



Treatise on Tolerance

VOLTAIRE

Musean Translation

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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

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TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

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Chapter I



On the occasion of the death of Jean Calas.

A brief history of the death of Jean Calas.

The murder of *Calas*, committed in Toulouse with the sword of justice on March 9, 1762, is one of the most extraordinary events to deserve the attention of our age and of posterity. We soon forget the multitude who have died in countless battles, not only because this is the inevitable fate of war, but because those who die by force of arms could also have killed their enemies, and did not perish without defending themselves. Where danger and advantage are equal, astonishment ceases, and even pity grows weak. But if an innocent father is delivered into the hands of error, passion, or fanaticism; if the accused has no defense but his virtue; if those who decide his life risk nothing in slaughtering him except being mistaken; if they can kill with impunity by a judicial sentence—then a public outcry rises, everyone fears for himself. We see that no one's life is safe before a tribunal established to protect the lives of citizens, and every voice joins in demanding vengeance.

This strange affair concerned religion, suicide, the murder of a son by his parents. The question was whether a father and mother had strangled their son to please God, whether a brother had strangled his brother, whether a friend had strangled his friend, and whether the judges had to reproach themselves for having an innocent father broken on the wheel, or for sparing a guilty mother, brother, and friend.

Jean Calas, sixty-eight years old, had worked as a merchant in Toulouse for more than forty years, and everyone who had lived with him knew him as a good father. He was a Protestant, as were his wife and all his children except one, who had renounced heresy and whom his father supported with a small allowance. He seemed so far removed from that absurd fanaticism which breaks every bond of society that he approved the conversion of his son *Louis Calas*, and for thirty years had employed a devout Catholic servant who had brought up all his children.

One of *Jean Calas's* sons, named *Marc-Antoine*, was a man of letters, reputed to have a restless, gloomy, and violent temperament. Unable either to succeed in commerce, for which he had no aptitude, or to gain admission to the bar, because this required certificates of Catholic faith which he could not obtain, the young man resolved to end his life and gave one of his friends an intimation of his plan. He strengthened his resolve by reading everything ever written about suicide.

At last, one day, having lost his money gambling, he chose that very day to carry out his plan. A friend of his and of his family named *Lavaisse*, a young man of nineteen known for his candor and gentle character, the son of a celebrated Toulouse lawyer, had arrived¹ from Bordeaux the day before; he happened to have supper with the *Calas* family. The father, the mother, *Marc-Antoine*, their eldest son, and *Pierre*, their second son, ate together. After supper they withdrew to a small sitting room; *Marc-Antoine* disappeared. At last, when young *Lavaisse* wished to leave, he and *Pierre Calas* went downstairs and found *Marc-Antoine* below, near the shop, hanging from a door in his shirt, with his coat folded on the counter. His shirt was not even disarranged; his hair was neatly combed. There was not a wound or bruise on his body.²

We pass over all the details the lawyers have recounted; we will not describe the grief and despair of the father and mother. Their cries were heard by the neighbors. Beside themselves, *Lavaisse* and *Pierre Calas* ran to find surgeons and officers of justice.

While they were carrying out this duty, while the father and mother were sobbing and weeping, the people of Toulouse gathered around the house. These people are superstitious and hotheaded; they regard their brothers who do not share their religion as monsters. It was in Toulouse that solemn thanks were offered to God for the death of *Henry III*, and an oath was sworn to slaughter the first person who spoke of acknowledging the great and good *Henry IV*. Every year this city still celebrates, with a procession and bonfires, the day on which it massacred four thousand heretical citizens two centuries ago. Six decrees of the Council have forbidden this hateful festival in vain: the people of Toulouse have always celebrated it, just as they celebrate the Floral Games.

Some fanatic in the mob cried out that *Jean Calas* had hanged his own son *Marc-Antoine*. The cry was repeated, and in a moment everyone had taken it up. Others added that the dead man had been due to renounce his faith the next day, and that his family and young *Lavaisse* had strangled him out of hatred for the Catholic religion. A moment later there was no longer any doubt. The whole city was convinced that it was an article of Protestant faith that a father and mother must murder their son as soon as he wished to convert.

Once minds are inflamed, they stop at nothing. People imagined that the Protestants of Languedoc had assembled the day before; that by majority vote they had chosen an executioner for the sect; that the choice had fallen on young *Lavaisse*; and that within twenty-four hours this young man had received word of his election and arrived from Bordeaux to help *Jean Calas*, his wife, and their son *Pierre* strangle a friend, a son, a brother.

Mr. *David*, a capitoul, or municipal magistrate, of Toulouse, stirred up by these rumors and eager to distinguish himself through swift action, conducted proceedings in violation of the rules and ordinances. The *Calas* family, the Catholic servant, and *Lavaisse* were put in irons.

An ecclesiastical summons calling for testimony was published, as defective as the proceedings themselves. They went further. *Marc-Antoine Calas* had died a Calvinist, and if he had taken his own life, his body should have been dragged

on a hurdle. Instead, he was buried with the greatest pomp in the Church of Saint-Étienne, despite the parish priest, who protested against this profanation. There are four confraternities of penitents in Languedoc: the white, the blue, the gray, and the black. The brothers wear a long hood with a cloth mask pierced by two eyeholes. They tried to enlist the Duke of *Fitz-James*, commander of the province, in their order, but he refused. The White Penitents held a solemn service for *Marc-Antoine Calas* as a martyr. No church ever celebrated the feast of a true martyr with greater pomp; but this pomp was terrible. Above a magnificent catafalque they had raised a moving skeleton representing *Marc-Antoine Calas*, holding in one hand a palm branch and in the other the pen with which he was to sign his renunciation of heresy—and which was, in fact, writing his father's death sentence.

The unfortunate man who had taken his own life now lacked only canonization. All the people regarded him as a saint: some invoked him; others went to pray at his tomb; others asked him for miracles; others told of those he had performed. A monk pulled out some of his teeth to obtain lasting relics. A devout woman, somewhat deaf, said she had heard the sound of bells. A priest suffering from apoplexy recovered after taking an emetic. Official records of these wonders were drawn up. The author of this account possesses an attestation that a young man of Toulouse went mad after praying for several nights at the new saint's tomb and failing to obtain the miracle he implored.

Some of the magistrates belonged to the confraternity of White Penitents. From that moment, *Jean Calas's* death seemed certain.

What above all prepared the way for his execution was the approach of that singular festival which the people of Toulouse celebrate every year in memory of a massacre of four thousand Huguenots; 1762 marked the bicentenary. The city was preparing the decorations for this solemnity, and the preparations themselves further kindled the people's fevered imagination. It was said publicly that the scaffold on which the *Calas* family would be broken on the wheel would be the festival's finest ornament; that Providence itself was bringing these victims to be sacrificed to our holy religion. Twenty people heard such remarks, and still more violent ones. And this is in our own day! At a time when philosophy

has made such progress! When a hundred academies are writing to inspire gentleness in human conduct! It seems that fanaticism, lately outraged by reason's successes, struggles beneath it with all the greater fury.

Thirteen judges met every day to bring the trial to a conclusion. There was, and could be, no evidence against the family; but religion led astray took the place of evidence. Six judges long persisted in condemning *Jean Calas*, his son, and *Lavaisse* to the wheel, and *Jean Calas's* wife to the stake. Seven others, more moderate, wanted at least an inquiry. The debates were long and repeatedly renewed. One of the judges, convinced of the defendants' innocence and the impossibility of the crime, spoke vigorously on their behalf. He opposed zeal for humanity to zeal for severity; in every house in Toulouse, where the incessant cries of deluded religion demanded the blood of these unfortunate people, he became the *Calas* family's public advocate. Another judge, known for his violence, spoke against the *Calas* family throughout the city with as much fury as the first showed eagerness to defend them. At last the uproar became so great that both were obliged to withdraw from the case; they retired to the country. But, by a strange misfortune, the judge favorable to the *Calas* family had the scruple to maintain his withdrawal, while the other returned to cast his vote against people he had no right to judge. It was this vote that secured the sentence of the wheel: there were eight votes against five, one of the six opposing judges having at last, after much dispute, gone over to the harsher side.

It seems that when a father is accused of murdering his child, and the question is whether to deliver a family man to the most dreadful torture, the judgment ought to be unanimous, because the evidence of so unheard-of a crime³ ought to be plainly clear to everyone. In such a case, the slightest doubt should suffice to make a judge tremble before signing a death sentence. The weakness of our reason and the inadequacy of our laws make themselves felt every day; but when is their wretchedness more apparent than when the weight of a single vote sends a citizen to the wheel? In Athens, fifty votes beyond half were required before anyone dared pronounce a death sentence. What follows from this? What we know, to very little purpose: that the Greeks were wiser and more humane than we are.

It seemed impossible that *Jean Calas*, an old man of sixty-eight whose legs had long been swollen and weak, could by himself have strangled and hanged a son of twenty-eight, a man of uncommon strength. He must necessarily have been assisted in the deed by his wife, his son *Pierre Calas*, *Lavaisse*, and the servant. They had not left one another for a single moment on the evening of that fatal event. But this supposition was as absurd as the other. How could a devout Catholic servant have allowed Huguenots to murder a young man she had raised, to punish him for loving her own religion? How could *Lavaisse* have come expressly from Bordeaux to strangle his friend, whose supposed conversion he knew nothing about? How could a loving mother have laid hands on her son? How could all of them together have strangled a young man as strong as all of them, without a long and violent struggle, without terrible cries that would have summoned the entire neighborhood, without repeated blows, without bruises, without torn clothing?

It was clear that if the murder of the son could have been committed, all the accused were equally guilty, since they had not left one another for a moment. It was clear that they were not guilty; it was clear that the father alone could not be guilty; and yet the judgment condemned this father alone to die on the wheel.

The grounds for the judgment were as inconceivable as everything else. The judges who had resolved on *Jean Calas's* execution persuaded the others that this feeble old man could not withstand the torture, and that under the executioners' blows he would confess his crime and that of his accomplices. They were confounded when the old man, dying on the wheel, called God to witness his innocence and implored him to forgive his judges.

They were obliged to issue a second judgment contradicting the first, releasing the mother, her son *Pierre*, young *Lavaisse*, and the servant. But one of the councilors pointed out that this judgment gave the lie to the other; that they were condemning themselves; that, since all the accused had always been together at the time of the supposed murder, the release of all the survivors proved beyond dispute the innocence of the father they had executed. They then decided to banish his son *Pierre Calas*. This banishment seemed as incon-

sistent and absurd as everything else: *Pierre Calas* was either guilty or innocent of the murder. If guilty, he should have been broken on the wheel like his father; if innocent, he should not have been banished. But the judges, appalled by the father's execution and the moving piety with which he had died, imagined they could save their honor by letting people believe they were showing mercy to the son—as though showing mercy in such a case would not have been another breach of duty. They thought that banishing this young man, poor and without protectors, was of no consequence, and no great injustice after the one they had had the misfortune to commit.

They began by threatening *Pierre Calas* in his dungeon with the same treatment as his father if he did not renounce his religion. This is what the young man⁴ attests under oath.

As *Pierre Calas* was leaving the city, he met an abbé intent on conversion, who made him return to Toulouse. He was shut up in a Dominican convent and forced to perform every Catholic observance. This was part of what they wanted; it was the price of his father's blood, and the religion they had thought to avenge seemed satisfied.

The daughters were taken from their mother and shut up in a convent. This woman, almost spattered with her husband's blood, who had held her eldest son dead in her arms, who saw the other banished, who had been deprived of her daughters and stripped of all her possessions, was alone in the world, without bread, without hope, dying under the weight of her suffering. Some people, after carefully examining every circumstance of this horrible affair, were so deeply struck that they urged Madame *Calas*, who had withdrawn into seclusion, to dare to come and ask for justice at the foot of the throne. She could scarcely stand then; her life was ebbing away. Besides, born an Englishwoman and brought to a French province at an early age, she was frightened by the very name of Paris. She imagined that the kingdom's capital must be even more barbarous than Toulouse. At last the duty of vindicating her husband's memory prevailed over her weakness. She arrived in Paris at the point of death. She was astonished to find welcome, help, and tears.

In Paris, reason prevails over fanaticism, however great it may be; in the provinces, by contrast, fanaticism almost always prevails over reason.

Mr. *de Beaumont*, a celebrated lawyer at the Parlement of Paris, immediately took up her defense and drew up a legal opinion signed by fifteen lawyers. Mr. *Loiseau*, no less eloquent, composed a brief on behalf of the family. Mr. *Mariette*, a lawyer at the Council, drafted a formal petition that brought conviction to every mind.

These three generous defenders of the laws and of innocence gave the widow the proceeds from the publication of their pleadings.⁵ Paris and all Europe were moved to pity, and joined this unfortunate woman in demanding justice. The whole public had pronounced its judgment long before the Council could sign it.

Compassion reached even the ministry, despite the ceaseless torrent of business that often leaves no room for pity, and despite the habit of seeing suffering people, which can harden the heart still further. The daughters were restored to their mother. All three, dressed in mourning crape and bathed in tears, were seen to draw tears from their judges.

Yet this family still had a few enemies, for religion was involved. Several people called *devout*⁶ in France declared openly that it was far better to let an innocent old Calvinist be broken on the wheel than to expose eight councilors of Languedoc to admitting they had been mistaken. They even used this expression: “There are more magistrates than *Calases*”; and from this they inferred that the *Calas* family must be sacrificed to the honor of the judiciary. It did not occur to them that the honor of judges, like that of other men, consists in repairing their mistakes. In France we do not believe that the pope, assisted by his cardinals, is infallible; we might believe the same of eight judges in Toulouse. All the other reasonable and disinterested people said that the Toulouse judgment would be overturned throughout Europe, even if particular considerations prevented its being overturned in the Council.

Such was the state of this astonishing affair when it prompted some impartial but compassionate people to offer the public a few reflections on tolerance, on forbearance, on compassion—which the Abbé *Houteville*, in his swollen decla-

mation riddled with factual errors, calls a *monstrous doctrine*, and which reason calls the birthright of human nature.

Either the judges of Toulouse, swept away by the fanaticism of the mob, had an innocent father broken on the wheel, which is without precedent; or this father and his wife strangled their eldest son, assisted in this murder by another son and a friend, which is contrary to nature. In either case, the abuse of the holiest religion has produced a great crime. It is therefore in the interest of the human race to examine whether religion should be charitable or barbarous.

¹ October 12, 1761.

² After the body was taken to the town hall, all that was found was a small scratch on the tip of his nose and a small mark on his chest, caused by some carelessness in moving the body.

³ I know only two examples in history of fathers accused of murdering their sons for religion. The first is the father of Saint *Barbara*, whom we call Saint *Barbe*. He had ordered two windows for his bathing room; in his absence, *Barbe* added a third in honor of the Holy Trinity. With *the tip of her finger* she made the sign of the cross on marble columns, and the sign became deeply engraved in them. Her angry father ran after her, sword in hand, but she fled through a mountain that opened for her. Her father went around the mountain and caught his daughter. She was whipped naked, but God covered her with a white cloud; at last her father cut off her head. This is what the *Fleur des Saints* relates.

The second example is Prince *Hermenegild*. He rebelled against the king his father, fought him in 584, was defeated, and was killed by an officer. He has been made a martyr because his father was an Arian.

⁴ “A Dominican came into my dungeon and threatened me with the same kind of death if I did not renounce my faith. This I attest before God, July 23, 1762.”

Pierre Calas.

- ⁵ Counterfeit editions were printed in several cities, and Madame *Calas* lost the benefit of this generosity.
- ⁶ *Devout* comes from the Latin word *devotus*. The *Devoti* of ancient Rome were men who devoted themselves to the salvation of the republic: men such as *Curtius* and the *Decii*.

Chapter II



Consequences of the execution of Jean Calas.

If the White Penitents caused the execution of an innocent man, the utter ruin and dispersal of a family, and the disgrace that ought to attach only to injustice but instead attaches to punishment; if the White Penitents' haste to celebrate as a saint a man whose body should have been dragged on a hurdle sent a virtuous father to the wheel—then surely this misfortune should make them true penitents for the rest of their lives. They and the judges must weep, but not in a long white robe and a mask that would conceal their tears.

We respect all confraternities; they are edifying. But however much good they may do the state, does it equal the terrible evil they have caused? They seem to have been established by the zeal that animates the Catholics of Languedoc against those we call Huguenots. One would think they had taken a vow to hate their brothers; for we have enough religion to hate and persecute, but not enough to love and help. And what if these confraternities were governed by fanatics, as some congregations of Artisans and *Gentlemen* once were, among whom the habit of seeing visions was reduced to an art and a system, as one of our most eloquent and learned magistrates has said? What if these confraternities established those dark rooms called meditation chambers, where they had devils painted with horns and claws, pits of flame, crosses and daggers, with the

holy name of Jesus above the picture? What a spectacle for eyes already spell-bound, and imaginations as inflamed as they were submissive to their spiritual directors!

There have been times, as we know only too well, when confraternities were dangerous. The Fraticelli and the Flagellants caused disturbances. The League began with such associations. Why set oneself apart from other citizens in this way? Did they believe themselves more perfect? That in itself insults the rest of the nation. Did they want all Christians to join the confraternity? What a fine spectacle Europe would make in hoods and masks, with two little round holes in front of the eyes! Does anyone honestly think that God prefers this costume to a coat? More than that: this dress is a uniform for religious disputants, warning their adversaries to take up arms. It can kindle a kind of civil war in people's minds, which might end in disastrous excesses if the king and his ministers were not as wise as the fanatics are senseless.

We know well enough what it has cost us since Christians began disputing points of doctrine: blood has flowed on scaffolds and battlefields from the fourth century to our own day. Let us confine ourselves here to the wars and horrors stirred up by the quarrels of the Reformation, and see where they began in France. Perhaps a brief and faithful picture of so many calamities will open the eyes of some who are poorly informed, and move hearts that are well disposed.

Chapter III



An account of the sixteenth-century Reformation.

When minds began to be enlightened at the revival of learning, complaints about abuses became general. Everyone admits that these complaints were justified.

Pope *Alexander VI* had openly bought the tiara, and his five bastards shared in its benefits. His son, the Cardinal Duke of *Borgia*, acting in concert with the pope his father, had the *Vitelli*, the *Urbino*, the *Gravina*, the *Oliveretto*, and a hundred other lords put to death in order to seize their domains. *Julius II*, moved by the same spirit, excommunicated *Louis XII*, gave his kingdom to whoever could take it, and himself, helmet on his head and breastplate on his back, laid part of Italy waste with fire and sword. *Leo X*, to pay for his pleasures, traded in indulgences as people sell goods in a public market. Those who rose against so much brigandage were at least not wrong in their morals; let us see whether they wronged us in politics.

They said that since Jesus Christ had never demanded first-year revenues from benefices or reserved benefices for himself, nor sold dispensations for this world and indulgences for the next, people could dispense with paying a foreign prince for all these things. Even if first-year revenues, lawsuits in the court of Rome, and the dispensations that still exist today cost us only five hundred thousand francs a year, it is clear that since *Francis I*, in two hundred and fifty years, we have paid one hundred and twenty million; and allowing for the dif-

ferent values of a mark of silver, this amounts to some two hundred and fifty million in today's money. We may therefore admit without blasphemy that the heretics, in proposing the abolition of these peculiar taxes, which will astonish posterity, were doing the kingdom no great harm, and were better accountants than they were bad subjects. Let us add that they alone knew Greek and were acquainted with antiquity. Let us not conceal the fact that, despite their errors, we owe them the development of the human mind, long buried in the deepest barbarism.

But since they denied purgatory, which must not be doubted and which, besides, brought the monks a great deal of money; since they did not revere relics, which must be revered but which brought in still more; and since, finally, they attacked highly respected doctrines,⁷ the first answer was simply to have them burned. The king who protected them and paid them subsidies in Germany marched through Paris at the head of a procession, after which several of these unfortunates were executed. Here is how the execution was carried out. They were suspended from the end of a long beam that pivoted like a seesaw on a standing tree. A great fire was lit beneath them, and they were alternately plunged into it and raised again. They suffered torment and death by degrees, until they expired under the longest and most dreadful torture barbarity has ever invented.

