

**Revivals And Church History :: ALGERIUS - Burned for the testimony of Jesus****ALGERIUS - Burned for the testimony of Jesus - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/10/3 14:35**

ALGERIUS, A YOUTH, A STUDENT OF PADUA, MISERABLY BURNED FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS, AT ROME, A. D. 1557. A CONSOLATORY LETTER FROM HIM.
- AN ACCOUNT OF HIS SACRIFICE

To my beloved brethren and fellow servants of Jesus Christ, who have gone out of Babylon unto mount Zion, whose names I do not omit without cause, grace, peace and mercy from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen. In order somewhat to sweeten or take away the pain which you suffer on my account, I would communicate to you the sweetness which I experience, that you may rejoice with me, and shout for joy with thanksgiving in the presence of the Lord.

I will tell to the world an incredible thing, namely, that I have found infinite sweetness in the bowels of the lion. And who will in any wise believe what I am going to relate here? Who can believe it?

In a dark hole I have found pleasure; in a place of bitterness and death, rest and hope of salvation; in the abyss or depths of hell, joy; where others weep, I have laughed; where others fear, I have found strength; who will believe this? In a state of misery I have had very great delight; in a lonely corner I have had most glorious company, and in the severest bond, great rest. All these things, my fellow brethren in Jesus Christ, the gracious hand of God has given me. Behold, He that at first was far from me, is now with me, and Him whom I knew but a little, I now see clearly; to whom I once looked from afar, Him I now behold as present; He for whom I longed, now offers me His hand; He comforts me; He fills me with joy; He drives from me bitterness, and renews within me strength and sweetness; He makes me well; He sustains me; He helps me up; He strengthens me. Oh, how good is the Lord, who does not suffer His servants to be tempted above that they are able! Oh, how easy, pleasant and sweet is His yoke! Is there any like God the Most High, who sustains and refreshes those that are tempted? He heals them that are bruised and wounded, and restores them altogether. Isa. 41; 43:20. None is like Him. Learn, most beloved brethren, how sweet the Lord is, how faithful and merciful; who visits His servants in trial (Isa. 43:2); who humbles Himself and condescends to be with us in our huts and humble abodes. He gives us a cheerful mind and peace of heart.

*In this letter we found so much wisdom, holiness, and excellence, that we have read it innumerable times with attention and deep emotion. It kindled our love to God, and our zeal, not only to live with Christ, but also, if necessary, to die with Him and for His holy truth. Oh, that we were worthy, that His holy name might be praised through us unworthy creatures!

But will the blind world believe these things? No; she will much rather say (since she is unbelieving), "You will not be able long to endure the heat, cold and discomfort of this place. And how then will you be able to bear the cross, the thousandfold contempt, wrong reproaches, and undeserved ignominy? Will you not regard your dear native country, the riches of this world, your parents, rank and honor at the court? Will you be able entirely to dismiss from your mind your glorious learning, which strengthens and recreates for all labor spent? Will you lose so much for nothing, yea, all the labors you have undergone, your much watching, laboring and assiduity? For what purpose have you labored and studied so much, even from your very youth up?

But, last of all, have you then no fear at all of death, which awaits you, though you are innocent? Oh, what extreme folly and ignorance it is, to be able with a single word to avoid all this, and to escape death, and yet you will refuse to do it! Oh, what a despicable thing it is to be able to obtain something from such excellent, just, God-fearing, wise and good (or pious) councilors and illustrious men,* and voluntarily to refuse to receive anything.

But hearken, ye blind and mortal men, what is hotter and more intense than the fire which is prepared for you? What is colder than your own heart, which is yet in darkness, and has no light at all? John 1:5. What is harder and more confused and restless than your life? What is more ignoble and repulsive than your age? Tell me, my dear, what country or home is sweeter than the heavenly? II Cor. 5:1. What treasure is greater than eternal life? And who are our parents and friends, except those alone who keep the Word of God? Where are greater joy, riches, and honor than in heaven? Tell me, ye ignorant, is not all learning given to know God, whom if we do not know in truth, all our labor, watching and exertion, yea, all our undertakings are expended to no purpose? Answer me, ye unhappy men: what comfort or balm can he have, who misses God, who is the cure and refreshing of all? Ex. 15:26. How can he say that I fear death, if he

himself is dead in sins, and thus prefers death to life? I Tim. 5:6. For if Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, can life be found out of Christ? The heat is to me a refreshing pleasure, and winter a joy in the Lord. I who do not fear the burning of the fire, shall I be afraid of simple heat? Is he tormented by ice, who consumes, melts, and falls asleep in the love of God?

This place is indeed hard and severe for the guilty and evildoers; but to the innocent and righteous it is very pleasant and sweet; hence issues honey; hence flows the heavenly drink; here wells up milk; here springs forth the abundance of all good things.

