

The Canonization of Joan of Arc; or, Rome's Duplicity



By Rev. C. R. Macfaul, M. A., OTTAWA, CANADA.

This is from a March 1920 publication of the *Converted Catholic Magazine* which was not found in the Lutheran Library. This article talks about the history of the Roman Catholic Church condemning Joan of Arc to death, burning her alive at the stake, and then canonizing her as a saint 488 years later!

Roman Catholic papers have announced that one of the great events of 1920 will be the formal canonization of Joan of Arc. In view of her being one day made a Roman Catholic saint, on April 18, 1909, in the presence of 30,000 French pilgrims, many cardinals, clergy, and others, the ceremonies of the beatification of Joan of Arc were carried out in St. Peter's, Rome. A Roman Catholic Press report says: "The Papal Decree, 'De Tuto,' which is the formal act of ratifying the Canonization was publicly read in the presence of the Holy Father on June 8, 1919. Nothing is now required but the formal canonization, which is a ceremony of imposing grandeur. Invitations will be issued to all nations, France being prominently represented. As this ceremony takes some months to organize, it will probably be May or June next year before it takes place."

This action on the part of the Roman Church has caused new interest in the history of this wonderful maid, and should lead every intelligent person to ask a few pertinent questions.

Who Was Responsible for Her Death?

Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, conducted her trial. He was a favorite of Cardinal Beaufort, who had shortly before the trial, recommended him to the Pope for the Bishopric of Rouen. It was Bishop Beauvais who negotiated the ransom of 6,000 francs whereby Joan came under his care when she was to be judged by the Church. In the chapel of the Castle of Rouen, on Feb. 21, 1431, the trial began. The judges present numbered about forty, and on the third day of the trial sixty-two. They are carefully classed, in the report of the trial, as doctors of theology, abbots, canons, doctors in canonical and civil law, with the Bishop of Beauvais at their head. Of the long public trial and private examination and re-examination of Joan, in which not a rule was omitted, "except those of justice, fairness and truth," space will not permit us to mention. Suffice it to say that, with no advocate, no counsel, no one to conduct her defense, the maid was condemned to the stake.

On May 30, 1431, in the old Market Place of Rouen, surrounded by bishops, ecclesiastics and notables, she was burnt alive. Below the stake where Joan was sacrificed were written these words: "Jeanne, called the Maid, Liar, Abuser of the People, Soothsayer, Blasphemer of God, Pernicious, Superstitious, Idolatrous, Cruel, Dissolute, Invoker of Devils, Apostate, Schismatic, Heretic."

The responsibility for the death of Joan rests therefore with the Roman Church. Let it be remembered that the faithful of the Church are taught to put faith in the appearance of saints and angels, in visions and dreams. Lourdes, in France, is founded on the visions of the child Bernadette. Jeanne was but following the teachings of her Church when she believed in the visions and voices which she said constrained her to seek to save France for the French, and yet her Church condemned her as a sorceress.

The moment she appealed directly to God and not to the Pope, she was a Protestant, although that word had not then been coined, and a heretic, and the stake had to follow; and even though she at one time appeared to submit to the Church, she had relapsed again into error, therefore she must be burnt. Only the Church that has always refused the individual the right of his thoughts and speech, the author of The Infernal Inquisition, could have so cruelly sacrificed this pure girl who, free from all thought of self-seeking had never any other motive but to serve her God and deliver her country.

After denouncing the Maid as a sorceress, heretic, apostate, idolater, blasphemer of God, and an invoker of devils, Rome will solemnly invite Catholic France to offer to the Vatican their humble and grateful thanks for the honor that the sovereign Pontiff will heap upon that country by canonizing the Maid of Orleans.

If one could believe that the Roman Church had no special part to play to her advantage in canonizing Joan of Arc, we would all greatly rejoice in the acknowledgment that it erred greatly in condemning her to death.

Rome had no intention of stopping with the beatification of the Maid of Orleans. They have been hunting up the records of Joan's life to find if she ever wrought any special miracles, an essential condition, generally, of a person being canonized. No doubt they have succeeded in their hunt to Rome's satisfaction.

The Roman Catholic Church will have a most difficult task ahead of hunting up past records to discover the saints it so foully murdered, and declaring it erred in burning and beheading them. It will never possess enough candles and incense to honor all the unknown and authentic saints that it, "the Scarlet Beast of the Tiber," has devoured while drunk "with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

Why Was She Canonized?

France, the elder daughter of the Church, has refused to submit any longer to her cruel and crafty Roman mother. The Maid of Orleans is now one of France's

greatest heroines and patriots. She was a peasant, a child of the common people. Rome has seized this opportunity to honor her with a view of winning the favor, especially of the people in the humbler walks of life, hoping thus to regain to some extent its lost power in the government of the country, and to recover its lost prestige in France owing to her pretended neutrality during the war. In the Roman Church, as among the heathen, female saints have always been the most popular, and the Pope thinks it wise to add the name of the maid to the list of saints, believing that she will be most welcome to the people.

The Church has been a long time coming to this decision. It dared not do it sooner lest its people be scandalized at its placing in her calendar of saints one that she condemned as a heretic and burnt at the stake. It is over 488 years since it committed the cruel deed. It hopes that the great majority of her people, ignorant of the history of the world at that time, will never learn that it was guilty of the crime, and if any do it has decided, because of the advantage it hopes to gain, to run the risk of their accepting its explanation of the part she played.

For duplicity, Rome has no equal on the face of the earth.