Shortly before the death of *Francis I*, some members of the Parlement of Provence, incited by churchmen against the inhabitants of Mérindol and Cabrières, asked the king for troops to support the execution of nineteen people of that district whom they had condemned. They had six thousand slaughtered, sparing neither women, the old, nor children, and reduced thirty towns to ashes. These people, unknown until then, were doubtless wrong to have been born Waldensians: that was their only crime. For three hundred years they had lived in wildernesses and on mountains which they had made fertile through incredible labor. Their peaceful, pastoral life recalled the innocence attributed to the world's earliest ages. They knew the neighboring towns only

through the produce they went there to sell. They knew nothing of lawsuits or war. They did not defend themselves; they were slaughtered like fleeing animals killed within an enclosure.⁸

After the death of *Francis I*, a prince nevertheless better known for his love affairs and misfortunes than for his cruelties, the execution of a thousand heretics, above all that of the parlement councilor *Dubourg*, and finally the massacre of Vassy, drove the persecuted to take up arms. Their sect had multiplied in the glare of the pyres and beneath the executioners' blades. Rage succeeded patience; they imitated the cruelties of their enemies. Nine civil wars filled France with carnage. A peace more disastrous than war produced the *Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre*, without precedent in the annals of crime. The League assassinated *Henry III* and *Henry IV* by the hands of a Dominican friar and a monster who had been a Feuillant brother. Some people maintain that humanity, forbearance, and freedom of conscience are horrible things. But honestly, would they have produced comparable calamities?

⁷ They revived *Berengar's* view of the Eucharist. They denied that a body could be in a hundred thousand different places, even through divine omnipotence; they denied that attributes could subsist without a substance; they believed it absolutely impossible for what is bread and wine to the eyes, the palate, and the stomach to be annihilated at the very moment it exists. They upheld all these errors formerly condemned in *Berengar*. They relied on several passages from the early Church Fathers, especially *Saint Justin*, who says expressly in his Dialogue contre *Typhon*: "The offering of fine flour is the figure of the Eucharist, which Jesus Christ commands us to perform in memory of his Passion." "And the offering of fine flour, &c., was a figure of the bread of the Eucharist, which our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to prepare in remembrance of his Passion, &c."

They recalled everything said in the early centuries against the veneration of relics; they quoted these words of *Vigilantius*: "Must you respect, or even adore, worthless dust? Do the souls of martyrs still love their ashes? The cus-

toms of idolaters have entered the Church; people are beginning to light torches at midday. During our lives we can pray for one another; but after death, what use are these prayers?"

But they did not say how vigorously *Saint Jerome* had spoken against these words of *Vigilantius*. In short, they wanted to bring everything back to apostolic times, and refused to admit that as the Church had grown and strengthened, its discipline had necessarily needed to grow and strengthen too. They condemned riches, which nevertheless seemed necessary to sustain the majesty of worship.

- ⁸ The truthful and respected President *de Thou* speaks of these innocent and unfortunate people as follows: *"They were people who, some three hundred years earlier, had taken rough and uncultivated land from their lords in return for rent, and by unremitting labor and constant cultivation had made it fruitful in crops and suitable for livestock. They were most enduring of toil and hunger, averse to lawsuits, generous to the needy, diligent and scrupulously faithful in paying taxes to the prince and dues to their lords. They displayed their worship of God through constant prayer, and innocence in their conduct; but they rarely entered churches dedicated to saints, except when they went to towns near their borders to trade or conduct business. If they sometimes set foot in them, they did not prostrate themselves before statues of God and the saints, or place candles or offerings before them. They did not ask priests to celebrate divine service for themselves or the souls of their relatives, nor mark their foreheads with a cross as others customarily did. When the heavens thundered, they did not sprinkle themselves with holy water, but raised their eyes to heaven and implored God's help. They did not travel on religious pilgrimages or bare their heads before images of crosses along the roads. They celebrated their rites in a different manner and in the common tongue. Finally, they paid no honor to the pope or bishops, but had certain men chosen from their own number as their leaders and teachers. When these things were reported to Francis on the sixth day before the Ides of February in the year, 1564."*

Madame *de Cental*, who owned part of the ravaged lands, where nothing could now be seen but the bodies of their inhabitants, sought justice from King *Henry II*, who referred her to the Parlement of Paris. The advocate general of Provence, named *Guérin*, the principal author of the massacres, was the only man condemned to be beheaded. *De Thou* says that he alone paid the penalty for the other guilty men, “*because he lacked the favor of courtiers*”—because he had no friends at court.

Chapter IV



Whether tolerance is dangerous, and among which peoples it is practiced.

Some have said that to show fatherly forbearance toward our erring brothers, who pray to God in bad French, would be to put weapons in their hands; that we would see new battles of Jarnac, Moncontour, Coutras, Dreux, Saint-Denis, &c. I do not know, for I am no prophet. But it seems to me poor reasoning to say: “These men rose up when I harmed them; therefore they will rise up when I do them good.”

I would venture to take the liberty of inviting those at the head of government, and those destined for high office, to consider carefully whether there is really reason to fear that gentleness will produce the same rebellions that cruelty brought about; whether what happened in one set of circumstances must happen in another; whether times, opinions, and ways of life are always the same.

The Huguenots were undoubtedly intoxicated with fanaticism and stained with blood, as we were. But is the present generation as barbarous as their fathers? Have time, reason—which is making such progress—good books, and the gentleness of social life made no impression on those who guide these people’s minds? And do we not see that almost all Europe has changed its face over the past fifty years or so?

Government has grown stronger everywhere, while manners have grown gentler. Public order, sustained by large standing armies, moreover leaves no reason to fear a return to those anarchic times when Calvinist peasants fought

Catholic peasants, hastily formed into regiments between sowing and harvest. Other times, other concerns. It would be absurd today to put a tenth of the Sorbonne to death because it once petitioned to have the *Maid of Orléans* burned; because it declared that *Henry III* had forfeited his right to reign, excommunicated him, and outlawed the great *Henry IV*. Surely no one will call to account the kingdom's other corporate bodies that committed the same excesses in those frenzied times. It would be not only unjust, but as mad as purging all the inhabitants of Marseille because they had the plague in 1720. Shall we sack Rome, as the troops of *Charles V* did, because *Sixtus V*, in 1585, granted nine years of indulgence to every Frenchman who took up arms against his sovereign? Is it not enough to prevent Rome from ever committing such excesses again?

The fury inspired by dogmatism and the abuse of a misunderstood Christianity has shed as much blood and caused as many disasters in Germany, England, and even Holland as in France. Yet today differences of religion cause no disturbance in those states. Jews, Catholics, Greek Christians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Socinians, Mennonites, Moravians, and so many others live as brothers in those lands, and contribute equally to society's welfare.

In Holland there is no longer any fear that the disputes of a *Gomar*⁹ over predestination will cause the grand pensionary to be beheaded. In London there is no longer any fear that quarrels between Presbyterians and Episcopalians over a liturgy and a surplice will spill a king's blood on a scaffold.¹⁰ Ireland, populous and prosperous, will no longer see its Catholic citizens spend two months sacrificing their Protestant fellow citizens to God: burying them alive; hanging mothers from gibbets, tying daughters around their mothers' necks, and watching them die together; cutting open pregnant women, tearing out their half-formed children, and feeding them to pigs and dogs; putting a dagger into the hands of their bound prisoners and guiding their arms into the breasts of their wives, fathers, mothers, and daughters, imagining that they were making them murder their own families and damning them all by exterminating them all. This is what *Rapin-Thoyras*, an officer in Ireland and nearly a contemporary, relates; what all the annals and all the histories of England relate; and what

surely will never be imitated. Philosophy, philosophy alone, that sister of religion, has disarmed hands so long bloodied by superstition; and the human mind, awakening from its intoxication, has marveled at the excesses into which fanaticism carried it.

We ourselves have a wealthy province in France where Lutheranism predominates over Catholicism. The university in Alsace is in Lutheran hands; Lutherans hold some of the municipal offices. Not the slightest religious quarrel has disturbed this province's peace since it came under our kings. Why? Because no one there has been persecuted. Do not try to constrain people's hearts, and every heart will be yours.

I do not say that everyone who does not share the prince's religion should share the offices and honors of those who belong to the dominant faith. In England, Catholics, regarded as adherents of the Pretender, cannot hold public office; they even pay double taxes. But otherwise they enjoy all the rights of citizens.

Some French bishops have been suspected of thinking that having Calvinists in their dioceses serves neither their honor nor their interest; this has been called the greatest obstacle to tolerance. I cannot believe it. The body of French bishops consists of men of high birth who think and act with a nobility worthy of their origins. They are charitable and generous; justice requires us to acknowledge it. They must realize that the fugitives from their dioceses will certainly not convert in foreign lands, whereas, returned to their pastors, they might be enlightened by their teaching and moved by their example. There would be honor in converting them; their temporal revenues would not suffer; and the more citizens there were, the greater the yield of the prelates' lands.

A bishop of Warmia, in Poland, had an Anabaptist as a tenant farmer and a Socinian as a revenue collector. He was urged to dismiss and prosecute one because he did not believe in consubstantiality, and the other because he did not baptize his son until the age of fifteen. He replied that they would be eternally damned in the next world, but that in this one they were very necessary to him.

Let us leave our little sphere and examine the rest of our globe. The Grand Signor governs twenty peoples of different religions in peace. Two hundred thousand Greek Christians live safely in Constantinople; the mufti himself names the Greek patriarch and presents him to the emperor; a Latin patriarch is tolerated there. The sultan appoints Latin bishops for certain Greek islands,¹¹ using this formula: *"I command him to go and reside as bishop on the island of Chios, according to their ancient custom and their vain ceremonies."* This empire is full of Jacobites, Nestorians, and Monothelites; there are Copts, Christians of *Saint John*, Jews, Guebres, and Banians. The Turkish annals mention no rebellion stirred up by any of these religions.

Go to India, Persia, Tartary: you will find the same tolerance and the same peace. *Peter the Great* favored every form of worship in his vast empire. Commerce and agriculture benefited, and the body politic never suffered.

In the more than four thousand years for which it has been known, the government of China has never adopted any worship but that of the *Noahides*, the simple adoration of one God. Yet it tolerates the superstitions of *Fo* and a multitude of bonzes who would be dangerous if the wisdom of the courts had not always kept them in check.

It is true that the great Emperor *Yongzheng*, perhaps the wisest and most magnanimous China has ever had, expelled the Jesuits. But this was not because he was intolerant; on the contrary, it was because the Jesuits were. They themselves report in their *Lettres curieuses* what this good prince told them: *"I know that your religion is intolerant; I know what you have done in Manila and Japan. You deceived my father; do not expect to deceive me as well."* Read the whole speech he deigned to address to them, and you will find him the wisest and most merciful of men. Could he really keep European natural philosophers who, under the pretext of showing thermometers and aeolipiles at court, had already stirred a prince of the blood to rebellion? And what would this emperor have said if he had read our histories, if he had known the days of our League and the Gunpowder Plot?

It was enough for him to be informed of the unseemly quarrels among Jesuits, Dominicans, Capuchins, and secular priests sent into his states from the ends of the earth. They came to preach the truth, and they anathematized one another. The emperor merely sent away foreign troublemakers. But with what kindness he sent them away! What fatherly care he took of them on their journey, and to prevent their being insulted along the road! Their very banishment was an example of tolerance and humanity.

The Japanese¹² were the most tolerant of all people: twelve peaceful religions were established in their empire. The Jesuits came to make a thirteenth; but soon they would tolerate no other, and we know the result. A civil war as dreadful as those of the League ravaged the country. The Christian religion was at last drowned in torrents of blood. The Japanese closed their empire to the rest of the world, and regarded us only as savage beasts, like those the English have purged from their island. In vain the minister *Colbert*, aware of our need for the Japanese, who have no need of us, tried to establish trade with their empire. He found them unyielding.

Thus our entire continent proves that we must neither preach nor practice intolerance.

Look to the other hemisphere; consider Carolina, whose lawgiver was the wise *Locke*. Any head of a family with only seven people in his household may establish a religion of his choice, provided those seven people agree with him. This liberty has produced no disorder. God forbid that we should cite this example to encourage every household to devise a worship of its own. We give it only to show that the furthest extreme to which tolerance can go has not been followed by the slightest dissension.

But what shall we say of those peaceful *Primitives*, mockingly called *Quakers*, who, with customs perhaps ridiculous, have been so virtuous, and have taught peace to the rest of humanity in vain? They number a hundred thousand in Pennsylvania. Discord and controversy are unknown in the happy homeland they have made for themselves; and the very name of their city, Philadelphia, constantly reminding them that human beings are brothers, is an example and a reproach to peoples who do not yet know tolerance.

In short, tolerance has never stirred up a civil war; intolerance has covered the earth with carnage. Now judge between these two rivals: between the mother who wants her son slaughtered and the mother who gives him up, provided he lives.

I speak here only of the interest of nations; respecting theology, as I must, I consider in this discussion only society's physical and moral welfare. I beg every impartial reader to weigh these truths, correct them, and carry them further. Attentive readers who share their thoughts with one another always go further than the author.¹³

⁹ *Franciscus Gomarus* was a Protestant theologian. Against his colleague *Arminius*, he maintained that God had destined the greater part of humanity, from all eternity, to be burned eternally. This infernal doctrine was upheld, as it deserved to be, by persecution. The grand pensionary *Barneveldt*, who belonged to the party opposed to *Gomarus*, was beheaded at the age of 72, on May 13, 1619, "*for having grieved the Church of God to the utmost.*"

¹⁰ A declaimer, in the *Apologie de la Révocation de l'Edit de Nantes*, says of England: "*A false religion was bound to produce such fruits; only one remained to ripen, and these islanders are harvesting it: the contempt of nations.*" We must admit that the author chooses his moment badly for saying that the English are contemptible and despised by the whole earth. Surely it is not when a nation distinguishes itself by its courage and generosity, when it is victorious in all four parts of the world, that one can expect a welcome for saying it is contemptible and despised. This singular passage appears in a chapter on intolerance. Those who preach intolerance deserve to write like this. This abominable book, which seems the work of the madman of *Verberies*, is by a man with no religious commission—for what pastor would write like this? The fury in this book goes so far as to justify the *Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre*. One would think a work filled with such dreadful paradoxes would be in everyone's hands, if only for its singularity; yet it is scarcely known.

¹¹ See *Ricaut*.

¹² See *Kempfer*, and all the accounts of Japan.

¹³ Mr. *de la Bourdonnaie*, intendant of Rouen, says that hatmaking has collapsed in Caudebec and Neufchâtel because the refugees fled. Mr. *Foucaut*, intendant of Caen, says that trade in his administrative district has fallen by half. Mr. *de Maupeou*, intendant of Poitiers, says that the manufacture of drugget has been destroyed. Mr. *de Bezons*, intendant of Bordeaux, complains that trade in Clérac and Nérac scarcely survives. Mr. *de Miroménil*, intendant of Touraine, says that trade in Tours has fallen by ten million a year—and all this through persecution. See the *Mémoires des Intendants*, 1698. Above all, count the army and naval officers and sailors who have been obliged to serve against France, often with disastrous success; and consider whether intolerance has done the state any harm.

We do not presume here to propose policies to ministers whose genius and high principles are well known, and whose hearts are as noble as their birth. They will readily see that rebuilding the navy requires some forbearance toward the inhabitants of our coasts.

Chapter V



How tolerance may be admitted.

I venture to suppose that an enlightened and magnanimous minister, a humane and wise prelate, a prince who knows that his interest lies in having many subjects and his glory in their happiness, deigns to look over this shapeless and defective work. He supplies its deficiencies with his own understanding; he says to himself: “What will I risk by seeing the land cultivated and adorned by more hardworking hands, tax revenues increased, the state more prosperous?”

Germany would be a wilderness covered with the bones of Catholics, Evangelicals, Reformed Christians, and Anabaptists slaughtered by one another, if the Peace of Westphalia had not at last secured freedom of conscience.

We have Jews in Bordeaux, Metz, and Alsace; we have Lutherans, Molinists, and Jansenists. Can we not tolerate Calvinists and keep them in check on much the same terms as Catholics are tolerated in London? The more sects there are, the less dangerous each becomes; their number weakens them. All are restrained by just laws that forbid riotous assemblies, insults, and sedition, and are always kept in force by the power to compel obedience.

We know that several heads of families who have built great fortunes in foreign countries are ready to return to their homeland. They ask only for the protection of natural law, the validity of their marriages, certainty about their children’s legal status, the right to inherit from their fathers, and personal freedom.

No public churches, no right to municipal offices or high dignities: Catholics have none in London or in several other countries. It is no longer a question of granting vast privileges and fortified places to a faction, but of allowing a peaceful people to live, of softening edicts that may once have been necessary and are so no longer. It is not for us to tell the ministry what it can do; it is enough to implore its aid for the unfortunate.

How many ways there are to make them useful and prevent them from ever being dangerous! The wisdom of the ministry and Council, supported by force, will readily find the means that so many other nations employ so successfully.

There are still fanatics among the Calvinist rabble; but there are certainly more among the Convulsionary rabble. The dregs of the madmen of *Saint-Médard* count for nothing in the nation; those of the Calvinist prophets have disappeared. The great means of reducing the number of these maniacs, if any remain, is to leave this sickness of the mind to the care of reason, which enlightens humanity slowly but unfailingly. Reason is gentle, humane; it inspires forbearance, stifles discord, strengthens virtue, and makes obedience to the laws attractive, doing more in this way than force does to uphold them. And shall we count for nothing the ridicule that all respectable people now attach to religious frenzy? This ridicule is a powerful barrier against the extravagances of every sectarian. Past times are as though they had never been. We must always begin from where we are, and from the point nations have reached.

There was a time when people thought themselves obliged to issue decrees against anyone who taught a doctrine contrary to *Aristotle's* categories, nature's abhorrence of a vacuum, quiddities, and universals existing in things themselves. We have in Europe more than a hundred volumes of jurisprudence on witchcraft and the means of distinguishing false sorcerers from true ones. The excommunication of locusts and insects harmful to crops was once widely practiced, and still appears in several ritual books. The practice has passed; *Aristotle*, sorcerers, and locusts are left in peace. There are countless examples of these solemn follies, once so important. Others recur from time to time; but when they have run their course, when people have had their fill, they vanish. If

someone today took it into his head to become a Carpocratian, a Eutychian, a Monothelite, a Monophysite, a Nestorian, a Manichaeian, &c., what would happen? People would laugh at him as at a man dressed in an old-fashioned ruff and doublet.

The nation was beginning to open its eyes when the Jesuits *Le Tellier* and *Doucín* manufactured the bull *Unigenitus* and sent it to Rome. They thought they were still living in those ignorant times when peoples accepted the most absurd assertions without examination. They dared condemn this proposition, universally true in every case and at every time: "*Fear of an unjust excommunication must not prevent anyone from doing his duty.*" This was to condemn reason, the liberties of the Gallican Church, and the foundation of morality. It was to tell humanity: "God commands you never to do your duty whenever you fear injustice." Common sense has never been more brazenly affronted; the consultors in Rome took no notice. The court of Rome was persuaded that this bull was necessary and that the nation desired it. It was signed, sealed, and sent; we know the consequences. Certainly, had they been foreseen, the bull would have been softened. The quarrels were fierce; the king's wisdom and goodness have at last calmed them.

The same holds for many of the points that divide Protestants from us. Some are of no consequence; others are more serious, but the fury of dispute over them has so subsided that Protestants themselves no longer preach controversy in any of their churches.

It is therefore this time of distaste, of satiety—or rather, of reason—that we may seize upon as a turning point and a pledge of public peace. Controversy is an epidemic disease nearing its end; this plague, of which we have been cured, now requires only gentle care. In short, the state's interest is for its exiled sons to return modestly to their father's house. Humanity demands it, reason advises it, and statecraft has nothing to fear from it.

Chapter VI



Whether intolerance is sanctioned by natural law and human law.

Natural law is the law that nature makes known to all people. You have raised your child: he owes you respect as his father, gratitude as his benefactor. You have a right to the produce of the land you have cultivated with your own hands. You have given and received a promise: it must be kept.

Human law can never rest on any foundation but this law of nature; and the great principle, the universal principle of both, throughout the earth, is: *“Do not do what you would not want done to you.”* Now it is hard to see how, following this principle, one person could say to another: *“Believe what I believe, and what you cannot believe, or you will perish.”* This is what is said in Portugal, Spain, and Goa. In some other countries people are now content to say: *“Believe, or I abhor you; believe, or I will do you all the harm I can. Monster, you do not have my religion, so you have no religion. Your neighbors, your city, your province must look on you with horror.”*

If human law sanctioned such conduct, then the Japanese would have to detest the Chinese, who would loathe the Siamese; the Siamese would persecute the Gangarides, who would fall upon the inhabitants of the Indus. A Mogul would tear the heart from the first Malabari he found; the Malabari could slaughter the Persian, who could massacre the Turk; and all together would fall upon the Christians, who have devoured one another for so long.