It is true that this place is esteemed lonesome

*The powerful nobility or aristocracy of Venice is meant here.

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and base; yet it is to me as a spacious valley, and one of the most excellent places in the world.

Tell me, ye miserable men, whether I could have a pasture or meadow more pleasant than this; for here I behold kings, princes, states and nations; here I see war (or conflict); these cut in pieces, the others victorious; some that have fallen into low estate, others, who have attained to great honors.

Here is Mount Zion; here I rise and enter into heaven; Jesus Christ stands before my eyes; around me stand the fathers, prophets, evangelists, apostles, and all the servants of God. He (the Lord) embraces and nourishes me; these exhort me, those show me holy things; these comfort me, others escort me with music and song.

Shall I now say that I am alone, among so many? For here I have whom I may take for companions, comforters and examples, since I see some that are crucified, some beheaded; some stoned; others cut in twain; some roasted others fried in pans, ovens, and chaldrons of oil; some whose eyes are put out; others whose tongue is cut out; these with their skin pulled over their head; others with hands and feet cut off; some that are cast into fiery furnaces; others given as food to wild beasts; yea, it would require too much time, were I to relate it all.

Finally, I see still others, who have suffered manifold tortures and martyrdoms, and this only because they now live and are free from all pain. And for all these there is but one remedy, one medicine, which can cure all their infirmities; and this remedy gives to me also strength, and life, and cheerfulness to suffer all these fears and afflictions, which are but momentary, and not worth speaking of; this is the hope which I have placed in heaven. I do not fear those who unjustly revile and persecute me, since He that dwells in heaven, will reject and extirpate them, but will heal and restore these. I shall not be afraid if a thousand surround me; for the Lord my God will always deliver me; He is my shield and protector; He is my comfort; He is my head; He will beat down those who oppose me without cause; He will break the teeth of sinners; for salvation, blessing, might and dominion are His. Then reproach which we suffer for Christ's sake gives us nothing but joy and gladness; for it is written, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." I Pet. 4:16. If we, then, are so assured of our salvation, we are not to regard the unjust reproaches of those who revile us.

On earth I have no continuing city or place of rest; my home and country are in heaven; I seek the new city of Jerusalem, which I see before me, which comes to meet me. Behold, I am already on the way; there is my sweet home, my riches, my parents and my friends, my pleasure and my honor; I have no fear that I shall miss them.

All these earthly things are but shadows; they are all transient, and a vanity of vanities to those who miss the hope and essence of eternal life.

The accomplishments, arts, or gifts which God has given me, were at first pleasant companions and recreations; now they yield me holy fruits. It is true, I have sweated, suffered cold, and as much as I was able, watched night and day; but this my labor has tended and redounded to make me more perfect; there never passed a day or hour without some improvement. Behold, the true countenance of God has been revealed over my life, and the Lord has caused me to experience great joy in my heart. In Him alone I shall rest in peace. I Pet. 1:8.

Who will now dare say that I have lost my age and years? Who will say that I have lost my courage? For my soul has said, "The Lord is my portion; therefore will I seek him." Lam. 3:24. Hence since dying in the Lord is no dying, but leading a blessed life, why then does a reprobate to God oppose me, to prevent me from dying? All this will be the

greatest joy, if I only may taste the cup of the Lord. And what surer pledge of my salvation could I find? Has He not said, "Men will do unto you what they have done to me?" John 15:20. Therefore let this fool keep silence, who has now so long deceived himself in the light of the sun. Let the blind world cease, I say, to imagine such things. For I will say with the apostle, "Neither tribulation, nor distress, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor care, nor persecution, nor sword shall be able to separate us from the love in Christ. We are killed all the day long: we are led to death like sheep for the slaughter." Romans 8:35, 36. Thus we are partakers with Christ, who has said that the disciple is not greater than his master, and the servant not more than his lord. He also left us the command, that each should take up His cross and follow Him.

Comfort yourselves, O most beloved fellow servants of God, comfort yourselves, for we fall into manifold temptations. Let our patience be perfect in every place, since these things are promised us here on earth, for it is written that those who kill us will think that thereby they are doing God a holy service and sacrifice. John 16:2. Hence fear and death are only parts and things which teach us to understand our calling, and we rejoice in a future life, and shout joyfully in the Lord, since we are (far from all sin) beaten, and delivered unto death. For it is better to suffer for righteousness sake (if thus it be the will of the Lord) than for evildoing. We have an example in Christ, and the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, and the children of unrighteousness put them to death according to their manner and custom. Behold what do we now? Blessed are they that have continued steadfast! We rejoice in our innocence and (Godgiven) righteousness. God will punish them that persecute us.

I have been called a fool, since I do not conceal the knowledge of God, and do not care whether I speak in secret or openly; to which I could reply with a single word."O poor man, who, or what are you, who do not see the sun, and never once think of God's words."

