

WHO ARE HERETICS?

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We have not yet spoken of the meaning of heresy. This is the time, and this the place, to give this term a clear and intelligible definition.

Heresy, fairly interpreted, signifies, *offensive doctrine contrary to established faith*, or if the phraseology be preferred, *unpopular error which cannot be endured*. A heretic, then, who is only the living form of heresy, may be easily defined. **HE IS AN ERRORIST WHO ENTERTAINS SENTIMENTS THAT CANNOT BE TOLERATED.**

To illustrate: A heretic in a Mahometan court is one who denies the Mahometan faith and the divinity of Mahomet; a heretic in a Jewish court is one who does not subscribe to all the ceremonies and rites of the law of Moses; and a heretic in the court of Rome is one who rejects the Pope's infallibility and remission of sins by sacerdotal traffic. It is not necessary that a man should be imprisoned, burned, or banished, to constitute him a heretic; but he is a heretic because he dissents fundamentally from his country's faith or the popular religion. Hence Moses was charged with heresy among the Egyptians, the Hebrew children among the Chaldeans, John the Baptist among the Jews, and Hooper among the Catholics,—because the faith, teaching, and manners of these persons were contrary to authorised rule.

A question of some importance naturally follows these views and premises. If heresy be something contrary to established faith, and this faith requires authority to establish it, what kind of authority shall this be, or from where should it come? For if the authority enforcing law be unjust and irreligious, the person who rejects it is only a heretic in the eye of unjust and irreligious law, and in the meantime may be a son of favor according to just and righteous authority. For we have only to look with both eyes to see that a person may stand acquitted and condemned at the same moment, if we have before us the idea of two tribunals. If a gentleman be summoned to appear in a court-room where there are two Judges and two Juries, always and invariably acting in opposition to each other, it requires no labour to show that he stands accused and acquitted immediately on his trial. This indeed is so clear that we might darken it by attempting to add more light.

Unquestionably every law is made and confirmed by authority; every kind of authority has its source; and this source must be either good or evil, just or unjust, earthly or heavenly, human or divine. Now it is law and its authority which constitute heresy and heretics, and therefore we must invariably know the nature of the law and the source of the authority before we can lawfully determine the character of the heresy. Some good