The right to intolerance is therefore absurd and barbarous; it is the right of tigers—and far more horrible, for tigers tear only to eat, while we have exterminated one another over paragraphs.

Chapter VII



Whether intolerance was known to the Greeks.

The peoples of whom history has given us some faint knowledge all regarded their different religions as bonds uniting them with one another: this was an association of the human race. There was a kind of right of hospitality among gods as among men. When a stranger arrived in a city, he began by worshiping the gods of the country; people never failed to venerate even the gods of their enemies. The Trojans prayed to the gods who fought for the Greeks.

Alexander went into the deserts of Libya to consult the god *Ammon*, whom the Greeks called *Zeus* and the Latins *Jupiter*, although both peoples had their own *Jupiter* and *Zeus* at home. When a city was besieged, sacrifices and prayers were offered to its gods to win their favor. Thus, even in the midst of war, religion brought people together and sometimes softened their fury, though at other times it commanded inhuman and horrible deeds.

I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that none of the civilized peoples of antiquity restricted freedom of thought. All had a religion; but it seems they treated people as they treated their gods. All acknowledged a supreme God, but associated with him a prodigious number of lesser divinities. They had only one public worship, but allowed a multitude of individual systems of thought. The Greeks, for example, religious as they were, accepted the Epicureans' denial of providence and the existence of the soul. I say nothing of the other sects, all of which offended the sound ideas one ought to have of the Creator, and all of

which were tolerated.

Socrates, who came closest to knowledge of the Creator, paid the penalty for it, we are told, and died a martyr to the Deity. He is the only man the Greeks put to death for his opinions. If this was indeed the cause of his condemnation, it does intolerance no credit, since they punished the one man who alone gave glory to God, and honored all those who offered the most unworthy notions of the Deity. In my opinion, the enemies of tolerance should not invoke the hateful example of *Socrates*' judges.

It is clear, moreover, that he fell victim to a furious faction roused against him. He had made implacable enemies of the Sophists, orators, and poets who taught in the schools, and even of all the tutors responsible for children of high birth. He himself admits, in the speech reported by *Plato*, that he went from house to house proving to these tutors that they were mere ignoramuses. Such conduct was unworthy of the man an oracle had declared the wisest of all. A priest and a member of the Council of Five Hundred were unleashed against him and brought charges. I admit that I do not know precisely what those charges were; I find only vagueness in his defense. He is made to say in general that he was accused of instilling in young people principles hostile to religion and government. This is how slanderers behave every day throughout the world. But a court requires established facts, precise and detailed charges; the trial of *Socrates* supplies us with none. We know only that he initially had two hundred and twenty votes in his favor. The court of five hundred therefore contained two hundred and twenty philosophers: that is a great many; I doubt they could be found elsewhere. In the end, the majority voted for hemlock. But let us also remember that the Athenians, returning to their senses, came to abhor the accusers and judges; that *Meletus*, the principal author of the sentence, was condemned to death for this injustice; that the others were banished; and that a temple was raised to *Socrates*. Never was philosophy so well avenged or so greatly honored. The example of *Socrates* is, at bottom, the most devastating argument that can be brought against intolerance. The Athenians had an

altar dedicated to foreign gods, gods they could not know. Could there be stronger proof not only of forbearance toward all nations, but also of respect for their worship?

An honorable man, an enemy neither of reason, literature, integrity, nor his country, recently justified the *Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre* and cited the war of the Phocaeans, called *the Sacred War*, as though it had been kindled over worship, doctrine, or theological arguments. The question was who would own a field: that is the subject of every war. Sheaves of wheat are not a symbol of belief; no Greek city ever fought over opinions. Besides, what is this modest and gentle man proposing? Does he want us to wage a sacred war?

Chapter VIII



Whether the Romans Were Tolerant.

Among the ancient Romans, from *Romulus* to the time when Christians disputed with the priests of the empire, you will not find a single man persecuted for his opinions. *Cicero* doubted everything; *Lucretius* denied everything; and neither incurred the slightest reproach. Freedom went so far that *Pliny* the Naturalist begins his book by denying a God and saying that, if there is one, it is the sun. Speaking of the underworld, *Cicero* says: “*There is no old woman so foolish as to believe*”: “There is not even an old woman foolish enough to believe in it.” *Juvenal* says: “*Nor do children believe*”: “Children believe none of it.” On the Roman stage they sang: “*After death there is nothing, and death itself is nothing*”: “Nothing comes after death; death itself is nothing.” Let us abhor these maxims and, at most, forgive them in a people whom the Gospels had not enlightened. They are false; they are impious. But let us conclude that the Romans were very tolerant, since these maxims never raised the slightest murmur.

The great principle of the Senate and the Roman people was: “*Offenses against the gods are the gods’ concern*”; “It is for the gods alone to concern themselves with offenses against the gods.” This sovereign people thought only of conquering, governing, and civilizing the world. They were our lawmakers as well

as our conquerors; and *Caesar*, who gave us chains, laws, and games, never sought to force us to abandon our Druids for him, though he was the high priest of the nation that ruled us.

The Romans did not practice every form of worship or give them all public sanction, but they permitted them all. Under *Numa* they had no material object of worship, no images, no statues; soon they raised them to the gods *of the first rank*, whom the Greeks had made known to them. The law of the Twelve Tables, "*Let them not worship foreign gods,*" came to mean simply that public worship was granted only to the greater or lesser divinities approved by the Senate. *Isis* had a temple in Rome until *Tiberius* demolished it, after its priests, bribed with *Mundus's* money, let him sleep in the temple under the name of the god *Anubis*, with a woman called *Paulina*. It is true that *Josephus* alone tells this story; he was not a contemporary, and he was credulous and prone to exaggeration. It is scarcely likely that, in an age as enlightened as that of *Tiberius*, a lady of the highest rank would have been foolish enough to believe she was enjoying the favors of the god *Anubis*.

But whether this anecdote is true or false, it remains certain that Egyptian superstition had raised a temple in Rome with public consent. The Jews had traded there since the time of the Punic War; they had synagogues there in the days of *Augustus*, and retained them almost without interruption, as they have in modern Rome. Could there be stronger evidence that the Romans regarded tolerance as the most sacred law governing relations among peoples?

We are told that as soon as Christians appeared, they were persecuted by these same Romans, who persecuted no one. It seems plain to me that this assertion is quite false; I ask no other proof than *St. Paul* himself. Chap. 21. & 22. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that, when the Jews accused *St. Paul* of seeking to destroy the Mosaic law through Jesus Christ, *St. James* proposed that *St. Paul* shave his head and go to purify himself in the temple with four Jews, "*so that everyone may know that everything said about you is false, and that you continue to observe the law of Moses.*"

Paul, a Christian, therefore went to perform all the Jewish ceremonies for seven days; but before the seven days were over, some Jews from *Asia* recognized him. Seeing that he had entered the temple not only with Jews but also with Gentiles, they cried sacrilege. He was seized and brought before the governor *Felix*, and afterward the case was taken to the tribunal of *Festus*. The Jews thronged together to demand his death. Actes des Apôtres, Chap. 25. *Festus* answered them: *"It is not the custom of the Romans to condemn a man before the accused has his accusers before him and has been given freedom to defend himself."*

These words are all the more remarkable in this Roman magistrate because he seems to have had no regard for *St. Paul*, and to have felt only contempt for him. Misled by the false light of his reason, he took him for a madman; he told him to his face that he was out of his mind: Act. des Ap. Ch. 26. v. 34. *"Your great learning is driving you insane."* *Festus*, then, listened only to the equity of Roman law when he extended his protection to a stranger he could not esteem. Here the Holy Spirit himself declares that the Romans were not persecutors, and that they were just. It was not the Romans who rose against *St. Paul*; it was the Jews. *St. James*, the brother of Jesus, was stoned by order of a Sadducean Jew, not a Roman; the Jews alone stoned *St. Stephen*;¹⁴ and when *St. Paul* guarded the executioners' cloaks, he certainly was not acting as a Roman citizen.

The first Christians surely had no quarrel with the Romans; their only enemies were the Jews, from whom they were beginning to separate. We know the implacable hatred all sectarians bear those who abandon their sect. There were undoubtedly disturbances in the synagogues of Rome. *Suetonius* says in the Life of Claudius: *"He expelled from Rome the Jews, who were continually rioting at Christ's instigation."* He was mistaken in saying that it was at Christ's instigation: he could not have known the details of a people as despised in Rome as the Jewish people were. But he was not mistaken about the occasion of these quarrels. *Suetonius* wrote under *Hadrian*, in the second century; in Roman eyes, Christians were not then distinct from Jews. The passage in *Suetonius* shows that, far from oppressing the first Christians, the Romans were then

restraining the Jews who persecuted them. They wanted the synagogue of Rome to show its separated brethren the same indulgence that the Senate showed the synagogue itself. The banished Jews soon returned; they even attained public honors despite the laws that excluded them: *Dio Cassius* and *Ulpian* tell us so.¹⁵ Is it possible that, after the destruction of Jerusalem, the emperors showered dignities on the Jews while persecuting Christians, whom they regarded as a Jewish sect, and delivering them to executioners and wild beasts!

Nero, we are told, persecuted them. *Tacitus* tells us that they were accused of setting fire to Rome and abandoned to the fury of the people. In such an accusation, was their religious belief at issue? Certainly not. Shall we say that the Chinese whom the Dutch slaughtered a few years ago in the outskirts of Batavia were sacrificed to religion? However eager we may be to deceive ourselves, it is impossible to attribute to intolerance the disaster that befell a few wretches, half Jewish and half Christian, under *Nero*.¹⁶

¹⁴ Although the Jews no longer had the power to impose the death penalty after *Archelaus* had been banished to the land of the Allobroges and Judea was governed as a province of the empire, the Romans often closed their eyes when the Jews carried out the judgment of zeal—that is, when, in a sudden riot, they zealously stoned someone they believed had blasphemed.

¹⁵ *Ulpianus* l.... tit. II. “*They permitted those who follow the Jewish superstition to attain public honors, etc.*”

¹⁶ *Tacitus* says: “*Those whom the common people called Christians, hated for their crimes.*”

It is very unlikely that the name Christian was already known in Rome; *Tacitus* wrote under *Vespasian* and *Domitian*, and spoke of Christians as people spoke of them in his own day. I would venture to say that the words “*convicted of hatred of the human race*” might well mean, in *Tacitus*’s style, “*convicted of being hated by the human race*” just as readily as “*convicted of hating the human race.*”

Indeed, what were these first missionaries doing in Rome? They were trying to win a few souls; they taught them the purest morality; they rose against no authority; the humility of their hearts was as profound as the lowliness of their station and circumstances. They were scarcely known, scarcely distinct from the other Jews: how could the human race, which knew nothing of them, hate them? And how could they be convicted of detesting the human race?

When London burned, Catholics were accused; but this was after wars of religion, after the Gunpowder Plot, in which several Catholics, unworthy of the name, had been proved guilty.

The first Christians in *Nero's* time were certainly not in the same position. It is very difficult to penetrate the darkness of history. *Tacitus* gives no reason for the suspicion that *Nero* himself had wished to reduce Rome to ashes; there would have been much stronger grounds for suspecting *Charles II* of burning London. The blood of his father the king, executed on a scaffold before the people who demanded his death, could at least have furnished *Charles II* with an excuse. But *Nero* had neither excuse, pretext, nor interest. These senseless rumors may be the common people's lot in every country; in our own day we have heard some just as foolish and unjust.

Tacitus, who knows the character of princes so well, should also have known that of the people: always vain, always excessive in their violent and fleeting opinions, incapable of seeing anything, and capable of saying everything, believing everything, and forgetting everything.

Philo says that *Sejanus persecuted them under Tiberius, but that after Sejanus's death the emperor restored all their rights*. They had the rights of Roman citizens, however much Roman citizens despised them; they shared in the distributions of grain, and even when a distribution fell on the Sabbath, theirs was deferred to another day. This was probably in consideration of the sums of money they had given the state; for in every country they have bought tolerance and very quickly recouped what it cost them.

This passage in *Philo* perfectly explains the one in *Tacitus* which says that four thousand Jews or Egyptians were sent to Sardinia, and that if the harsh climate had killed them, it would have been a slight loss, *a trifling loss*.

I will add to this observation that *Philo* regards *Tiberius* as a wise and just prince. I readily believe that he was just only insofar as justice agreed with his interests; but the good that *Philo* says of him makes me doubt a little the horrors with which *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* reproach him. It does not seem at all likely to me that an infirm old man of seventy retired to the island of Capri to indulge in elaborate debaucheries scarcely within the bounds of nature, and unknown even to Rome's most unbridled youth. Neither *Tacitus* nor *Suetonius* had known this emperor; they delighted in gathering popular rumors. *Octavian*, *Tiberius*, and their successors had been hated because they ruled a people who ought to have been free. Historians delighted in defaming them, and these historians were taken at their word because there were then no memoirs, journals of the time, or documents available. Thus the historians cite no one; no one could contradict them; they defamed whomever they pleased and settled the judgment of posterity as they chose. It is for the discerning reader to judge how far to distrust historians' truthfulness, what credence to give public events attested by serious authors born in an enlightened nation, and what limits to set to belief in anecdotes those same authors relate without any proof.

Chapter IX



On Martyrs.

There were Christian martyrs in later times. It is very difficult to know precisely why these martyrs were condemned; but I venture to believe that under the first *Caesars* none was condemned for his religion alone. All religions were tolerated. How could obscure men with a worship of their own have been hunted down and prosecuted when every other form of worship was permitted?

The *Tituses*, the *Trajans*, the *Antonines*, the *Deciuses* were not barbarians. Can we imagine that they would have denied Christians alone a freedom enjoyed by the whole earth? Would anyone even have dared accuse them of having secret mysteries, when the mysteries of *Isis*, of *Mithras*, of the Syrian goddess—all foreign to Roman worship—were permitted without objection? Persecution must have had other causes; private hatreds, sustained by reasons of state, must have shed Christian blood.

For example, when *St. Lawrence* refuses to give the prefect of Rome, *Cornelius Secularis*, the Christians' money entrusted to his keeping, it is natural that the prefect and the emperor should be angered. They did not know that *St. Lawrence* had distributed this money to the poor and performed a charitable and holy deed; they regarded him as an insubordinate man and put him to death.¹⁷

Consider the martyrdom of *St. Polyeuctus*. Was he condemned for his religion alone? He enters the temple where thanks are being offered to the gods for the emperor *Decius's* victory; he insults the priests, overturns and smashes the altars and statues. In what country in the world would such an outrage be forgiven? The Christian who publicly tore up the emperor *Diocletian's* edict, bringing the great persecution upon his brethren in the last two years of that prince's reign, had a zeal not guided by knowledge; and it was a great misfortune for him to cause his own party's disaster. This reckless zeal, which often broke out and which several Fathers of the Church themselves condemned, was probably the source of all the persecutions.

I certainly do not compare the first Sacramentarians to the first Christians; I do not set error beside truth. But *Farel*, *John Calvin's* predecessor, did in Arles what *St. Polyeuctus* had done in Armenia. A statue of *St. Anthony* the Hermit was being carried through the streets in procession. *Farel*, with some of his followers, falls upon the monks carrying *St. Anthony*, beats them, scatters them, and throws *St. Anthony* into the river. He deserved the death he escaped because he had time to flee. Had he merely shouted to these monks that he did not believe a raven had brought half a loaf to *St. Anthony* the Hermit, or that *St. Anthony* had conversed with centaurs and satyrs, he would have deserved a stern reprimand for disturbing the peace. But if that evening, after the procession, he had calmly examined the story of the raven, the centaurs, and the satyrs, no one could have reproached him.

What! The Romans would have allowed the infamous *Antinous* to be placed among the lesser gods, yet torn to pieces and thrown to wild beasts all those who could be charged with nothing but peacefully worshipping a just man! What! They would have acknowledged a supreme God,¹⁸ a sovereign God, master of all the subordinate gods, as the formula "*God, best and greatest*" attests, yet hunted down those who worshiped one God!

It is not credible that there was ever an Inquisition against Christians under the emperors—that is, that people went into their homes to question them about their beliefs. No Jew, Syrian, Egyptian, bard, Druid, or philosopher was ever troubled on that account. The martyrs, then, were those who rose against the

false gods. Not to believe in them was very wise and very pious; but if, not content to worship one God in spirit and in truth, they violently attacked the established worship, however absurd it might be, we are forced to admit that they themselves were intolerant.

Tertullian, in his *Apology*, admits that Christians were regarded as agitators. Chap. 39. The accusation was unjust, but it proved that it was not the Christians' religion alone that stirred the magistrates' zeal. Chap. 35. He admits that Christians refused to adorn their doors with laurel branches during public celebrations of the emperors' victories: this blameworthy display could easily be taken for the crime of treason.

The first judicial severity exercised against Christians was *Domitian's*; but it went no further than an exile lasting less than a year: "*He readily checked what he had begun, restoring those he himself had banished,*" says *Tertullian*. *Lactantius*, whose style is so impassioned, concedes that from *Domitian* to *Decius*—Chap. 3.—the Church was peaceful and flourishing. This long peace, he says, was interrupted when that execrable animal *Decius* oppressed the Church: "*After many years there arose that execrable animal Decius, to harass the Church.*"

There is no wish here to discuss the learned *Dodwell's* opinion on the small number of martyrs. But if the Romans had persecuted the Christian religion so fiercely, if the Senate had put so many innocent people to death by unheard-of torments, if they had plunged Christians into boiling oil, if they had exposed naked girls to wild beasts in the circus, how could they have left all the first bishops of Rome in peace? Among these bishops, *St. Irenaeus* counts only *Telesphorus* as a martyr, in the year 139 of the common era; and there is no proof that this *Telesphorus* was put to death. *Zephyrinus* governed the flock of Rome for eighteen years and died peacefully in 219. It is true that almost all the first popes appear in the ancient martyrologies; but the word *martyr* was then understood only in its true sense: *martyrdom* meant *testimony*, not *execution*.

It is difficult to reconcile this frenzy of persecution with the freedom Christians enjoyed to hold fifty-six councils, which ecclesiastical writers count in the first three centuries.

There were persecutions; but had they been as violent as we are told, *Tertullian*, who wrote so forcefully against the established worship, would probably not have died in his bed. We know very well that the emperors did not read his *Apology*, that an obscure work composed in Africa does not reach those charged with governing the world. But it must have been known to people close to the proconsul of Africa; it must have brought its author a great deal of hatred. Yet he did not suffer martyrdom.

Origen taught publicly in Alexandria and was not put to death. This same *Origen*, who spoke so freely to pagans and Christians, proclaiming Jesus to the former and denying a God in three Persons to the latter, expressly admits in his third book against *Celsus* that “*there have been very few martyrs, and those at long intervals.*” “*Yet,*” he says, “*Christians neglect nothing to bring everyone to embrace their religion; they travel through cities, towns, and villages.*”

Certainly these continual journeys could easily have been denounced as seditious by hostile priests; yet these missions were tolerated despite the Egyptian people, always turbulent, seditious, and cowardly—a people who had torn a Roman to pieces for killing a cat; a people contemptible in every age, whatever the admirers of the pyramids may say.¹⁹

Who was more likely to rouse the priests and the government against him than *St. Gregory Thaumaturgus*, *Origen's* disciple? One night *Gregory* had seen an old man sent by God, accompanied by a woman radiant with light: this woman was the Holy Virgin, and this old man was *St. John* the Evangelist. *St. John* dictated a creed to him, which *St. Gregory* went out to preach. On his way to Neocaesarea, he passed a temple where oracles were given, and rain obliged him to spend the night there; he made several signs of the cross. The next day the temple's high priest was astonished that the demons who had previously answered him no longer wished to deliver oracles. He summoned them; the devils came to tell him that they would come no more. They informed him that they could no longer inhabit this temple because *Gregory* had spent the night there and made signs of the cross. The priest had *Gregory* seized, and *Gregory* answered him: “*I can drive demons from wherever I wish and make them enter wherever I please.*” “*Then make them return to my temple,*” said the priest.

Gregory then tore a small piece from a volume he held in his hand and wrote these words on it: "*Gregory to Satan: I command you to return to this temple.*" The note was placed on the altar; the demons obeyed and delivered their oracles that day as usual, after which, as we know, they ceased.

It is *St. Gregory of Nyssa* who relates these events in the *Life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus*. The priests of the idols must surely have been incensed against *Gregory* and, in their blindness, have denounced him to the magistrate; yet their greatest enemy suffered no persecution.