My dear, remember the words of Christ, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." Matthew 5:14, 15. And in another place He says, "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings, and others. Therefore, fear not them which kill the body; but much rather him which is able to kill the soul. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10:18, 28, 32.

Since then the Lord has spoken so plainly of this subject, by what authority then do they advise and seek to persuade me? For I shall never forsake the counsel of God, and follow the advice of men, since it is written, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Ps. 1:1.

I shall never deny Christ, but will confess Him whenever it is necessary. I shall not esteem my life more highly than my soul; I shall not exchange the future for the present. Oh, how little does he understand and know who thinks us to be in the way of folly. Wisd. 5:4.

I do not deem it to be improper, though I do not please the so-called most mighty, just, wise, merciful, good and illustrious senators of this place, whose grace is offered me, if I apostatize.

But since we are instructed by the apostles of the Lord, that we must obey God rather than men, etc., therefore I do not accept this grace of them.

I wish that they were more perfect in the sight of the Lord; it is true, they are mighty here, but they should also perfect themselves in the Lord; they are indeed just, but they are still without Christ, who is the foundation of righteousness; they are wise, but where the beginning of wisdom is, there is also the fear of God; they are called merciful, but I wish that they might be more patient or subdued in Christian charity; they are good, but I wish them the foundation of goodness, namely, the best and most high God; they are called illustrious, but they have not accepted our Saviour, the most illustrious.

Hear, therefore, O ye kings, and understand; learn, ye that be judges of the ends of the earth; serve the Lord with fear, and approach Him with trembling. Receive instruction, and understand it, lest the Lord be angry, and ye perish from the right way. Why do ye rage, O ye people; and ye nations, why do ye imagine vain things against the Lord? Ye kings of the earth, and ye princes, why are ye united together against Christ, the Holy One of God? How long will ye seek lies, and hate truth. Be converted, and turn to the Lord our God, and harden not your hearts. For one cannot but know that

he. who persecutes God's servants, persecutes God Himself; since He has said, "Whatsoever men shall do unto you, they shall do to me, and not to you." Zech. 2:8.

But, my dear, pray tell me, in what manner I have deserved to be condemned? Is it that I have not answered the most illustrious senators, my lords, according to their pleasure? If I have said anything, it was not I at all that said it, since the Lord says that before the authorities it will not be us that speak, but the Spirit of our Father which will be in us. Matt. 10:30. Now, if the Lord is faithful and true, which He is in truth, I am innocent. It was He who made me speak. And what am I, that I could withstand the will of God? Acts 11:17. Therefore, he that would reprove such words, reproves the Word of the Lord, who worked in me. But if he thinks that the Lord is not to be reprov'd, Oh, then let him not accuse me any more, since I am innocent of this work; for I did what I would not, I spoke what I thought not. But if the things which I have spoken are not good and true, and this is found and proved to me, then I will confess that they proceeded from me alone, and not from God; but if I have said things that are good and proved, and cannot with justice be reprov'd, whether we will or not, it will have to be acknowledged that they proceeded from the Lord. Now, if all this is so, who then will accuse me? The most wise people? Who will condemn me? The most righteous judges (who are nevertheless unwise and unjust)?

Do what you will. Shall the words of the Lord be made void? Shall the Gospel be of account no longer? Certainly not; but the kingdom of God shall be only the more precious and sweet to the true Israelites, and come the sooner to the chosen of Jesus Christ. But they who do such things, shall experience the great judgment of God. They that kill the righteous shall not escape unpunished. II Thess. 1:6.

O most beloved, lift up your eyes, and take to heart the counsel of God. Not long ago the Lord showed you a sign of pestilence, in order to lead you to repentance; but if this will not be received, he will unsheathe the sword entirely, and smite with the sword, pestilence and famine the people which exalts the horn against Christ. May God, through His mercy, avert this scourge from this place. To all believers their most zealous servant, the imprisoned and bound Algerius.

Written in the most delightful pleasure garden of the prison, called Leonia, the 12th of July, A. D. 1557.*

HOW ALGERIUS WAS OFFERED UP

This Algerius,** though very young in years, was a student from the kingdom of Naples, and studied at Padua, where a brother who spoke his language came to him, of whom he diligently inquired the way and the will of the Lord, listening very ear-

*Some had given 1555 as the year, but this is an error.

