Louis XVI Innocent was called the Protestant pope by the Gallican party. He was considered a man of "iron hand" when needed. "He made some prescriptions concerning the behavior of the clergy, forbade the entering of women into the Vatican Palace (except

the royalty), and condemned the Quietism of Molinos". Concerning his former friendship with Molinos he claimed " Veramente siamo enganati".

III. The Conflict The teachings of Molinos were not known for the Church. In Spain the mystic Juan Falcon (1596-1638), had a large number of followers during his lifetime. Another group, the " Alumbrados" influenced many people in Cadiz and Seville in the late 1500's. They taught that vocal prayer, and thinking in the humanity of Jesus or in his passion must be avoided.

In 1623 the Inquisition condemned them as heretics. It is clear that both, Falcon and the Alumbrados, influenced Molinos' thought. Molinos' doctrines about mysticism were world wide appreciated and practiced. It is said that in Naples he had " more than 20.

000 followers". His popularity among the royalty was notable. Queen Christina of Sweden, and princess Borghese were among his devoted followers. The main work of Molinos *La Guia Espiritual* was subject of investigation by the " Holy Office".

However the conflict arose when the Jesuits began to question his practices and the teachings found in his writings which at one time were highly praised by the clergy . Molinos has taught that " if souls in a high state of prayer are tempted to commit the most obscene and blasphemous acts, they must not leave their prayer to resist the temptation; the devil if being allowed to humiliate them, and if the actions are committed, they are not to be confessed as sins". For him Quietism was the means to reach God and to find peace: " Rest is necessary for the soul as well as the body; rest in which the force of grace refreshes and recreates the soul. This rest can not be obtained by

employing the soul in various spiritual activities. Just as the body needs sleep in order to recruit his energies, so the does the soul requires a silent resting in the presence of God". This kind of teachings caused that in many convents the nuns thought lightly of confessions, indulgences, penance, and vocal prayer, and regarded themselves as not blameworthy for their material faults.

After months of investigation of his books, and personal letters (about 20.000 were analyzed by the Inquisition), the Inquisition sponsored by the Jesuits presented 263 charges against Molinos. Sixty eight of his propositions were condemned as " Heretical, erroneous, blasphemous, dangerous, and in practice, incompatible with Christian morality". It is interesting that only two witness accused him with of obscenities . What were those so called obscenities? It is not possible to answer this question. There is no access to the reports of Molino's trial.

They are " buried in the secret files of the Holy Office". Molinos retracted from his teaching publicly in 1687 at the Church of Santa Mara Sopra Minerva. Along with Molinos more than two hundred persons were arrested in Rome, and " several communities of nuns" found themselves implicated in the scandal. One month after his sentence the " Gazette de France" published the news of Molino's death; however, historians tells us that Molinos lived nine more years, dying at the age of sixty-eight on December 28, 1696. The Catholic Encyclopedia ends its article about Molinos saying: " He lived 9 more years of pious and exemplary behavior, perhaps practicing his teaching that elevated souls seek only the humiliations and scorn that it

might please God to send". IV. Possible Options It is evident that the Molinos was facing a dilemma.

The Church has called him to repent of serious charges. What should be his response to the mandate of the Church? Shall he be consistent with his Quietism and recant in obedience? He chose to recant admitting the charges against. In doing so he tried to be consistent.

By the other hand the other only option was to keep himself standing in his beliefs and to pay a the higher price of martyrdom. We probably never know what was in his mind during the trial. It may be that the accusations of immoral behavior were real and that he just was " caught" and had no other option. V. Biblical Principles. The Scriptures leave no place for immorality and lack of repentance in the life of true believers .

We don't know the heart of man, (God is the final judge), but if Molinos was living an immoral lifestyle the Bible have very clear teachings. The Apostle Paul dealing with immorality in the Church of Corinth says: " It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 1 Cor. 5: 1-2.

The Church must never allow immoral people to continue living in sin. In 2 Th. 3: 6 Paul again gives specific commandment concerning this issue: " Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us".

There is not only immorality that is to be forbidden in the Church but heresy as well: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself, Titus 3: 10-11. Was this the case of Molinos? Was he one of those whom " profess that they know God; but in works they deny him"? Titus 1: 16. VI. Conclusion Miguel de Molinos have passed to the history as accused of being both heretic and immoral. He has been judged by the Roman Catholic Church and found guilty. However the lack of historical evidences bring doubts upon his blame. Only God the Supreme Judge of all men will have the last word concerning the case of this mystic of the middle ages. BIBLIOGRAPHY Bell, Mary.

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