The history of *St. Cyprian* says that he was the first bishop of Carthage condemned to death. *St. Cyprian's* martyrdom dates from the year 258 of our era; therefore, for a very long time, no bishop of Carthage was sacrificed for his religion. History does not tell us what slanders arose against *St. Cyprian*, what enemies he had, or why the proconsul of Africa was angered against him. *St. Cyprian* writes to *Cornelius*, bishop of Rome: "*There was recently a popular disturbance in Carthage, and twice the cry went up that I should be thrown to the lions.*" It is very likely that the frenzy of Carthage's savage populace finally caused *Cyprian's* death; and it is quite certain that it was not the emperor *Gallus* who condemned him from so far away for his religion, since he left *Cornelius*, who lived under his very eyes, in peace.

So many hidden causes often mingle with the apparent cause, so many unknown forces work to persecute a man, that in later centuries it is impossible to disentangle the hidden source of the misfortunes of even the most eminent men—much less the source of the execution of a private individual who could have been known only to those of his own party.

Observe that *St. Gregory Thaumaturgus* and *St. Dionysius*, bishop of Alexandria, who were not executed, lived in *St. Cyprian's* time. Why did they remain in peace, though at least as well known as this bishop of Carthage? And why was *St. Cyprian* delivered to execution? Is there not some likelihood that one succumbed to powerful personal enemies, to slander, to the pretext of reasons of state so often joined to religion, while the others had the good fortune to escape human malice?

It is hardly possible that the accusation of Christianity alone brought *St. Ignatius* to his death under the merciful and just *Trajan*, since Christians were allowed to accompany and console him when he was taken to Rome.²⁰ There had often been riots in Antioch, an ever-turbulent city where *Ignatius* was the Christians' secret bishop. Perhaps these riots, maliciously imputed to innocent Christians, drew the attention of the government, which was deceived, as has happened all too often.

St. Simeon, for example, was accused before *Shapur* of being a Roman spy. The history of his martyrdom relates that King *Shapur* proposed that he worship the sun; but we know that the Persians did not worship the sun. They regarded it as an emblem of the good principle, of *Oromase*, or *Orosmade*, the Creator God whom they acknowledged.

However tolerant we may be, we cannot help feeling some indignation against those declaimers who accuse *Diocletian* of persecuting Christians from the moment he came to the throne. Let us rely on *Eusebius of Caesarea*; his testimony cannot be rejected. *Constantine's* favorite and panegyrist, the violent enemy of the preceding emperors, must be believed when he vindicates them. Here are his words: Hist. Ecclésiastiq. Liv. 8. "The emperors long gave Christians great marks of goodwill; they entrusted provinces to them; several Christians lived in the palace; they even married Christian women; *Diocletian* took *Prisca* as his wife, whose daughter became the wife of *Maximian Galerius*, etc."

Let this decisive testimony teach people to slander no more; let them judge whether the persecution stirred up by *Galerius*, after nineteen years of a reign of mercy and beneficence, must not have had its source in some intrigue unknown to us.

Consider how absurd is the fable of the Theban, or Thebaean, Legion, supposedly massacred to the last man for its religion. It is ridiculous to have brought this legion from Asia by way of the Great St. Bernard; it is impossible that it should have been summoned from Asia to quell a revolt in Gaul a year after that revolt had been suppressed. It is no less impossible that six thousand infantrymen and seven hundred cavalrymen should have been slaughtered in a

pass where two hundred men could hold off an entire army. The account of this alleged butchery begins with an obvious imposture: "*While the earth groaned beneath Diocletian's tyranny, heaven was filling with martyrs.*" Now this adventure, as we have said, is supposed to have occurred in 286, when *Diocletian* most favored the Christians and the Roman Empire was at its happiest. Finally, what should spare us all these discussions is that there never was a Theban Legion: the Romans were too proud and too sensible to form a legion from those Egyptians who served in Rome only as slaves, *a homeborn slave of Canopus*. It would be as if they had had a Jewish Legion. We have the names of the thirty-two legions that formed the main strength of the Roman Empire; the Theban Legion is certainly not among them. Let us therefore place this tale beside the Sibyls' acrostic verses predicting the miracles of Jesus Christ, and so many other forged writings that a false zeal lavished on the world to exploit its credulity.

¹⁷ We certainly respect everything the Church makes worthy of respect; we invoke the holy martyrs. But while revering *St. Lawrence*, may we not doubt that *St. Sixtus* told him, "*You will follow me in three days*"; that within this short interval the prefect of Rome had the Christians' money demanded of him; that the deacon *Lawrence* had time to gather all the city's poor; that he walked before the prefect to lead him to the place where these poor people were; that he was tried and put to torture; that the prefect ordered a blacksmith to make a gridiron large enough to roast a man; that Rome's chief magistrate attended this strange execution in person; that *St. Lawrence*, on this gridiron, said, "I am cooked enough on one side; have me turned over to the other if you want to eat me"? This gridiron is scarcely in the Roman spirit; and how can it be that no pagan author mentioned any of these adventures?

¹⁸ We need only open *Virgil* to see that the Romans acknowledged a supreme God, sovereign over all heavenly beings.

*O you who rule the affairs of men and gods
With everlasting power, and terrify with your thunderbolt,
O Father, eternal power of men and gods, etc.*

Horace speaks far more strongly:

*From whom nothing greater than himself is born,
Nor does anything flourish that is his like or second.*

Nothing but the unity of God was sung in the mysteries into which almost all Romans were initiated. See the beautiful Hymn of *Orpheus*; read the letter of *Maximus of Madaura* to *St. Augustine*, in which he says that “*only fools can fail to acknowledge a sovereign God.*” *Longinianus*, a pagan, writes to the same *St. Augustine* that “*God is one, incomprehensible, ineffable.*” *Lactantius* himself, who cannot be accused of excessive indulgence, admits in his Book V that “*the Romans subject all the gods to the supreme God*”: “*He subjects and binds them to God.*” Even *Tertullian*, in his *Apology*, admits that the whole empire acknowledged a God who ruled the world, whose power and majesty are infinite: “*The ruler of the world, of perfect power and majesty.*” Above all, open *Plato*, Cicero’s master in philosophy, and you will see that “*there is only one God,*” that “*we must worship him, love him, and strive to resemble him through holiness and justice.*” *Epictetus* in chains and *Marcus Aurelius* on the throne say the same thing in a hundred places.

- ¹⁹ This assertion needs proof. We must acknowledge that, ever since history succeeded fable, we see in the Egyptians only a people as cowardly as they are superstitious. *Cambyzes* takes Egypt in a single battle; *Alexander* gives it laws without fighting a single engagement, without any city daring to await a siege; the *Ptolemies* take possession of it without striking a blow; *Caesar* and *Augustus* subjugate it just as easily. *Omar* takes all Egypt in a single campaign; the Mamluks, peoples from Colchis and the lands around Mount Caucasus, are its masters after *Omar*. It is they, not the Egyptians, who defeat *St. Louis’s* army and take that king prisoner. Finally, once the Mamluks have become Egyptians

—that is, soft, cowardly, idle, and fickle, like the native inhabitants of that climate—they pass in three months under the yoke of *Selim I*, who hangs their sultan and leaves this province annexed to the Turkish Empire, until one day other barbarians seize it.

Herodotus relates that in fabulous times an Egyptian king called *Sesostris* left his country with the express intention of conquering the world. It is plain that such a plan is worthy only of *Picrochole* or *Don Quixote*; and quite apart from the fact that the name *Sesostris* is not Egyptian, this event, like all the earlier ones, may be ranked with the *Thousand and One Nights*. Nothing is more common among conquered peoples than to retail fables about their former greatness, just as in certain countries certain wretched families claim descent from ancient sovereigns. The priests of Egypt told *Herodotus* that this king, whom he calls *Sesostris*, had gone to subjugate Colchis; it is as if we were told that a king of France had set out from Touraine to subjugate Norway.

These tales may be repeated in thousands upon thousands of volumes without becoming any more plausible. It is far more natural that the robust and savage inhabitants of the Caucasus, the Colchians and the other Scythians, who so often came to ravage Asia, should have penetrated as far as Egypt; and if the priests of Colchis later brought the custom of circumcision home with them, that does not prove that they had been subjugated by the Egyptians. *Diodorus* of Sicily relates that every king conquered by *Sesostris* came each year from the depths of his kingdom to bring him tribute, and that *Sesostris* used them as carriage horses, having them harnessed to his chariot when he went to the temple. These tales of *Gargantua* are faithfully copied every day. Certainly those kings were very obliging to come from so far away to serve as horses in this fashion.

As for the pyramids and the other antiquities, they prove nothing but the pride and bad taste of Egypt's princes, and the slavery of a foolish people who used their arms, their sole possession, to satisfy their masters' vulgar ostentation. Even in the times so greatly praised, this people's government seems absurd and tyrannical: we are told that all the land belonged to their monarchs. Such slaves were just the people to conquer the world!

This profound learning of the Egyptian priests is another of the most enormous absurdities of ancient history—that is, of fable. Men who claimed that in the course of eleven thousand years the sun had risen twice in the west and set twice in the east, beginning its course anew, were surely far beneath the author of the Liège Almanac. The religion of these priests who governed the state could not compare with that of the most savage peoples of America. We know that they worshiped crocodiles, monkeys, cats, and onions; and perhaps today, on the whole earth, only the worship of the great *Lama* is as absurd.

Their arts are scarcely better than their religion. There is not a single ancient Egyptian statue that is tolerable, and everything good they possessed was made in Alexandria under the *Ptolemies* and the *Caesars*, by artists from Greece. They needed a Greek to teach them geometry.

The illustrious *Bossuet* goes into raptures over Egyptian merit in his *Discourse on Universal History*, addressed to *Louis XIV's* son. He may dazzle a young prince, but he gives scholars very little satisfaction. It is a highly eloquent declamation, but a historian should be more philosopher than orator. Besides, this reflection on the Egyptians is offered only as a conjecture: what other name can we give to everything said about antiquity?

- 20 The death of *St. Ignatius* is not called into question; but let a person of good sense read the account of his martyrdom—will he not feel some doubts rising in his mind? The unknown author of this account says that “*Trajan believed something would be lacking in his glory if he did not subject the Christians’ God to his empire.*” What a notion! Was *Trajan* a man who wished to triumph over the gods? When *Ignatius* appeared before the emperor, that prince said to him: “*Who are you, impure spirit?*” It is scarcely likely that an emperor would have spoken to a prisoner and condemned him himself; that is not how sovereigns act. If *Trajan* summoned *Ignatius* before him, he did not ask him, “*Who are you?*” He knew very well. Could those words, “*impure spirit,*” have been uttered by a man like *Trajan*? Do we not see that this is an exorcist’s expression, which a Christian puts into an emperor’s mouth? Good God, is that *Trajan’s* style?

Can we imagine that *Ignatius* answered that his name was *Theophorus* because he carried Jesus in his heart, and that *Trajan* debated Jesus Christ with him? At the end of the conversation *Trajan* is made to say: "*We order that Ignatius, who boasts of carrying the Crucified within him, shall be put in chains, etc.*" A sophist hostile to Christians might have called Jesus Christ "*the Crucified*"; but it is scarcely likely that such a term would have been used in a judicial decree. Execution on the cross was so common among the Romans that the language of the law could not have designated the object of Christian worship as "*the Crucified*"; and this is not how laws and emperors pronounce their judgments. Next *St. Ignatius* is made to write a long letter to the Christians of Rome. "*I write to you,*" he says, "*though I am entirely in chains.*" Certainly, if he was allowed to write to the Christians of Rome, those Christians were not being hunted down; *Trajan* therefore did not intend to subject their God to his empire. Or, if those Christians were under the scourge of persecution, *Ignatius* committed a very great imprudence in writing to them: he was exposing them, handing them over, making himself their informer.

It seems that those who drew up these acts should have paid greater heed to plausibility and propriety. The martyrdom of *St. Polycarp* raises still more doubts. We are told that a voice cried from heaven, "*Courage, Polycarp!*"; that the Christians heard it, but the others heard nothing. We are told that when *Polycarp* had been bound to the stake and the pyre was ablaze, the flames drew away from him and formed an arch above his head; that a dove came out of it; that the saint, spared by the fire, gave off a fragrance of spices that perfumed the entire gathering; but that he whom fire dared not approach could not withstand the sword's edge. We must admit that those who find more piety than truth in these stories deserve forgiveness.

Chapter X



On the Danger of False Legends and Persecution.

Falsehood has deceived humanity for too long. It is time to learn the few truths we can discern through those clouds of fables that cover Roman history from *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* onward, and that have almost always shrouded the annals of other ancient nations.

How can we believe, for example, that the Romans—that grave and stern people from whom we derive our laws—condemned Christian virgins, girls of high birth, to prostitution? This shows a very poor understanding of the austere dignity of our lawmakers, who punished the lapses of the Vestals so severely. *Ruinart's Authentic Acts* relate these infamies; but must we believe *Ruinart's Acts* as we believe the Acts of the Apostles? These *Authentic Acts*, following *Bollandus*, say that in the city of Ancyra there were seven Christian virgins, each about seventy years old; that the governor *Theodectes* condemned them to pass through the hands of the city's young men; but that, since these virgins were spared—as was only natural—he obliged them to serve naked in the mysteries of *Diana*, which, however, no one ever attended without a veil. *St. Theodotus*, who was admittedly a tavern keeper but no less zealous for that, prayed fervently that God would be pleased to put these holy maidens to death, lest they yield to temptation. God granted his prayer: the governor had them

thrown into a lake with stones around their necks. They immediately appeared to *Theodotus* and begged him not to allow “*their bodies to be eaten by fish*”: those were their very words.

The holy tavern keeper and his companions went by night to the shore of the lake, which was guarded by soldiers. A heavenly torch went before them all the way, and when they reached the guards’ post, a heavenly horseman in full armor pursued the guards, lance in hand. *St. Theodotus* drew the virgins’ bodies from the lake; he was brought before the governor, and the heavenly horseman did not prevent his head from being cut off. Let us never cease repeating that we venerate true martyrs, but that this story of *Bollandus* and *Ruinart* is difficult to believe.

Must we recount here the tale of young *St. Romanus*? He was thrown into the fire, says *Eusebius*, and some Jews who were present reviled Jesus Christ for leaving his confessors to burn, when God had rescued *Shadrach*, *Mesbach*, and *Abednego* from the fiery furnace. Scarcely had the Jews spoken when *St. Romanus* emerged triumphant from the pyre. The emperor ordered him pardoned and told the judge that he wanted no quarrel with God. (Strange words for *Diocletian*!) Despite the emperor’s indulgence, the judge ordered *St. Romanus*’s tongue cut out; and although he had executioners, he had a physician perform the operation. Young *Romanus*, born with a stammer, spoke fluently as soon as his tongue had been cut out. The physician was reprimanded; and to show that the operation had been performed according to the rules of his art, he seized a passerby and cut out exactly as much of his tongue as he had cut from *St. Romanus*’s, whereupon the passerby died on the spot: “*For*,” the author adds learnedly, “*anatomy teaches us that a man cannot live without a tongue*.” Truly, if *Eusebius* wrote such nonsense, if it was not added to his writings, what reliance can we place on his history?

We are given the martyrdom of *St. Felicity* and her seven children, supposedly sent to their deaths by the wise and pious *Antoninus*, without being told the author of the account. It is very likely that some author, more zealous than truthful, wished to imitate the history of the *Maccabees*. The account begins: “*St. Felicity was a Roman woman; she lived in the reign of Antoninus*.” These

words make it plain that the author was not a contemporary of *St. Felicity*. He says that the praetor judged them from his tribunal in the *Field of Mars*; but the prefect of Rome held his tribunal on the Capitol, not in the *Field of Mars*, which, after having served for the assemblies of the people, was then used for reviews of soldiers, races, and military games. This alone proves the forgery.

We are also told that, after the judgment, the emperor entrusted different judges with carrying out the sentence—a practice entirely contrary to all the formalities of those times, and of every age.

There is likewise a *St. Hippolytus* supposedly dragged by horses, like *Hippolytus*, son of *Theseus*. This punishment was never known among the ancient Romans; the resemblance of the names alone gave rise to this fable.

Observe, too, that in the accounts of martyrdoms, composed exclusively by Christians themselves, we almost always see crowds of Christians freely visiting the condemned man's prison, following him to his execution, gathering his blood, burying his body, and working miracles with his relics. If religion alone had been persecuted, would not these avowed Christians have been sacrificed too—these Christians who assisted their condemned brethren and were accused of working enchantments with the remains of martyred bodies? Would they not have been treated as we treated the Waldensians, the Albigensians, the Hussites, and the various Protestant sects? We slaughtered them, burned them in crowds, without distinction of age or sex. Is there a single incident in the authenticated accounts of ancient persecutions that approaches the *St. Bartholomew's Day massacre* or the massacres in Ireland? A single one resembling the annual festival still celebrated in Toulouse—a cruel festival, one to be abolished forever—in which an entire people thanks God in procession and congratulates itself on having slaughtered four thousand of its fellow citizens two hundred years ago?

I say it with horror, but truthfully: it is we Christians, we ourselves, who have been persecutors, executioners, murderers! And of whom? Of our brothers. It is we who have destroyed a hundred cities, crucifix or Bible in hand, and who

have never ceased shedding blood and lighting pyres, from the reign of *Constantine* to the frenzies of the cannibals who inhabited the Cévennes—frenzies which, thank heaven, no longer survive today.

We still sometimes send poor people from Poitou, Vivarais, Valence, and Montauban to the gallows. Since 1745 we have hanged eight of those men called preachers, or ministers of the Gospel, whose only crime was to have prayed to God for the king in their local speech and given a drop of wine and a piece of leavened bread to a few foolish peasants. Nothing is known of this in Paris, where pleasure is the only matter of importance, where nothing is known of what happens in the provinces or abroad. These trials take an hour, less time than it takes to judge a deserter. If the king were informed, he would grant a pardon.

Catholic priests are treated this way in no Protestant country. There are more than a hundred Catholic priests in England and Ireland; they are known, and they were allowed to live very peacefully during the last war.

Shall we always be the last to embrace the sound opinions of other nations? They have reformed; when shall we reform? It took sixty years to make us accept what *Newton* had demonstrated; we are scarcely beginning to dare to save our children's lives by inoculation; only very recently have we begun to practice the true principles of agriculture. When shall we begin to practice the true principles of humanity? And with what effrontery can we reproach the pagans for having made martyrs, when we have been guilty of the same cruelty in the same circumstances?

Let us grant that the Romans put a multitude of Christians to death for their religion alone; in that case the Romans were deeply culpable. Would we wish to commit the same injustice? And when we reproach them for having persecuted, would we wish to be persecutors?

If someone were so devoid of good faith, or so fanatical, as to say to me here, "Why do you come to expose our errors and our faults? Why destroy our false miracles and our false legends? They nourish many people's piety; some errors are necessary. Do not tear from the body an inveterate ulcer whose removal would destroy the body itself"—this is what I would answer.

All these false miracles, by which you shake the faith owed to genuine ones, all these absurd legends you add to the truths of the Gospel, extinguish religion in people's hearts. Too many who wish to learn, but have no time to learn enough, say: "The teachers of my religion have deceived me, so there is no religion. Better to throw myself into the arms of nature than into those of error; I would rather depend on natural law than on human inventions." Others have the misfortune to go still further. They see that imposture has put a bridle on them, and they refuse even the bridle of truth; they incline toward atheism. People become depraved because others have been deceitful and cruel.

These are certainly the consequences of all pious frauds and all superstitions. People generally reason only halfway. It is a very bad argument to say: "*Voragine*, author of the *Golden Legend*, and the Jesuit *Ribadeneira*, compiler of *The Flower of the Saints*, wrote nothing but nonsense; therefore there is no God. Catholics slaughtered a certain number of Huguenots, and Huguenots in turn murdered a certain number of Catholics; therefore there is no God. Confession, Communion, and all the sacraments have been used to commit the most horrible crimes; therefore there is no God." I would conclude the opposite: therefore there is a God who, after this fleeting life, in which we have so misunderstood him and committed so many crimes in his name, will deign to console us for so many dreadful misfortunes. For when we consider the wars of religion, the forty papal schisms, almost all bloody, the impostures, almost all disastrous, the irreconcilable hatreds kindled by differing opinions—when we see all the evils false zeal has produced—humanity has long had its hell in this life.

Chapter XI



The Abuses of Intolerance.