* Some old writers did not know that this youth, Algerius shortly before his death, had, through baptism which he received upon his faith, united with the cross-bearing Church of the Anabaptists; hence they ignorantly ascribed to him another religion.

estly, and was forthwith baptized into the Lord's death, which he immediately afterwards manfully and undauntedly as a bold hero and young soldier of Christ, forcibly proved with the deed, and sealed with his blood, and thus became like his Master, since he was also, even as Christ, when He came up out of Jordan, immediately assailed by the enemy, the tempter and his instruments, and cast into prison, in which he went through and endured many severe conflicts, but was always greatly strengthened and comforted with great joy, by the Lord, whom he had set before his eyes, as his present writing abundantly shows, which he wrote in prison at Padua to the brethren in Italy, to strengthen and comfort them in their sorrow, which had come upon them on his account, because they were solicitous for him as being a novice in the faith. But the Lord clothed him with great power, and hence, through him, as one of His chief weapons, glorified His name. For after many temptations, he was sent to Venice, where the entire senate or nobility tried to prevail upon him, as did the tempter finally try to do with Christ, and meant, by solemn entreaties, flattery, and the offer of all manner of worldly aid and friendship, certainly to catch and alienate him, which was not one of the least darts; but, as an immovable pillar, he rejected it all and despised it for Christ's sake, in order that he might with Moses and Paul win and keep Christ alone. Matt. 4:8; Eph. 6:16; Phil. 3:8; Hebrews 11:26.

When they could not prevail upon him, though they tried for a long time, he was therefore sent to Rome, and delivered to the pope, where he finally, after severe and hard imprisonment, offered up his life in great steadfastness, as a sweet

savor, to the Lord, very eagerly and joyfully following in the footsteps of all his forefathers and the glorious confessors of Christ; and thus he rightly partook of the sufferings of his Lord and Master; yea, his end was crowned with great triumphant praise even also by all his despisers, and thus the desired cup was drained.

Many different means having been tried with him, he was at last sentenced to be burnt, but not in the same manner as others, who were, also on account of the faith, with shortened pain, executed according to the Italian or French custom of being first hanged and strangled, and then burnt. But this pious Algerius was held in greater honor by the Lord Christ, and for this reason also had to begin and bring to a triumphant issue a far more exalted and honorable conflict.

Having been brought in a wagon to the place called Mercado, a final attempt was made upon him. A Carthusian monk-in Rome called Capadocines*, and holy people-was appointed to take him in hand. The same constantly held a crucifix before him, and admonished him, to remember once more, before his departure, his Lord and Re-

*We are much inclined to the view that thin is an error, and that the Capucins are meant.-Transl.

deemer, and not to die thus hardened and desperate in error. At the same time he constantly held before his eyes the crucifix, which Algerius vigorously pushed aside with his hands, which had not been bound, as I understand, saying aloud in his language, with his eyes lifted up to heaven, "My Lord and God lives above in heaven." etc.

At this the spectators cried with a loud voice, and said, "Oh, he struck it," meaning the crucifix."Oh, away, away with him; he is utterly hardened and blinded, all is lost on him." For at Rome it is thought something great, when these Carthusians cannot convert one; hence they are generally reserved for the last. Thereupon he was stripped to his waist, and boiling oil was first poured over his head and bare body, which good and pious Algerius patiently suffered, but doubtless severely felt. He rubbed his hand over his face, and pulled off the skin and the hair. Thereupon only was he burnt to ashes, an unusual thing in Italy, since I have seen it with my own eyes, that they were only roasted and singed in the fire, whereupon the dead body was carried to the grave. But as has been said, this blessed Algerius had to glorify our Lord and God much more highly. To him and to the Lord Jesus Christ, who wrought this through him, by the power of the Holy Ghost, be praise and glory forever. May He help us poor and weak mortals to follow Him. Amen. Yes, O Lord Jesus, Amen.

Brother Da. Gr., who wrote this account, as the old copy shows, also writes, "This was done with him in the year 1557, a little while before I came to Rome, since at that time Algerius was still on everybody's tongue. I have also heard with my own ears, from the mouth of some who counted themselves good papists and witnessed his execution, how wonderfully steadfast he died; and that he truly believed in his heart what he there in his severe martyrdom and pain confessed with his mouth before all the people. Hence there is no doubt but he ascended immediately to heaven, and was saved. Thus must the adversaries bear testimony to the saints of God, even against their will. Deut. 32:31.

Shortly afterwards, the flood occurred at Rome, when the Tiber overflowed, and did great damage, so that some Romans say that Rome suffered as much damage as if it had been plundered with haste; which I for my part, found to be true indeed, having never seen a greater famine of bread. It is impossible for me to tell how fearful the sight and distress was, especially among the poor people. But they do not recognize that it was a just . Wisd. 19:13.

Re: ALGERIUS - Burned for the testimony of Jesus, on: 2009/3/27 19:21

Part of this letter was read the other evening on the conference prayer call by brother Frank (Apollos). It is lengthy, but very rich and full of authentic, true Christianity.

May the Lord pour out upon His Bride that same spirit that sustained and strengthened so many martyrs over the past two thousand years. May we follow in their train!

"I shall never deny Christ, but will confess Him whenever it is necessary. I shall not esteem my life more highly than my soul; I shall not exchange the future for the present. "