But what! Shall every citizen be allowed to believe only his own reason, and to think whatever that reason, enlightened or deceived, dictates to him? He must be,²¹ provided he does not disturb the peace; for it is not in a man's power to believe or disbelieve, but it is in his power to respect the customs of his country. And if you said it was a crime not to believe in the dominant religion, you would yourselves be accusing the first Christians, your fathers, and vindicating those whom you accuse of having delivered them to execution.

You answer that the difference is great: all religions are the work of men, and the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church alone is the work of God. But in good faith, because our religion is divine, must it reign through hatred, fury, exile, confiscation of property, prisons, torture, murder, and thanksgiving offered to God for these murders? The more divine the Christian religion is, the less it falls to man to impose it. If God made it, God will sustain it without you. You know that intolerance produces only hypocrites or rebels. What a disastrous choice! Finally, would you uphold through executioners the religion of a God whom executioners put to death, and who preached only gentleness and patience?

Consider, I beg you, the dreadful consequences of a right to intolerance. If it were permissible to strip a citizen of his property, throw him into a dungeon, or kill him because, at a particular degree of latitude, he did not profess the religion accepted at that degree, what exception would exempt the foremost men of the state from the same penalties? Religion binds the monarch and the beggar equally. And so more than fifty theologians or monks have asserted this monstrous horror: that it was permissible to depose and kill sovereigns who did not think as the dominant Church did. The kingdom's sovereign law courts have never ceased proscribing these abominable rulings of abominable theologians.²²

The blood of *Henry the Great* was still smoking when the Parlement of Paris issued a decree establishing the independence of the Crown as a fundamental law. Cardinal *Du Perron*, who owed his cardinal's purple to *Henry the Great*, rose in the Estates of 1614 against the court's decree and had it suppressed. All the journals of the time report the words *Du Perron* used in his speeches: "*If a prince became an Arian,*" he said, "*we would certainly be obliged to depose him.*" Certainly not, Your Eminence. Let us accept your fanciful supposition: one of our kings, having read the history of the councils and the Fathers, struck also by the words "*my Father is greater than I,*" taking them too literally, and wavering between the Council of Nicaea and that of Constantinople, should declare for *Eusebius of Nicomedia*. I would obey my king no less; I would consider myself no less bound by the oath I had sworn him. And if you dared to rise against him, and I were one of your judges, I would pronounce you guilty of treason.

Du Perron carried the dispute further, and I abridge it. This is not the place to probe these revolting fantasies. I will confine myself to saying, with all citizens, that obedience was owed to *Henry IV* not because he was consecrated at Chartres, but because the incontestable right of birth gave the Crown to that prince, who deserved it through his courage and goodness.

Let us therefore be allowed to say that every citizen ought, by the same right, to inherit his father's property, and that we cannot see how he deserves to be deprived of it and dragged to the gallows because he agrees with *Ratramnus* against *Paschasius Radbertus*, and with *Berengar* against *Scotus*.

We know that not all our dogmas have always been clearly explained and universally accepted in our Church. Since Jesus Christ did not tell us how the Holy Spirit proceeded, the Latin Church long believed, with the Greek, that he proceeded from the Father alone; at last it added to the Creed that he proceeded also from the Son. I ask whether, on the day after this decision, a citizen who had held to the previous day's creed would have deserved death. Would it be any less cruel or unjust today to punish someone who thought as people once thought? In the time of *Honorius I*, was it a crime to believe that Jesus did not have two wills?

The Immaculate Conception has not been established for long; the Dominicans still do not believe in it. At what point will the Dominicans begin to deserve punishment in this world and the next?

If we should learn from anyone how to conduct ourselves in our endless disputes, it is surely from the Apostles and the Evangelists. There was enough to provoke a violent schism between *St. Paul* and *St. Peter*. In his Epistle to the Galatians, *Paul* expressly says that he withstood *Peter* to his face because *Peter* was blameworthy, because he practiced dissimulation as *Barnabas* did, because they ate with Gentiles before *James* arrived, then secretly withdrew and separated themselves from the Gentiles for fear of offending the circumcised. "*I saw,*" he adds, "*that they were not walking uprightly according to the Gospel; I said to Cephas: If you, a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as Jews?*"

Here was cause for a violent quarrel. The question was whether the new Christians would follow Jewish practices or not. At that very time *St. Paul* went to offer sacrifice in the temple of Jerusalem. We know that the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were circumcised Jews who observed the Sabbath and abstained from forbidden meats. A Spanish or Portuguese bishop who had himself circumcised and observed the Sabbath would be burned in an *auto-da-fé*. Yet peace was not disturbed over this fundamental matter, either among the Apostles or among the first Christians.

Had the Evangelists resembled modern writers, they would have had a vast field on which to fight one another. *St. Matthew* counts twenty-eight generations from *David* to Jesus. *St. Luke* counts forty-one; and these generations are entirely different. Yet we see no dissension arise among the disciples over these apparent contradictions, so well reconciled by several Fathers of the Church. Charity was not wounded; peace was preserved. What greater lesson could there be in tolerating one another in our disputes and humbling ourselves before everything we do not understand?

St. Paul, in his epistle to some Jews of Rome converted to Christianity, devotes the whole end of Chapter III to saying that faith alone glorifies, and that works justify no one. *St. James*, on the contrary, in his epistle to the twelve tribes scattered throughout the earth, Chapter II, never ceases saying that one cannot be saved without works. This is what has separated two great communions among us, and what did not divide the Apostles.

If persecuting those with whom we dispute were a holy deed, we must admit that whoever had the most heretics killed would be the greatest saint in paradise. What figure would a man who had contented himself with stripping his brothers of their property and plunging them into dungeons cut beside a zealot who had massacred hundreds on *St. Bartholomew's Day*? Here is the proof.

St. Peter's successor and his consistory cannot err; they approved, celebrated, and consecrated the deed of *St. Bartholomew's Day*: therefore this deed was most holy; therefore, of two assassins equal in piety, the one who had disemboweled twenty-four pregnant Huguenot women must be raised to twice the glory of the one who had disemboweled only twelve. For the same reason, the fanatics of the Cévennes must have believed that they would be raised to glory in proportion to the number of priests, men in religious orders, and Catholic women whose throats they had cut. These are strange claims to eternal glory.

²¹ See *Locke's* excellent *Lettre sur la Tolérance*.

²² The Jesuit *Busenbaum*, with commentary by the Jesuit *La Croix*, says that "*it is permissible to kill a prince excommunicated by the pope, in whatever country that prince may be found, because the universe belongs to the pope, and whoever accepts*

this commission performs a most charitable deed.” This proposition, invented in the madhouses of hell, has done more than anything else to rouse all France against the Jesuits. They were then reproached more than ever for this doctrine, so often taught by them and so often disavowed. They thought to justify themselves by showing almost the same rulings in *St. Thomas* and several Dominicans.[A] Indeed, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, the Angelic Doctor, interpreter of the divine will—such are his titles—asserts that an apostate prince loses his right to the Crown and must no longer be obeyed;[B] that the Church may punish him with death; that the emperor *Julian* was tolerated only because Christians did not have the greater strength;[C] that by right every heretic ought to be killed;[D] that those who deliver a people from a prince who governs tyrannically are highly praiseworthy, etc., etc. The Angel of the Schools is greatly respected; but if, in the days of his fellow Dominican *Jacques Clément* and of the Feuillant *Ravaillac*, he had come to France to maintain such propositions, how would the Angel of the Schools have been treated?

[A] See, if you can, the *Lettre d’un homme du monde à un Théologien sur St. Thomas*; it is a Jesuit pamphlet of 1762.

[B] Liv. II, part. 2, question 12.

[C] Liv. II, part. 2, question 12.

[D] Ibid. question 11 & 12.

We must admit that *Jean Gerson*, chancellor of the University, went still further than *St. Thomas*, and the Franciscan *Jean Petit* infinitely further than *Gerson*. Several Franciscans upheld *Jean Petit’s* horrible theses. We must admit that this diabolical doctrine of regicide derives solely from the mad idea, long held by almost all monks, that the pope is a God on earth who can dispose as he pleases of kings’ thrones and lives. In this we have sunk far below those Tatars who believe the great *Lama* immortal: he distributes the contents of his close-stool to them; they dry these relics, place them in shrines, and kiss them devoutly. For my part, I confess that, for the sake of peace, I would rather wear such relics around my neck than believe that the pope has the slightest right over the worldly affairs of kings, or even over my own, in any case whatever.

Chapter XII



Was intolerance a matter of divine law in Judaism, and was it always practiced?

By *divine law*, I believe, we mean the precepts God himself has given. He required the Jews to eat a lamb cooked with lettuce, and the guests to eat it standing, staff in hand, in commemoration of the *Passover*. He ordained that the high priest should be consecrated by placing blood on his right ear, his right hand, and his right foot—customs extraordinary to us, but not to antiquity. He required that the goat *Hazazel* be laden with the people's iniquities; he forbade them to eat fish without scales, pigs, hares, hedgehogs, owls, griffons, ixions, and so on. Deutér. Chap. 14.

He instituted festivals and ceremonies. All these things, which seemed arbitrary to other nations, subject to enacted law and custom, became divine law for the Jews because God himself commanded them, just as everything Jesus Christ, son of *Mary*, son of God, has commanded us is divine law for us.

Let us not inquire here why God replaced the law he had given *Moses* with a new one, or why he commanded more things of *Moses* than of the patriarch *Abraham*, and more of *Abraham* than of *Noah*.²³ He seems to condescend to adapt himself to the times and to the size of the human population: a father's gradual instruction. But these abysses lie too deep for our feeble sight. Let us keep within the bounds of our subject, and first examine what intolerance was among the Jews.

It is true that in Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy—Amos, Chap. 5, v. 26.

Jérém. Chap. 7, v. 22.

Actes des Ap. Ch. 7, v. 42.—there are very severe laws governing worship, and still more severe punishments. Several commentators struggle to reconcile the accounts of *Moses* with passages in *Jeremiah* and *Amos*, and with *St. Stephen's* celebrated speech, reported in the Acts of the Apostles. *Amos* says that throughout their time in the wilderness the Jews worshiped *Moloch*, *Remphan*, and *Kium*. *Jeremiah* expressly says that God asked no sacrifice of their fathers when they came out of Egypt. *St. Stephen*, addressing the Jews, puts it this way: "They worshiped the host of heaven; for forty years in the wilderness they offered neither sacrifices nor sacrificial victims; they carried the tabernacle of the god *Moloch* and the star of their god *Remphan*."

Other critics infer from the worship of so many foreign gods that *Moses* tolerated those gods, and offer these words of Deuteronomy as proof: Deutér. Chap. 12, v. 8. "*When you are in the land of Canaan, you shall not do as we do today, when everyone does whatever seems good to him.*"²⁴

They support their view by observing that no religious observance by the people in the wilderness is mentioned: no Passover celebrated, no Pentecost; no mention of a Feast of Tabernacles, no established public prayer. Even circumcision, the seal of God's covenant with *Abraham*, was not practiced.

They also appeal to the history of *Joshua*. Josué, Ch. 14. v. 15 & suiv. This conqueror says to the Jews: "The choice is yours: choose whichever course you please, whether to worship the gods you served in the land of the Amorites, or those you acknowledged in Mesopotamia." The people answer: "That shall not be; we will serve *Adonai*." *Joshua* replies: "You have chosen for yourselves; then remove the foreign gods from among you." It is therefore beyond dispute that under *Moses* they had gods other than *Adonai*.

There is no point here in refuting the critics who think the Pentateuch was not written by *Moses*. Everything on this subject was said long ago; and even if some small part of the books of *Moses* had been written in the time of the

judges, kings, or high priests, those books would be no less inspired and no less divine.

It is enough, I think, that Holy Scripture proves that despite the extraordinary punishment the Jews brought upon themselves by worshipping *Apis*, they long retained complete freedom. Perhaps even the slaughter of twenty-three thousand men, which *Moses* ordered because of the calf erected by his brother, taught him that severity gained nothing, and obliged him to close his eyes to the people's passion for foreign gods.

He himself soon seems to transgress the law he has given. Nomb. Chap. 21, v. 9. He has forbidden every graven image, yet he erects a bronze serpent. The same exception to the law appears later in *Solomon's* Temple. That prince has twelve oxen carved to support the Temple's great basin; cherubim are placed in the Ark, with an eagle's head and a calf's head. Apparently it was this crudely fashioned calf's head, found in the Temple by Roman soldiers, that long gave rise to the belief that the Jews worshiped a donkey.

The ban on worshipping foreign gods is in vain: *Solomon* is an idolater undisturbed. *Jeroboam*, to whom God gave ten shares of the kingdom, erects two golden calves and reigns for twenty-two years, uniting in his own person the offices of monarch and high priest. Under *Rehoboam*, the little kingdom of Judah sets up foreign altars and statues. The holy king *Asa* does not destroy the high places. The high priest *Uriah* erects an altar belonging to the king of Syria in the Temple, in place of the altar of burnt offerings. Liv. IV. des Rois, Chap. 16. In short, we see no religious coercion. I know that most Jewish kings destroyed and murdered one another; but it was always for their own interests, not for their beliefs.

It is true that among the prophets—Liv. III. des Rois, Chap. 18, v. 38 & 40.

Liv. IV. des Rois, Chap. 2, v. 24.—there were some who enlisted heaven in their vengeance. *Elijah* called down heavenly fire to consume the priest of *Baal*; *Elisha* summoned bears to devour forty-two little children who had called him *baldhead*. But these are rare miracles, and deeds it would be rather harsh to wish to imitate.

It is further objected that the Jewish people were very ignorant and very barbarous. Nomb. Chap. 31. We are told that in their war against the Midianites,²⁵ *Moses* ordered them to kill all the male children and all the mothers, and to divide the spoils. The victors found 675,000 sheep, 72,000 oxen, 61,000 donkeys, and 32,000 girls in the camp; they divided these among themselves and killed all the rest. Several commentators even maintain that thirty-two girls were sacrificed to the Lord: *thirty-two souls fell to the Lord's share*.

Indeed, the Jews sacrificed human beings to the Divinity: witness the sacrifice of *Jephthah*,²⁶ witness King *Agag*,²⁷ hacked to pieces by the priest *Samuel*. *Ezekiel* himself promises them human flesh to eat as an encouragement. Ezéch. Chap. 39, v. 18. "*You shall eat*," he says, "*the horse and the rider; you shall drink the blood of princes*." In the entire history of this people we find no act of generosity, greatness of soul, or beneficence; yet through the cloud of this barbarism, so long and so dreadful, rays of universal tolerance are always breaking. *Jephthah*, inspired by God, to whom he sacrificed his daughter, says to the Ammonites: Juges, Chap. 11, v. 24. "*Does not what your god Chemosh has given you belong to you by right? Allow us, then, to take the land our God has promised us*." This declaration is explicit; it can lead a very long way. At the very least, it plainly proves that God tolerated *Chemosh*. For Holy Scripture does not say: "You think you have a right to the lands you say the god *Chemosh* has given you." It says positively: "You have a right"; *they belong to you by right*—which is the true meaning of the Hebrew words *Otho thirasch*.

The story of *Micah* and the Levite, told in chapters 17 and 18 of the Book of Judges, is another indisputable proof of the tolerance and the very great freedom allowed among the Jews. *Micah's* mother, a very wealthy woman of Ephraim, had lost eleven hundred pieces of silver. Her son returned them to her; she dedicated this money to the Lord and had idols made from it. She built a little chapel; a Levite served the chapel for ten pieces of silver, a tunic, a cloak each year, and his board; and *Micah* exclaimed: Chap. 17 v. dernier. "*Now God will do me good, for I have a priest of the line of Levi in my house*."

Meanwhile, six hundred men of the tribe of *Dan* were looking for some village in the country to seize and settle in. They had no Levite priest with them, and needed one so that God would favor their venture. They went to *Micah's* house and took his ephod, his idols, and his Levite, despite the priest's protests and the cries of *Micah* and his mother. Then they confidently attacked the village called *Laish*, putting everything to fire and sword, as was their custom. They renamed *Laish Dan* in memory of their victory, and placed *Micah's* idol on an altar. Still more remarkable, *Jonathan*, the grandson of *Moses*, became high priest of this temple, where both the God of Israel and *Micah's* idol were worshiped.

After *Gideon's* death, the Hebrews worshiped *Baal-berith* for nearly twenty years and abandoned the worship of *Adonai*, without any leader, judge, or priest calling for vengeance. Their crime was great, I admit; but if even this idolatry was tolerated, how much more must differences within the true worship have been tolerated?

Some offer the following as proof of intolerance. The Lord himself allowed his Ark to be captured by the Philistines in battle. He punished the Philistines only by afflicting them with a disease of the private parts resembling hemorrhoids, toppling the statue of *Dagon*, and sending a multitude of rats into their fields. But when the Philistines, to appease his wrath, sent the Ark back, drawn by two cows still nursing their calves, and offered God five golden rats and five golden anuses, the Lord killed seventy elders of Israel and fifty thousand of the people for having looked at the Ark. The answer is that the Lord's punishment did not fall upon a belief, a difference in worship, or any idolatry.

Had the Lord wished to punish idolatry, he would have destroyed all the Philistines who dared to capture his Ark and who worshiped *Dagon*. Instead, he destroyed fifty thousand and seventy of his own people solely because they had looked at his Ark, which they were not permitted to look at. So greatly do the laws, the customs of that age, and the Jewish dispensation differ from everything we know; so far above our ways are the inscrutable ways of God. "*The severity shown,*" says the judicious Dom Calmet, "*toward this great number of*

men will seem excessive only to those who have failed to understand how much God wished to be feared and revered among his people, and who judge God's purposes and designs only by the feeble light of their own reason."

God therefore punishes not a foreign worship, but a profanation of his own: an indiscreet curiosity, a disobedience, perhaps even a spirit of rebellion. Plainly, such punishments belong to God alone within the Jewish theocracy. We cannot repeat too often that those times and customs bear no relation to our own. Finally, when in later centuries *Naaman* the idolater asked *Elisha* whether he was permitted to follow his king into the temple of Remnon and *worship there with him*, did not this same *Elisha*, who had had the children devoured by bears, answer: "*Go in peace*"? Liv. IV. des Rois, Chap. 20, v. 25.

There is much more. The Lord commands *Jeremiah* to put ropes around his neck, with collars²⁸ and yokes, and to send them to the petty kings, or Melchims, of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Tyre, and Sidon. Through *Jeremiah*, the Lord tells them: Jérém. Chap. 27, v. 6. "*I have given all your lands to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant.*" Here is an idolatrous king declared God's servant and favorite.

The same *Jeremiah*, whom the Jewish Melk, or petty king, *Zedekiah*, had thrown into a dungeon, obtained his pardon from *Zedekiah* and advised him in God's name to surrender to the king of Babylon: Jérém. Chap. 18, v. 19. "*If you go and surrender to his officers,*" he says, "*your soul shall live.*" God therefore finally takes the side of an idolatrous king. He delivers to him the Ark, the mere sight of which had cost fifty thousand and seventy Jews their lives. He delivers to him the Holy of Holies and the rest of the Temple, whose construction had cost a hundred and eight thousand talents of gold, a million and seventeen thousand talents of silver, and ten thousand gold drachmas, left by *David* and his officers for building the House of the Lord. Without counting the money spent by *Solomon*, this amounts to some nineteen billion sixty-two million at today's rates. Never was idolatry better rewarded. I know this calculation is exaggerated, and that there is probably a copyist's error; but reduce the sum by half, to a quarter, even to an eighth, and it will still astonish you. We are scarcely

less surprised by the riches *Herodotus* says he saw in the temple at Ephesus. In the end, treasures are nothing in God's eyes; the title of his servant, given to *Nebuchadnezzar*, is the true and priceless treasure.

God favors no less the *Kir*, or *Koresh*, or *Kosroes*, whom we call *Cyrus*. Isaïe, Chap. 44 & 45. He calls him *his Christ*, *his Anointed*, although he was not anointed in the ordinary sense of the word, and followed the religion of *Zoroaster*. He calls him his *Shepherd*, although in men's eyes he was a usurper. In all Holy Scripture there is no greater sign of special favor.

You see in *Malachi* that *from east to west the name of God is great among the nations, and pure offerings are made to him everywhere*. God cares for the idolatrous Ninevites as he does for the Jews; he threatens them and forgives them. *Melchizedek*, who was not a Jew, was a priest of God. *Balaam*, an idolater, was a prophet. Scripture thus teaches us that God not only tolerated all other peoples, but watched over them with a father's care—and we dare to be intolerant!

- 23 Since we intend to add a few useful notes to this work, we will observe here that God is said to have made a covenant with *Noah* and with all the animals. Yet he allows *Noah* to *eat everything that lives and moves*, excepting only blood, which he does not permit him to consume. God adds *that he will exact vengeance from every animal that has shed human blood*.

From these passages and many others we may infer what all antiquity has always believed down to our own day, and what all sensible people believe: that animals possess some understanding. God makes no covenant with trees and stones, which have no feeling; he makes one with animals, whom he has deigned to endow with feeling often more acute than ours, and with certain ideas necessarily bound to that feeling. That is why he forbids the barbarity of feeding on their blood: blood is indeed the source of life, and therefore of feeling. Drain an animal of all its blood, and every organ falls still. Scripture is thus entirely right to say in a hundred places that the soul—that is, what was called the sensitive soul—is in the blood; and this very natural idea has been shared by every people.

On this idea rests the compassion we owe to animals. Of the seven precepts of the *Noahides* accepted among the Jews, one forbids eating a limb taken from a living animal. This precept proves that men had been cruel enough to mutilate animals in order to eat their severed limbs, leaving them alive so that they could feed in turn on the different parts of their bodies. This custom did in fact survive among certain barbarous peoples, as we see in the sacrifices on the island of Chios to *Bacchus Omadrios*, the eater of raw flesh. In allowing animals to serve as our food, God therefore urges some humanity toward them. We must admit that making them suffer is barbarous, and certainly only habit can diminish our natural horror at slaughtering an animal we have fed with our own hands. There have always been peoples who felt grave scruples about it. These scruples persist on the Indian peninsula; the entire school of *Pythagoras*, in Italy and Greece, consistently abstained from meat. In his book on abstinence, *Porphry* reproaches his disciple for leaving his school merely to indulge a barbarous appetite.

It seems to me that anyone who dares to maintain that beasts are nothing but machines must have renounced the light of natural reason. There is a manifest contradiction in admitting that God has given beasts all the organs of feeling, yet maintaining that he has given them no feeling.

It also seems to me that anyone who fails to distinguish in animals the different voices of need, suffering, joy, fear, love, anger, and all their affections can never have observed them. It would be very strange if they expressed so well what they did not feel.

This observation may give practiced minds much to reflect on concerning the power and goodness of the Creator, who deigns to grant life, feeling, ideas, and memory to the beings he himself has fashioned with his almighty hand. We know neither how these organs were formed, nor how they develop, nor how life is received, nor by what laws feelings, ideas, memory, and will are bound to that life. And in this profound, eternal ignorance inherent in our nature, we argue without end and persecute one another, like bulls fighting with their horns without knowing why or how they have horns.

²⁴ Several writers rashly conclude from this passage that the chapter concerning the golden calf—which is nothing other than the god *Apis*—was added to the books of *Moses*, along with several other chapters.

Ibn Ezra was the first who believed he could prove that the Pentateuch had been compiled in the time of the kings. *Wollaston*, *Collins*, *Tindal*, *Shaftesbury*, *Bolingbroke*, and many others have argued that engraving one's thoughts on polished stone, brick, lead, or wood was the only way of writing. They say that in *Moses*' day the Chaldeans and Egyptians wrote in no other way; that only the essence of what one wished to transmit to posterity could then be engraved, very briefly and in hieroglyphics, not detailed histories; that it was impossible to engrave great books in a wilderness where one moved so often, where there was no one to supply clothing, cut it out, or even mend sandals, and where God was obliged to work a forty-year miracle to preserve his people's clothes and shoes. They say it is unlikely that there were so many engravers of characters when the most necessary crafts were lacking, and even bread could not be made. If told that the pillars of the Tabernacle were bronze and their capitals solid silver, they answer that the order may have been given in the wilderness, but was carried out only in happier times.

They cannot conceive how this poor people could have demanded a solid-gold calf to worship at the very foot of the mountain where God was speaking to *Moses*, amid thunderbolts and lightning that the people could see, and to the sound of the heavenly trumpet they could hear. They are astonished that on the very day before *Moses* came down from the mountain, the entire people appealed to *Moses*' brother for a solid-gold calf. How did *Aaron* cast it in a single day? How did *Moses* then reduce it to powder? They say that no craftsman can make a gold statue in less than three months, and that even the most advanced chemistry is insufficient to reduce it to a powder that can be swallowed. Thus *Aaron*'s transgression and *Moses*' operation would have been two miracles.

Their humanity, the goodness of heart that misleads them, prevents them from believing that *Moses* had twenty-three thousand people slaughtered to atone for this sin. They cannot imagine twenty-three thousand men allowing themselves

to be massacred by Levites in this way without a third miracle. Finally, they find it strange that *Aaron*, the guiltiest of all, should have been rewarded for the crime for which the others were so horribly punished, and made high priest while the bloodied corpses of twenty-three thousand of his brothers lay heaped at the foot of the altar where he was about to sacrifice.

They raise the same difficulties about the twenty-four thousand Israelites massacred by order of *Moses* to expiate the offense of a single man discovered with a Moabite girl. So many Jewish kings, and *Solomon* above all, married foreign women with impunity that these critics cannot accept that union with a Moabite was so great a crime. *Ruth* was a Moabite, although her family originally came from Bethlehem; Holy Scripture always calls her *Ruth the Moabite*. Yet on her mother's advice she went and lay in *Boaz's* bed, received six bushels of barley from him, afterward married him, and became *David's* forebear. *Rahab* was not only a foreigner but a prostitute; the Vulgate gives her no other title than *prostitute*. She married *Solomon*, prince of Judah, and it is also from this *Solomon* that *David* descends. *Rahab* is even regarded as a figure of the Christian Church; this is the view of several Fathers, and especially of *Origen* in his 7th homily on *Joshua*.

Bathsheba, the wife of *Uriah*, by whom *David* fathered *Solomon*, was a Hittite. Go further back, and the patriarch *Judah* married a Canaanite woman; his sons married *Tamar*, of the line of *Aram*. This woman, with whom *Judah* unwittingly committed incest, was not of the line of *Israel*.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ deigned to take flesh among the Jews in a family whose ancestry included five foreigners, to show that foreign nations would share in his inheritance.

Rabbi *Ibn Ezra* was, as we have said, the first who dared to maintain that the Pentateuch had been compiled long after *Moses*. He bases his view on several passages: "The Canaanites were then in this country. Mount Moriah, called the mountain of God. The bed of *Og*, king of Bashan, may still be seen in *Rabbah*, and he called all this land of Bashan the villages of *Jair*, to this day. There has never been a prophet in Israel like *Moses*. These are the kings who reigned in Edom before any king reigned over Israel." He maintains that these passages,

speaking of things that happened after *Moses*, cannot be by *Moses*. The answer to these objections is that these passages are notes added long afterward by copyists.

Newton, whose name should otherwise be spoken only with respect, but who could err since he was human, attributes the books of *Moses*, *Joshua*, and *Judges* to much later sacred authors in the introduction to his commentaries on *Daniel* and *St. John*. He bases this on chapter 36 of Genesis; on four chapters of Judges, 17, 18, 19, and 21; on *Samuel*, chapter 8; on Chronicles, chapter 2; and on the Book of *Ruth*, chapter 4. Indeed, if chapter 36 of Genesis speaks of kings, if they are mentioned in the books of Judges, if the Book of *Ruth* speaks of *David*, it seems that all these books were compiled in the time of the kings. This is also the view of some theologians, headed by the famous *Le Clerc*. But this opinion has only a few followers whose curiosity plumbs these abysses. Such curiosity is surely not among our human duties. When the learned and the ignorant, princes and shepherds, appear after this brief life before the Master of eternity, each of us will then wish to have been just, humane, compassionate, and generous. No one will boast of having known precisely in what year the Pentateuch was written, or of having disentangled the text from the notes customary among the scribes. God will not ask whether we sided with the Masoretes against the Talmud, whether we never mistook a *kaph* for a *beth*, a *yod* for a *vau*, a *daleth* for a *resh*. Surely he will judge us by our actions, not by our understanding of Hebrew. We hold firmly to the Church's decision, as is the reasonable duty of a believer.

Let us end this note with an important passage from Leviticus, a book composed after the worship of the golden calf. Levit. Chap. 17. It commands the Jews to stop worshiping the hairy ones, *the goats with which they have even committed infamous abominations*. We do not know whether this strange worship came from Egypt, the homeland of superstition and sorcery. But it is believed that the custom of our supposed sorcerers—going to the Sabbath, worshiping a goat there, and abandoning themselves with it to inconceivable obscenities whose very idea inspires horror—came from the ancient Jews. Indeed, it was they who taught sorcery in part of Europe. What a people! So strange an

infamy seemed to deserve a punishment like the one brought upon them by the golden calf; yet the lawgiver is content simply to prohibit it. This fact is reported here only to make the Jewish nation known. Bestiality must have been common among them, since theirs is the only known nation whose laws were obliged to prohibit a crime no other lawgiver elsewhere had even suspected. Lévit. Chap. 18 v. 23.

We may suppose that amid the hardships and privations the Jews endured in the deserts of Paran, Horeb, and Kadesh-barnea, the female sex, weaker than the other, had succumbed. The Jews must indeed have lacked girls, since they are always ordered, whenever they seize a town or village, whether to the left or right of the Asphaltic Lake, to kill everyone except girls of marriageable age.

The Arabs who still inhabit part of these deserts always stipulate in their treaties with caravans that they be given girls of marriageable age. It is likely that the young men in these dreadful lands carried the depravity of human nature so far as to couple with goats, as is said of certain shepherds in Calabria.

It remains to be determined whether these couplings produced monsters, and whether there is any foundation to the ancient tales of satyrs, fauns, centaurs, and minotaurs. History says so; natural science has not yet enlightened us on this monstrous question.

²⁵ Midian was not included in the Promised Land. It is a small district of Idumea, in Arabia Petraea, beginning to the north at the torrent of Arnon and ending at the torrent of Zared, amid rocks and on the eastern shore of the Asphaltic Lake. This country is now inhabited by a small band of Arabs; it may be about eight leagues long, and a little less wide.

²⁶ The text leaves no doubt that *Jephthah* sacrificed his daughter. “*God did not approve these consecrations,*” says *Dom Calmet* in his dissertation on *Jephthah’s* vow; “*but once they have been made, he requires their fulfillment, if only to punish those who made them, or to restrain the heedlessness with which they would have been made had their fulfillment not been feared.*” *St. Augustine* and almost

all the Fathers condemn *Jephthah's* act. It is true that Scripture says *he was filled with the spirit of God*; and *St. Paul*, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, praises *Jephthah*, placing him alongside *Samuel* and *David*.

St. Jerome, in his epistle to *Julian*, says: "*Jephthah sacrificed his daughter to the Lord, and for that reason the Apostle numbers him among the saints.*" Here are judgments on either side upon which we are not permitted to pass our own; we must fear even to hold an opinion.

- ²⁷ The death of King *Agag* may be regarded as a true sacrifice. *Saul* had taken this king of the Amalekites prisoner in war and accepted his surrender on terms. But the priest *Samuel* had ordered him to spare nothing, saying in these very words: Liv. I. des Rois, Chapitre 15. "*Kill everyone, from men to women, down to little children and those still at the breast.*"

Samuel hacked King Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal.

"The zeal that animated this prophet," says *Dom Calmet*, "put the sword in his hand on this occasion, to avenge the glory of the Lord and confound *Saul*."

In this fatal affair we see a consecration, a priest, a victim: it was therefore a sacrifice.

Every people whose history we possess has sacrificed human beings to the Divinity, except the Chinese. *Plutarch* reports that even the Romans did so in the days of the Republic.

We see in *Caesar's* Commentaries that the Germans were about to sacrifice the hostages he had given them when he freed those hostages by his victory.

I have observed elsewhere that this violation of the law of nations against *Caesar's* hostages, and these human victims sacrificed—to crown the horror—by women's hands, somewhat belie *Tacitus's* panegyric of the Germans in his treatise *De moribus Germanorum*. In that treatise, *Tacitus* seems more intent on satirizing the Romans than on praising the Germans, whom he did not know.

Let us say here in passing that *Tacitus* loved satire even more than truth. He wants to make everything hateful, even actions indifferent in themselves; and his malice pleases us almost as much as his style, because we love malicious gos-

sip and wit.

Let us return to human victims. Our ancestors sacrificed them just as the Germans did. This is the lowest depth of stupidity to which our nature, left to itself, can sink, and one of the fruits of our feeble judgment. We said: "We must offer God what is most precious and most beautiful to us; nothing is more precious to us than our children; we must therefore choose the most beautiful and the youngest to sacrifice to the Divinity."

Philo says that in the land of Canaan people sometimes sacrificed their children before God commanded *Abraham* to sacrifice his only son *Isaac* to test his faith.

Sanchuniathon, quoted by *Eusebius*, reports that in great dangers the Phoenicians sacrificed their dearest child, and that *Ilus* sacrificed his son *Jebud* at about the time God put *Abraham's* faith to the test. It is difficult to penetrate the darkness of that antiquity; but it is all too true that these horrible sacrifices were practiced almost everywhere. Peoples abandoned them only as they grew more civilized. Cultivation brings humanity.

- ²⁸ Those unfamiliar with ancient customs, who judge only by what they see around them, may be astonished by these peculiarities. But we must remember that in Egypt and much of Asia at that time, most things were expressed through figures, hieroglyphics, signs, and symbols.

The prophets, called *seers* among the Egyptians and the Jews, not only expressed themselves in allegories but represented the events they foretold through signs. Thus *Isaiah*, the first of the four great Jewish prophets, takes a scroll and writes on it: "*Shas bas, plunder quickly.*" Isaïe, Chapitre 8. Then he approaches the prophetess; she conceives and bears a son, whom he calls *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*. This figures the evils the peoples of Egypt and Assyria will inflict upon the Jews.

This prophet says: "*Before the child is old enough to eat butter and honey, and knows how to reject evil and choose good, the land you hate will be delivered from the two kings. The Lord will whistle for the flies of Egypt and the bees of Assyria.*"

The Lord will take a hired razor and shave off all the beard and the hair of the feet of the king of Assyria.”

This prophecy of bees, beard, and shorn hair of the feet can be understood only by those who know that it was customary to summon swarms with the sound of a flageolet or some other rustic instrument; that the greatest insult one could offer a man was to cut off his beard; that “the hair of the feet” meant pubic hair; and that this hair was shaved only in filthy diseases such as leprosy. All these figures, so alien to our style, mean nothing more than that in a few years the Lord will free his people from oppression.

The same *Isaiah* walks completely naked to signify that the king of Assyria will lead away from Egypt and Ethiopia a multitude of captives with nothing to cover their nakedness. Isaïe, Chapitre 20

Ezekiel eats the parchment scroll presented to him. Ezéch. Chap. 4 & suiv. Then he covers his bread with excrement and lies on his left side for three hundred and ninety days, and on his right for forty days, to convey that the Jews will lack bread and to signify the years their captivity is to last. He puts on chains, representing those of the people; he cuts off his hair and beard and divides them into three parts. The first third represents those who are to perish in the city; the second, those who will be put to death around the walls; the third, those who are to be carried away to Babylon.

The prophet *Hosea* joins himself to an adulterous woman, whom he buys for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley. Ozée, Chap. 3. “*You shall wait for me,*” he tells her, “*many days, and during that time no man shall approach you. Such is the state in which the children of Israel will long remain, without kings, without princes, without sacrifices, without an altar, and without an ephod.*” In short, the Nabi, the seers, the prophets, almost never predict anything without representing the thing predicted by a sign.

Jeremiah therefore merely follows custom when he binds himself with ropes and puts collars and yokes on his back, to signify the enslavement of those to whom he sends these symbols. Look closely, and those times are like those of an ancient world that differs in every way from the new one: civil life, laws, the manner of waging war, religious ceremonies—everything is utterly different.

We need only open *Homer* and the first book of *Herodotus* to be convinced that we bear no resemblance to the peoples of remote antiquity, and that we must distrust our judgment when we try to compare their customs with our own.

Nature itself was not what it is today. Magicians had a power over it they no longer possess: they charmed serpents, called up the dead, and so on. God sent dreams, and men interpreted them. The gift of prophecy was common. There were transformations such as *Nebuchadnezzar's* into an ox, *Lot's* wife into a pillar of salt, and five cities into a lake of bitumen.

There were kinds of human beings that no longer exist. The race of giants—*Rephaim*, *Emim*, *Nephilim*, *Anakim*—has disappeared. *St. Augustine*, in *la Cité de Dieu*, Livre V, says he saw the tooth of an ancient giant as large as a hundred of our molars. *Ezekiel* speaks of the *Gammadim* pygmies, a cubit tall, who fought at the siege of Tyre; and in almost all this the sacred authors agree with the secular ones. Diseases and remedies were not the same as in our day: the possessed were cured with the root called *Barad*, set in a ring that was held beneath their noses.

In the end, that entire ancient world was so different from ours that we can draw no rule of conduct from it today. And if, in that distant antiquity, people persecuted and oppressed one another in turn over their worship, we should not imitate such cruelty under the law of grace.

Chapter XIII



The extreme tolerance of the Jews

Thus under *Moses*, under the judges, under the kings, you always find examples of tolerance. There is more: *Moses* says several times *that God punishes fathers in their children, down to the fourth generation*. Exode, Chap. 20, v. 5. This threat was necessary for a people to whom God had revealed neither the immortality of the soul nor punishments and rewards in another life. These truths were proclaimed to them neither in the Decalogue nor in any law of Leviticus or Deuteronomy. They were doctrines of the Persians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Cretans; but they formed no part of the Jewish religion. *Moses* does not say: “*Honor your father and mother if you wish to go to heaven*”; but: “*Honor your father and mother so that you may live long upon the earth*.” Deutér. Chap. 28. He threatens them only with bodily afflictions: dry scabies, festering scabies, malignant ulcers on their knees and calves; exposure to their wives’ infidelities; having to borrow at interest from foreigners while being unable to lend at interest themselves; perishing of famine and being forced to eat their children. Nowhere does he tell them that their immortal souls will suffer torments after death or taste bliss. God, who himself led his people, punished or rewarded them immediately after their good or evil actions. Everything belonged to this world; and this is the evidence the learned Bishop *Warburton* offers to demonstrate that the Jewish law was divine:²⁹ since God himself was their king, dispensing justice immediately after transgression or obedience, he

had no need to reveal a doctrine he was reserving for the time when he would no longer govern his people. Those who ignorantly maintain that *Moses* taught the immortality of the soul deprive the New Testament of one of its greatest advantages over the Old. It is certain that the law of *Moses* proclaimed only temporal punishments down to the fourth generation. Yet despite this law's precise wording, despite God's express declaration that he would punish down to the fourth generation, *Ezekiel* announces—Ezéché. Chap. 18, v. 20.

Ezéché. Chap. 20, v. 25.—the very opposite to the Jews, telling them that the son will not bear his father's iniquity. He even goes so far as to make God say that he had given them *precepts that were not good*.³⁰

The Book of *Ezekiel* was nonetheless included in the canon of authors inspired by God. It is true that the synagogue did not permit it to be read before the age of thirty, as *St. Jerome* tells us; but that was for fear that the young might misuse the overly explicit pictures, in chapters 16 and 23, of the debauchery of the two sisters *Obolah* and *Obolibah*. In short, his book was always accepted, despite its direct contradiction of *Moses*.

Finally,³¹ when the immortality of the soul became an accepted doctrine—a development that had probably begun during the Babylonian captivity—the sect of the Sadducees continued to believe that there were neither punishments nor rewards after death, and that the faculty of feeling and thinking perished with us, like our active strength, our ability to walk and digest. They denied the existence of angels. They differed far more from other Jews than Protestants differ from Catholics; yet they remained in communion with their brothers. There were even high priests of their sect.

The Pharisees believed in fate³² and the transmigration of souls.³³ The Essenes thought that the souls of the just went to the Fortunate Isles,³⁴ and those of the wicked to a kind of Tartarus. They offered no sacrifices; they gathered among themselves in a synagogue of their own. In short, anyone willing to examine Judaism closely will be astonished to find the greatest tolerance amid the most barbarous horrors. It is a contradiction, certainly; almost every people has governed itself through contradictions. Happy the contradiction that brings gentleness of manners where the laws are written in blood!

²⁹ There is only one passage in the laws of *Moses* from which we might conclude that he knew the opinion prevailing among the Egyptians, that the soul does not die with the body. This passage is very important; it is in chapter 18 of Deuteronomy: “*Do not consult the diviners who foretell by examining the clouds, who charm serpents, who consult the spirit of Python, the seers, the adepts who question the dead and ask them for the truth.*”

This passage seems to suggest that, if people called up the souls of the dead, this supposed sorcery presumed the souls’ continued existence. It is also possible that the magicians *Moses* mentions, being nothing but crude impostors, had no clear idea of the sorcery they believed they performed. They made people believe that they forced the dead to speak, that by their magic they restored them to the condition those bodies had enjoyed in life, without even considering whether the doctrine of the immortality of the soul could be inferred from their ridiculous operations. Sorcerers have never been philosophers; they have always been stupid conjurers performing before fools.

We may also observe how strange it is that the word *Python* should appear in Deuteronomy long before this Greek word could have been known to the Hebrews. In fact, the term *Python* is not in the Hebrew, of which we have no exact translation.

That language presents insurmountable difficulties. It is a mixture of Phoenician, Egyptian, Syrian, and Arabic, and this ancient mixture is greatly altered today. Hebrew never had more than two verbal forms, the present and the future; the others must be guessed from the sense. Different vowels were often expressed by the same characters—or rather, they did not express the vowels; and the inventors of the points only increased the difficulty. Each adverb has twenty different meanings. The same word is used in opposite senses. Add to this confusion the dryness and poverty of the language: the Jews, lacking the arts, could not express what they did not know. In short, Hebrew is to Greek what a peasant’s speech is to an academician’s.

³⁰ *Ezekiel's* view eventually prevailed in the synagogue; but there were always Jews who believed in eternal punishments and also believed that God visited the fathers' iniquities upon their children. Today they are punished beyond the fiftieth generation, and still have eternal punishments to fear. The question is asked: how can the descendants of the Jews who were not accomplices in the death of Jesus Christ—those who were in Jerusalem but took no part in it, and those scattered over the rest of the earth—be punished in this world in their children, who are as innocent as their fathers? This temporal punishment, or rather this manner of living differently from other peoples and carrying on trade without a homeland, may not be regarded as a punishment in comparison with the eternal torments they bring upon themselves by their unbelief, and which they can escape through sincere conversion.

³¹ Those who have sought in the Pentateuch the doctrine of hell and paradise as we understand them have been strangely deluded. Their error rests only on an idle dispute over words. The Vulgate translated the Hebrew word *Sheol*, the pit, by the Latin *Infernum*; and the Latin word *Infernum* was translated into French as *Enfer*. This ambiguity has been used to make people believe that the ancient Hebrews possessed the notion of the Greeks' *Hades* and *Tartarus*, which other nations had known earlier under other names.

Chapter 16 of Numbers relates that the earth opened its mouth beneath the tents of *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, swallowed them with their tents and their possessions, and hurled them alive into the grave, into the underground. This passage certainly concerns neither the souls of these three Hebrews, nor the torments of hell, nor eternal punishment.

It is strange that the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique*, under *Enfer*, should say that the ancient Hebrews *acknowledged its reality*. If that were so, it would be an untenable contradiction in the Pentateuch. How could *Moses* have spoken of punishments after death in one single, isolated passage, and never spoken of them in his laws? Chapter 32 of Deuteronomy is quoted, but mutilated; here it is in full: "*They have provoked me with what was not God, and angered me with their vanity; and I shall provoke them with what is not a people, and anger them*

with a senseless nation. And a fire has been kindled in my fury, and it will burn to the depths of the earth; it will devour the earth to its seed, and burn the foundations of the mountains. And I shall heap evils upon them, and fill them with my arrows; they will be consumed by hunger, birds will devour them with bitter bites. I shall unleash upon them the teeth of beasts that crawl furiously over the earth, and serpents."

Is there the slightest connection between these expressions and the idea of infernal punishments as we conceive them? It seems, rather, that these words have been quoted only to make it plain that our hell was unknown to the ancient Jews.

The author of that article also quotes the passage from *Job*, chapter 24: "*The adulterer's eye watches for darkness, saying, the eye will not see me, and he will cover his face; he breaks into houses in the darkness, as he had said in the daytime, and they have not known the light. If dawn appears suddenly, they think it the shadow of death, and so they walk in darkness as in light. He is light upon the surface of the water; may his portion be cursed upon the earth; may he not walk by the way of the vineyard; may he pass from snow waters to excessive heat; and they have sinned the tomb*"; or else, "*the tomb has scattered those who sin*"; or else, according to the Septuagint, "*their sin has been called to remembrance.*"

I quote the passages in full and literally; without that, it is always impossible to form a true idea of them.

Is there, I ask you, a single word here from which we can conclude that *Moses* had taught the Jews the clear and simple doctrine of punishments and rewards after death?

The Book of *Job* has no connection with the laws of *Moses*. Moreover, it is very likely that *Job* was not a Jew; this is *St. Jerome's* opinion in his Hebrew Questions on Genesis. The word *Satan*, which appears in *Job*, was unknown to the Jews, and you never find it in the Pentateuch. The Jews learned this name only in Chaldea, along with the names *Gabriel* and *Raphael*, which were unknown before their enslavement in Babylon. *Job* is therefore cited here quite inappropriately.

The last chapter of *Isaiah* is also quoted: “*And from month to month, and Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh will come to worship me, says the Lord; and they will go out and see on the rubbish heap the corpses of those who have transgressed; their worm will not die, their fire will not be quenched, and they will be exposed to the eyes of all flesh until it has had its fill.*”

Certainly, if they are thrown on the rubbish heap, exposed to the sight of passersby until they have had their fill, and eaten by worms, this does not mean that *Moses* taught the Jews the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. And the words *the fire will not be quenched* do not mean that corpses exposed to the people’s gaze undergo the eternal punishments of hell.

How can anyone cite a passage from *Isaiah* to prove that the Jews in *Moses’* day had received the doctrine of the immortality of the soul? According to Hebrew reckoning, *Isaiah* was prophesying in the year of the world 3380. *Moses* lived around the year of the world 2500; eight centuries elapsed between them. It is an insult to common sense, or a mere joke, to abuse the freedom to quote in this way: to claim to prove that an author held a certain opinion by a passage from an author who came eight hundred years later and did not discuss that opinion. It is beyond dispute that the immortality of the soul, punishments and rewards after death, are proclaimed, acknowledged, and established in the New Testament; and it is beyond dispute that they are found nowhere in the Pentateuch.

Although the Jews later believed in the immortality of the soul, they were not enlightened as to its spiritual nature. Like almost every other nation, they thought the soul something fine and airy, a light substance that retained some semblance of the body it had animated. These were what people called the shades, the departed spirits of bodies. Several Fathers of the Church held this opinion. *Tertullian*, in his work *de l’Ame*, Chap. 22, puts it this way: “*We define the soul as born of God’s breath, immortal, corporeal, possessed of a form, simple in substance*”; “*We define the soul as born of God’s breath, immortal, corporeal, formed, simple in its substance.*”

St. Irenaeus says in his Livre II, Chap. 34: “*Souls are incorporeal in comparison with mortal bodies.*” “Souls are incorporeal in comparison with mortal bodies.” He adds that “Jesus Christ taught that souls preserve the images of the body”: “*the form of the bodies in which they are received, and so on.*” We do not find that Jesus Christ ever taught this doctrine, and it is difficult to guess *St. Irenaeus*’ meaning.

St. Hilary is more explicit and more definite in his commentary on *St. Matthew*. He plainly attributes a bodily substance to the soul: “*By their nature they are allotted a corporeal substance.*”

St. Ambrose, in his work on *Abraham*, Liv. II, Chap. 8, maintains that nothing is free of matter except the substance of the Holy Trinity.

One might reproach these venerable men for their bad philosophy; but we may believe that at bottom their theology was very sound, since, although they did not know the soul’s incomprehensible nature, they declared it immortal and wished it to be Christian.

We know that the soul is spiritual, but we do not know at all what spirit is. We know matter very imperfectly, and it is impossible for us to have a distinct idea of what is not matter. Knowing so little of what touches our senses, we can know nothing by ourselves of what lies beyond them. We carry a few words from our ordinary language into the abysses of metaphysics and theology, to give ourselves some faint idea of things we can neither conceive nor express. We try to shore ourselves up with these words, to sustain our feeble understanding, if we can, in these unknown regions.

Thus we use the word *spirit*, which corresponds to *breath* and *wind*, to express something that is not matter. And since this word—*breath*, *wind*, *spirit*—leads us back despite ourselves to the idea of a fine and light substance, we strip away from it whatever more we can in order to arrive at a conception of pure spirituality. But we never reach a distinct notion. We do not even know what we are saying when we utter the word *substance*: literally, it means what lies beneath; and by that very fact it warns us that it is incomprehensible. For what, indeed, is

that which lies beneath? Knowledge of God's secrets is not our portion in this life. Here, plunged in profound darkness, we fight one another, striking at random in the midst of this night, without knowing precisely why we fight.

If we reflect carefully on all this, no reasonable person can fail to conclude that we must show indulgence toward the opinions of others, and earn it for our own.

None of these observations is foreign to the heart of the question, which is whether human beings should tolerate one another. For if they prove how much people on every side have erred in every age, they prove that in every age people should have treated one another with indulgence.

³² The doctrine of fate is ancient and universal; you find it everywhere in *Homer*. *Jupiter* would like to save the life of his son *Sarpedon*, but Fate has condemned him to death; *Jupiter* can only obey. Among philosophers, Fate meant either the necessary chain of causes and effects necessarily produced by nature, or this same chain ordained by Providence—which is much more reasonable. The whole system of fate is contained in this verse of *Annaeus Seneca*: *The Fates lead the willing and drag the unwilling*. It has always been agreed that God governs the universe by eternal, universal, immutable laws. This truth was the source of all those unintelligible disputes over freedom, because freedom was never defined until the wise *Locke* appeared. He proved that freedom is the power to act. God grants this power, and man, acting freely according to God's eternal ordinances, is one of the wheels in the great machine of the world. All antiquity disputed freedom, but no one persecuted anyone over it until our own day. What an absurd horror, to have imprisoned or exiled for this dispute a *Pomponne d'Andilly*, an *Arnauld*, a *Sacy*, a *Nicole*, and so many others who have been the light of France!

³³ The theological romance of the transmigration of souls comes from India, from which we have received far more fables than is commonly thought. This doctrine is explained in the admirable twelfth book of *Ovid's* *Metamorphoses*.

It has been accepted almost throughout the world; it has always been disputed. But we do not find that any priest in antiquity ever obtained a royal warrant for the imprisonment of a disciple of *Pythagoras*.

- 34 Neither the ancient Jews, nor the Egyptians, nor their Greek contemporaries believed that the human soul went to heaven after death. The Jews thought that the moon and sun were a few leagues above us, in the same circle, and that the firmament was a thick, solid vault supporting the weight of the waters, which escaped through certain openings. Among the ancient Greeks, the palace of the gods was on Mount Olympus. In *Homer's* day, the dwelling of heroes after death was on an island beyond the Ocean, and this was the Essenes' opinion.

After *Homer*, planets were assigned to the gods; but there was no more reason for men to put a god on the moon than for the moon's inhabitants to put a god on the planet Earth. *Juno* and *Iris* had no palace but the clouds; there was nowhere there to rest a foot. Among the Sabaeans, each god had his star; but since a star is a sun, there is no way to live there unless one is made of fire. It is therefore quite pointless to ask what the ancients thought about heaven. The best answer is that they did not think.

Chapter XIV



Was intolerance taught by Jesus Christ?

Let us now see whether Jesus Christ established bloodthirsty laws, whether he commanded intolerance, whether he had the dungeons of the Inquisition built, whether he instituted the executioners of the *autos-da-fé*.

Unless I am mistaken, there are only a few passages in the Gospels from which the persecuting spirit could infer that intolerance and coercion are legitimate. One is the parable in which the kingdom of heaven is compared to a king inviting guests to his son's wedding. This monarch sends word through his servants: St. Math. Chap. 22. "*I have killed my oxen and my poultry; everything is ready; come to the wedding.*" Some disregard the invitation and go to their country houses, others to their business; others abuse the king's servants and kill them. The king sends his armies against these murderers and destroys their city. He sends out onto the highways to invite everyone his servants find to the feast. One of them sits down at the table without putting on a wedding garment; he is put in chains and thrown into the outer darkness.

Since this allegory plainly concerns only the kingdom of heaven, surely no one should derive from it a right to bind or imprison a neighbor who has come to supper without suitable wedding clothes. I know of no prince in history who had a courtier hanged for such a reason. Nor need we fear that when the emperor sends pages to princes of the Empire to invite them to supper, those

princes will kill the pages. The invitation to the feast signifies the preaching of salvation; the murder of the prince's messengers represents the persecution of those who preach wisdom and virtue.

The other parable concerns a private man who invites his friends to a great supper. St. Luc, Chap. 14. When he is ready to sit down, he sends his servant to tell them. One excuses himself because he has bought a piece of land and is going to inspect it. This excuse hardly seems valid: people do not go to look at their land at night. Another says he has bought five pairs of oxen and must try them out; he is as much at fault as the first, since one does not try out oxen at supper-time. A third answers that he has just married, and his excuse is certainly quite acceptable. The angry master of the house has the blind and the lame brought to his feast; and seeing that places are still empty, he tells his servant: "*Go out onto the highways and along the hedges, and compel people to come in.*"

It is true that we are not expressly told this parable represents the kingdom of heaven. These words, "*Compel them to come in,*" have been abused only too often. But plainly a single servant cannot forcibly compel everyone he meets to come to supper at his master's house; and guests brought there by force would hardly make the meal agreeable. According to the most respected commentators, "*Compel them to come in*" means nothing more than: ask, entreat, urge, prevail upon them. What connection, I ask you, is there between this entreaty, this supper, and persecution?

If everything is taken literally, must we be blind, lame, and brought in by force to be within the Church? In the same parable Jesus says: "*Do not invite either your friends or your rich relations to dinner.*" Has anyone ever inferred that we really must not dine with our relations and friends once they have a little money?

After the parable of the feast, Jesus Christ says: St. Luc, Chap. 14, v. 26 & suiv. "*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his brothers, his sisters, and even his own soul, he cannot be my disciple, and so on. For which of you, wishing to build a tower, does not first calculate the expense?*" Is anyone in

the world so unnatural as to conclude that we must hate our father and mother? Do we not readily understand that these words mean: "Do not hesitate between me and your dearest affections"?

The passage from *St. Matthew* is quoted: "*Let whoever does not listen to the Church be as a pagan and a customs collector.*" *St. Math. Chap. 8, v. 17.* This certainly does not say that pagans and the farmers of the king's taxes should be persecuted. They are accursed, it is true, but they are not handed over to the secular authorities. Far from depriving these tax farmers of any citizen's right, we have granted them the greatest privileges. Theirs is the only profession condemned in Scripture, and the one most favored by governments. Why, then, should we not show our erring brothers as much indulgence as we lavish consideration on our brothers the tax farmers?

Another passage that has been grossly abused is the one in *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark* where Jesus, hungry in the morning, approaches a fig tree and finds nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He curses the fig tree, which withers at once.

Several different explanations of this miracle are offered; but is there a single one that can authorize persecution? A fig tree could not produce figs around the beginning of March, and was made to wither: is that a reason to make our brothers wither with grief at every season of the year? Let us revere in Scripture everything that may raise difficulties in our curious and vain minds, but let us not abuse it to become harsh and implacable.

The persecuting spirit, which abuses everything, also seeks justification in the expulsion of the merchants driven from the Temple, and in the legion of demons sent from the body of a possessed man into the bodies of two thousand unclean animals. But who fails to see that these two examples are simply acts of justice that God himself deigns to carry out against a violation of the law? It was disrespectful to the House of the Lord to turn its forecourt into a merchants' shop. The Sanhedrin and the priests might permit this trade for the convenience of sacrifices, but the God to whom those sacrifices were offered, though hidden in human form, surely had the power to end this profanation. He could likewise punish those who brought into the country whole herds of

animals forbidden by a law he himself deigned to observe. These examples have not the slightest connection with persecution over doctrine. The spirit of intolerance must rest on very poor reasons indeed, since everywhere it seeks the emptiest pretexts.

Almost all the rest of Jesus Christ's words and deeds preach gentleness, patience, and indulgence. There is the father who welcomes the prodigal son; the laborer who comes at the last hour and is paid like the others; the charitable Samaritan. Jesus himself defends his disciples for not fasting; he forgives the sinful woman; he is content to recommend fidelity to the adulteress. He even deigns to enter into the innocent joy of the guests at Cana, who, already warmed with wine, ask for more. He is willing to work a miracle for them, turning water into wine.

He does not even lash out against *Judas*, who is to betray him. He commands *Peter* never to use the sword; he rebukes the sons of *Zebedee*, who, following *Elijah's* example, wanted to call down fire from heaven upon a town that had refused him lodging.

Finally, he dies a victim of envy. If we dare compare the sacred with the secular, and a God with a man, his death, humanly speaking, has much in common with that of *Socrates*. The Greek philosopher perished through the hatred of the Sophists, the priests, and the leading men of the people; the lawgiver of the Christians succumbed to the hatred of the scribes, the Pharisees, and the priests. *Socrates* could have avoided death and chose not to; Jesus Christ offered himself willingly. The Greek philosopher not only forgave his slanderers and his unjust judges, but asked them one day to treat his children as they had treated him, if his children were fortunate enough to deserve their hatred as he had. The lawgiver of the Christians, infinitely superior, prayed to his Father to forgive his enemies.

If Jesus Christ seemed to fear death, if his anguish was so extreme that his sweat was mingled with blood—the most violent and rarest of symptoms—it was because he deigned to descend into all the weakness of the human body he had assumed. His body trembled, and his soul was unshakable. He taught us that

true strength, true greatness, consist in enduring evils beneath which our nature gives way. There is supreme courage in hastening toward death while dreading it.

Socrates had called the Sophists ignorant and convicted them of bad faith. Jesus, exercising his divine rights, called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, fools, blind men, wicked men, serpents, a brood of vipers. St. Math. Chap. 23.

Socrates was not accused of wishing to found a new sect; Jesus Christ was not accused of wishing to introduce one. St. Math. Chap. 26. We are told that the chief priests and the whole council sought false testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death.

Now, if they were seeking false testimony, they were not accusing him of having preached publicly against the law. Indeed, he submitted to the law of *Moses* from childhood to death. He was circumcised on the eighth day like all other children. If he was later baptized in the Jordan, that was an established ceremony among the Jews, as among all the peoples of the East. Every legal impurity was washed away by baptism; this was how priests were consecrated. People immersed themselves in water at the feast of solemn atonement; proselytes were baptized.

Jesus observed every point of the law. He kept every Sabbath, abstained from forbidden meats, celebrated all the festivals, and even before his death had celebrated the Passover. He was accused neither of any new opinion nor of observing any foreign rite. Born an Israelite, he lived consistently as an Israelite.

Two witnesses came forward and accused him of having said *that he could destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days*. St. Math. chap. 26, v. 61. Such words were incomprehensible to the carnal-minded Jews, but this was not an accusation of wishing to found a new sect.

The high priest questioned him, saying: "*I command you by the living God to tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of GOD.*" We are not told what the high priest meant by *Son of God*. This expression was sometimes used to mean a righteous man,³⁵ just as the words *son of Belial* were used to mean a wicked man. The unenlightened Jews had no idea of the sacred mystery of a Son of God, himself God, coming to earth.

Jesus answered him: “*You have said it; but I tell you that you will soon see the son of man seated at the right hand of the power of God, coming upon the clouds of heaven.*”

The enraged Sanhedrin regarded this answer as blasphemy. The Sanhedrin no longer had the power to impose the death penalty. They brought Jesus before the Roman governor of the province and slanderously accused him of being a disturber of the public peace who said that tribute should not be paid to *Caesar* and who also called himself king of the Jews. It is therefore perfectly clear that he was accused of a crime against the state.

When the governor *Pilate* learned that he was a Galilean, he first sent him to *Herod*, tetrarch of Galilee. *Herod* thought it impossible that Jesus could aspire to become the head of a faction and lay claim to kingship. He treated him with contempt and sent him back to *Pilate*, who had the disgraceful weakness to condemn him in order to appease the tumult stirred up against himself, all the more because, as *Josephus* tells us, he had already faced a Jewish revolt. *Pilate* did not show the same generosity that the governor *Festus* later showed.

I now ask: is it tolerance or intolerance that belongs to divine law? If you wish to resemble Jesus Christ, be martyrs, not executioners.

- 35 It was indeed very difficult for the Jews, not to say impossible, to understand without a special revelation this ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, himself God. Genesis (chap. 6.) calls the sons of powerful men *sons of God*, just as the great cedars in the Psalms are called the cedars of God. *Samuel* says that a fear of God fell upon the people, meaning a great fear; a great wind is a wind of God; *Saul's* illness is a melancholy of God. Yet it seems that the Jews understood literally that Jesus called himself Son of God in the proper sense. But if they regarded those words as blasphemy, that may be further proof of their ignorance of the mystery of the Incarnation, and of God, Son of God, sent to earth for the salvation of humankind.

Chapter XV



Testimonies against Intolerance.

“It is impious, in matters of religion, to rob people of their freedom and prevent them from choosing a divinity; neither man nor God would wish for service given under compulsion.” (*Apologétique, ch. 24.*)

“If violence were used to defend the faith, the bishops would oppose it.” (*St. Hilaire, Liv. I.*)

“Religion imposed by force is religion no longer; we must persuade, not compel. Religion cannot be commanded.” (*Lactance, Liv. 3.*)

“It is an execrable heresy to try to drag people by force, by blows, by imprisonment, when reason has failed to convince them.” (*St. Athanase, Liv. I.*)

“Nothing is more contrary to religion than coercion.” (*St. Justin, Martyr, Liv. 5.*)

“Shall we persecute those whom God tolerates?” *said St. Augustine, before his quarrel with the Donatists made him too severe.*

“Let no violence be done to the Jews.” (*4me. Concile de Toledé, 56me. canon.*)

“Counsel, and do not compel.” (*Lettres de saint Bernard.*)

“We do not propose to destroy errors by violence.” (*Discours du Clergé de France à Louis XIII.*)

“We have always disapproved of harsh measures.” (*Assemblée du Clergé, 11me. Aoust 1560.*)

“We know that faith is won by persuasion, not imposed by command.” (*Fléchier, Evêque de Nîmes, Lettre 19.*)

“We must not even use insulting words.” (*L’Evêque du Belley dans une Instr. pastorale.*)

“Remember that the soul’s diseases cannot be cured by compulsion and violence.” (*Le Cardinal le Camus, Instruction pastorale de 1688.*)

“Grant civil toleration to everyone.” (*Fénelon, Archevêque de Cambrai, au Duc de Bourgogne.*)

“The forcible imposition of a religion is clear proof that the spirit directing it is an enemy of truth.” (*Dirois, Docteur de Sorbonne, Liv. 6, chap. 4.*)

“Violence can make hypocrites; we do not persuade by making threats resound on every side.” (*Tillemont, Hist. Eccl. tom. 6.*)

“It has seemed to us consistent with equity and sound reason to follow in the footsteps of the ancient Church, which used no violence to establish and extend religion.” (*Remontr. du Parlement de Paris à Henri II.*)

“Experience teaches us that violence is more likely to inflame than to cure an evil rooted in the mind, etc.” (*De Thou, Epître dédicatoire à Henri IV..*)

“Faith is not inspired by sword blows.” (*Cérisier, sur les regnes de Henri IV & de Louis XIII.*)

“It is a barbarous zeal that claims to plant religion in people’s hearts, as though persuasion could be the effect of coercion.” (*Boulainvilliers, Etat de la France.*)

“Religion is like love: commands can do nothing there, and coercion still less; nothing is more independent than loving and believing.” (*Amelot de la Houssaye, sur les Lettres du Cardinal d’Ossat.*)

“If Heaven has loved you enough to let you see the truth, it has bestowed a great grace upon you; but should those who possess their Father’s inheritance hate those who do not?” (*Esprit des Loix, Liv. 25.*)

An enormous book could be composed entirely of passages like these. Our histories, our speeches, our sermons, our works on morals, our catechisms—all breathe, all teach today this sacred duty of forbearance. By what fatality, by what inconsistency would we contradict in practice a doctrine we proclaim every day? When our actions contradict our morality, it is because we believe

there is some advantage for us in doing the opposite of what we teach; but there is certainly no advantage in persecuting those who disagree with us and making them hate us. Once again, then, intolerance is absurd. But, someone will say, those who have an interest in constraining consciences are not absurd. The short chapter that follows is addressed to them.

Chapter XVI



Dialogue between a Dying Man and a Man in Good Health.

A citizen lay at the point of death in a provincial town. A man in good health came to insult his final moments and said to him:

“Wretch! Think as I do this instant; sign this paper; confess that five propositions appear in a book neither you nor I have ever read. Take *Lanfranc*’s side against *Berengar* at once, and *St. Thomas*’s against *St. Bonaventure*. Uphold the Second Council of Nicaea against the Council of Frankfurt. Explain to me this instant how these words, *My Father is greater than I*, expressly mean, *I am as great as he is*.

“Tell me how the Father communicates everything to the Son except fatherhood, or I shall have your body thrown on the refuse heap. Your children will not inherit; your wife will be deprived of her dowry; and your family will beg for bread that men like me will not give them.”

The Dying Man.

“I can scarcely make out what you are saying. Your threats reach my ears indistinctly; they trouble my soul and make my death dreadful. In God’s name, have pity on me!”

The Barbarian.

“Pity! I can have none unless you agree with me in everything.”

The Dying Man.

“Alas! You can see that in these last moments all my senses have withered, all the doors of my understanding are closed, my ideas are fleeing, my thought is going out. Am I in any condition to dispute?”

The Barbarian.

“Well, if you cannot believe what I wish, say that you believe it, and that will satisfy me.”

The Dying Man.

“How can I swear falsely to please you? In a moment I shall appear before the God who punishes perjury.”

The Barbarian.

“No matter; you will have the pleasure of being buried in a cemetery, and your wife and children will have the means to live. Die a hypocrite: hypocrisy is a good thing; it is, as people say, the homage vice pays to virtue. A little hypocrisy, my friend—what does it cost?”

The Dying Man.

“Alas! You despise God, or do not acknowledge him, since you demand a lie from me at the hour of death—you who must soon receive your own judgment from him and answer for this lie.”

The Barbarian.

“What, insolent man! I do not acknowledge God?”

The Dying Man.

“Forgive me, my brother; I fear you do not know him. The God I worship is reviving my strength at this moment so that, with my dying voice, I may tell you that if you believe in God, you must treat me with charity. He gave me my wife and children: do not let them perish in poverty. As for my body, do what you will with it; I leave it to you. But believe in God, I implore you!”

The Barbarian.

“Do what I told you, without arguing. I wish it; I command it.”

The Dying Man.

“And what interest have you in tormenting me so much?”

The Barbarian.

“What! What interest? If I have your signature, it will earn me a good canonry.”

The Dying Man.

“Ah, my brother! My last moment is here; I am dying; I shall pray to God to touch your heart and convert you.”

The Barbarian.

“To the devil with the impertinent fellow who would not sign! I shall sign for him and counterfeit his handwriting.”

The following letter confirms the same moral lesson.

Chapter XVII



Letter Written to the Jesuit Le Tellier by the Holder of a Benefice, May 6, 1714.

My Reverend Father,

I obey Your Reverence's orders to lay before you the means best suited to rid Jesus and his Society of their enemies. I believe only five hundred thousand Huguenots remain in the kingdom; some say a million, others a million and a half. But whatever their number, here is my opinion, which, as duty requires, I most humbly submit to yours.

- ¹ It is easy to catch all the Protestant preachers in a single day and hang them all at once in the same square, not only for public edification but for the beauty of the spectacle.
- ² I would have all the fathers and mothers murdered in their beds, because killing them in the streets might cause a disturbance; several might even escape, which must above all be prevented. This execution follows necessarily from our principles: for if a heretic must be killed, as so many great theologians prove, it is evident that all of them must be killed.
- ³ The next day I would marry all the girls to good Catholics, since we must not depopulate the state too much after the last war. As for the boys of fourteen and fifteen, already imbued with bad principles we cannot hope to destroy, my

opinion is that they must all be castrated, so that this breed may never reproduce. The younger boys will be brought up in your colleges and whipped until they know the works of *Sanchez* and *Molina* by heart.

⁴ Subject to correction, I think the same should be done to all the Lutherans of Alsace, since in 1704 I noticed two old women from that country laughing on the day of the battle of Höchstädt.

⁵ The matter of the Jansenists may seem somewhat more troublesome; I believe they number at least six million. But a mind such as yours should not take fright. I include among the Jansenists all the parlements, which so unworthily uphold the liberties of the Gallican Church. It is for Your Reverence, with your customary prudence, to weigh the means of bringing all these unruly spirits into submission. The Gunpowder Plot did not meet with the desired success because one of the conspirators was indiscreet enough to wish to save his friend's life; but since you have no friends, the same difficulty need not be feared. It will be very easy for you to blow up all the kingdom's parlements with that invention of the monk *Schwarz* called *gunpowder*. I calculate that each parlement will require, on average, thirty-six barrels of powder. Multiplying twelve parlements by thirty-six barrels gives only four hundred thirty-two barrels, which, at a hundred écus each, amount to a hundred twenty-nine thousand six hundred livres: a trifle for the Reverend Father General.

Once the parlements have been blown up, you will give their offices to the members of your congregation, who are perfectly versed in the laws of the kingdom.

⁶ It will be easy to poison Cardinal *de Noailles*, who is a simple man and suspects nothing.

Your Reverence will employ the same means of conversion upon a few resistant bishops. Their bishoprics will be placed in the hands of the Jesuits by means of a papal brief. Then, with all the bishops on the side of the good cause and all the parish priests skillfully chosen by the bishops, here is what I advise, subject to Your Reverence's pleasure.

⁷ Since the Jansenists are said to take communion at least at Easter, it would not be a bad thing to sprinkle the hosts with the drug used to do justice upon Emperor *Henry VII*. Some critic may tell me that this operation would risk giving rat poison to the Molinists too. The objection is weighty; but no project is without drawbacks, no system without some point at which it threatens to collapse. If we let such small difficulties stop us, we would never accomplish anything. Besides, since our aim is to procure the greatest possible good, we must not be scandalized if this great good brings with it some evil consequences of no account.

We have nothing to reproach ourselves with. It is demonstrated that all the so-called Reformed and all the Jansenists are allotted to Hell; thus we merely hasten the moment when they must take possession.

It is no less clear that Paradise belongs by right to the Molinists; therefore, by causing their deaths inadvertently and without any ill intention, we hasten their joy. In either case we are the ministers of Providence.

As for those who might be somewhat alarmed by the number, Your Fatherhood may point out to them that from the flourishing days of the Church down to 1707—that is, in about fourteen hundred years—theology has brought about the massacre of more than fifty million people, whereas I propose to strangle, cut the throats of, or poison only about six million five hundred thousand.

Someone may object, again, that my calculation is wrong and that I violate the rule of three. For, they will say, if in fourteen hundred years only fifty million people have perished over theological distinctions, dilemmas, and enthymemes, that amounts to only thirty-five thousand seven hundred fourteen people a year, with a fraction; and so, for the present year, I am killing six million sixty-four thousand two hundred eighty-five people too many, with a fraction. But truly, this quibbling is quite childish; one might even call it impious. For does my procedure not plainly save the lives of all Catholics until the end of the world? We would never finish if we wished to answer every criticism.

With profound respect, I remain Your Fatherhood's

Most humble, most devout, and most gentle R..., a native of Angoulême, Prefect of the Congregation.

This project could not be carried out, because much time was needed to make proper arrangements and Father *Le Tellier* was exiled the following year. But since we must examine both sides, it is worth asking in what cases we might legitimately follow, in part, the views of Father *Le Tellier's* correspondent. It would seem harsh to carry out this project in every particular; but we must see on what occasions people who disagree with us should be broken on the wheel, hanged, or sent to the galleys. That is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter XVIII



The Only Cases in Which Intolerance Is Warranted by Human Law.

For a government to have no right to punish people's errors, those errors must not be crimes. They are crimes only when they disturb society; they disturb society as soon as they inspire fanaticism. People must therefore begin by ceasing to be fanatics before they deserve toleration.

If some young Jesuits, knowing that the Church abhors the reprobate, that the Jansenists are condemned by a papal bull, and that the Jansenists are therefore reprobate, go off to burn down a house of the Fathers of the Oratory because *Quesnel*, an Oratorian, was a Jansenist, it is clear that we shall be obliged to punish those Jesuits.

Likewise, if they have proclaimed criminal maxims, if their order's constitution is contrary to the laws of the kingdom, we cannot avoid dissolving their Society and abolishing the Jesuits to make citizens of them. At bottom this is an imaginary evil and a real benefit to them: for what harm is there in wearing a short coat instead of a cassock, and in being free instead of enslaved? Whole regiments are disbanded at the peace and do not complain: why do the Jesuits cry out so loudly when they are disbanded so that we may have peace?

If the Franciscans, carried away by holy zeal for the Virgin *Mary*, go to demolish the church of the Dominicans, who think that *Mary* was born in original sin, we shall then be obliged to treat the Franciscans much as we treat the

Jesuits.

The same must be said of the Lutherans and Calvinists. It will be useless for them to say, "We follow the promptings of our conscience; it is better to obey God than men; we are the true flock; we must exterminate the wolves." It is evident that they themselves are then wolves.

One of the most astonishing examples of fanaticism was a small sect in Denmark whose principle was the best in the world. These people wished to procure eternal salvation for their brothers; but the consequences they drew from this principle were singular. They knew that all little children who die without baptism are damned, and that those fortunate enough to die immediately after baptism enjoy eternal glory. They went about cutting the throats of whatever newly baptized boys and girls they could find. This was doubtless doing them the greatest good one could procure for them: they were preserved at once from sin, the miseries of this life, and Hell; they were sent infallibly to Heaven. But these charitable people did not consider that we are not permitted to do a small evil for a great good; that they had no right over these little children's lives; that most fathers and mothers are carnal enough to prefer having their sons and daughters beside them to seeing their throats cut so that they may go to Paradise; and, in a word, that the magistrate must punish homicide even when it is committed with good intentions.

The Jews would seem to have more right than anyone to rob and kill us. For although the Old Testament contains a hundred examples of toleration, it also contains some examples and some laws of severity. God sometimes ordered them to kill idolaters and spare only girls of marriageable age. They regard us as idolaters; and although we tolerate them today, if they were masters they might well leave none of us in the world but our daughters.

Above all, they would be under an indispensable obligation to murder all the Turks; that follows without difficulty. For the Turks possess the country of the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Jerseneans, Hivites, Araceans, Cineans, Hamathites, and Samareans. All these peoples were devoted to destruction;

their country, which was more than twenty-five leagues long, was given to the Jews by several successive covenants. They must recover their property: the Muslims have usurped it for more than a thousand years.

If the Jews reasoned in this way today, it is clear that there would be no other answer to give them than to impale them.

These are almost the only cases in which intolerance seems reasonable.

Chapter XIX



An account of a theological dispute in China.

In the first years of the great Emperor *Kangxi*'s reign, a mandarin in the city of Canton heard a great uproar in the house next door. He asked whether anyone was being killed; he was told that the chaplain of the Danish Company, a chaplain from Batavia, and a Jesuit were disputing. He had them brought before him, served them tea and preserves, and asked why they were quarreling.

The Jesuit replied that it was deeply painful for him, who was always right, to deal with people who were always wrong; that he had begun by arguing with the utmost restraint, but had finally lost patience.

With all possible tact, the mandarin impressed upon them how necessary courtesy was in debate, told them that no one ever grew angry in China, and asked what the matter was.

The Jesuit replied, "My lord, I leave you to judge: these two gentlemen refuse to submit to the decisions of the Council of Trent."

"That surprises me," said the mandarin. Then, turning to the two dissenters, he said, "Gentlemen, it seems to me that you ought to respect the opinions of a great assembly. I do not know what the Council of Trent is, but several people are always better informed than one. No one should believe that he knows more than everyone else, or that reason dwells in his head alone. That is what our great *Confucius* teaches; and if you take my advice, you would do very well to defer to the Council of Trent."

The Dane then spoke. "Your lordship speaks with the greatest wisdom. We respect great assemblies as we should; indeed, we agree entirely with several assemblies held before the one at Trent."

"Oh! If that is so," said the mandarin, "I beg your pardon: you may well be right. Well then, you and this Dutchman share the same opinion against this poor Jesuit?"

"Not at all," said the Dutchman. "This man's opinions are almost as extravagant as those of this Jesuit, who is acting so sweetly toward you here. It is more than anyone can bear."

"I do not understand you," said the mandarin. "Are you not all three Christians? Have you not all three come to teach Christianity in our empire? And should you not therefore hold the same doctrines?"

"You see, my lord," said the Jesuit, "these two men are mortal enemies, yet both argue against me. It is therefore clear that both are wrong and that reason is on my side alone." "That is not so clear," said the mandarin. "It is just possible that all three of you are wrong. I would be curious to hear you one at a time."

The Jesuit then delivered a fairly long speech, during which the Dane and the Dutchman shrugged their shoulders; the mandarin understood none of it. The Dane spoke in his turn; his two adversaries looked at him with pity, and the mandarin understood no more than before. The Dutchman met with the same fate. At last all three spoke at once, hurling gross insults at one another. The worthy mandarin had great difficulty calling them to order, and said, "If you wish your doctrine to be tolerated here, begin by being neither intolerant nor intolerable."

On leaving the audience, the Jesuit met a Dominican missionary. He told him that he had won his case, assuring him that truth always triumphed. The Dominican said, "Had I been there, you would not have won it. I would have proved you guilty of falsehood and idolatry." The quarrel grew heated; the Dominican and the Jesuit seized each other by the hair. Informed of the scandal, the mandarin sent them both to prison. A subordinate mandarin asked the judge, "How long does Your Excellency wish them to remain under arrest?" "Until they agree," said the judge. "Ah!" said the subordinate, "then they will

be in prison all their lives.” “Very well,” said the judge, “until they forgive each other.” “They will never forgive each other,” the other replied. “I know them.” “Well then,” said the mandarin, “until they pretend to forgive each other.”

Chapter XX



Is it useful to keep the people in superstition?

Such is the weakness of the human race, and such its perversity, that it is surely better for it to be subjected to every possible superstition, provided none is murderous, than to live without religion. Humanity has always needed a restraint; and although it was absurd to sacrifice to fauns, woodland gods, and naiads, it was far more reasonable and useful to worship these fanciful images of the Divinity than to surrender to atheism. An atheist given to argument, violent, and powerful would be as deadly a scourge as a bloodthirsty believer in superstition.

When people have no sound notions of the Divinity, false ideas take their place, just as in unhappy times people trade with bad money when they have none that is good. The pagan feared to commit a crime lest the false gods punish him. The inhabitant of Malabar fears punishment by his idol. Wherever an established society exists, religion is necessary: the laws watch over crimes committed, and religion over secret crimes.

But once people have come to embrace a pure and holy religion, superstition becomes not only useless but very dangerous. We should not seek to feed acorns to those whom God deigns to feed with bread.

Superstition is to religion what astrology is to astronomy: the very foolish daughter of a very wise mother. These two daughters long held the whole earth in subjection.

When, in our centuries of barbarism, scarcely two feudal lords had a New Testament in their homes, it might have been pardonable to offer fables to the vulgar—that is, to those feudal lords, their witless wives, and the brutes who were their vassals. They were made to believe that *St. Christopher* had carried the child Jesus from one bank of a river to the other; they were fed stories of sorcerers and the possessed. They readily imagined that *St. Genou* cured gout and *St. Clare* cured diseased eyes. Children believed in the werewolf, and their fathers in the cord of *St. Francis*. Relics were beyond counting.

The rust of so many superstitions lingered among the people for some time even after religion was at last purified. It is well known that when Monsieur *de Noailles*, bishop of Châlons, had the supposed relic of Jesus Christ's holy navel removed and thrown into the fire, the whole city of Châlons brought a lawsuit against him. But he had as much courage as piety, and he soon persuaded the people of Champagne that they could worship Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth without keeping his navel in a church.

Those called Jansenists contributed a great deal to gradually uprooting from the nation's mind most of the false ideas that dishonored the Christian religion. People ceased to believe that merely reciting the thirty-day prayer to the Virgin *Mary* was enough to obtain whatever they wanted and to sin with impunity.

At last the townspeople began to suspect that it was not *St. Geneviève* who sent or stopped the rain, but God himself who governed the elements. The monks were astonished that their saints no longer worked miracles; and if the authors of the life of *St. Francis Xavier* returned to this world, they would not dare write that this saint raised nine dead people, that he was at sea and on land at the same time, or that when his crucifix fell into the sea, a crab brought it back to him.

The same has happened with excommunications. Our historians tell us that when King *Robert* was excommunicated by Pope *Gregory V* for marrying Princess *Bertha*, linked to him by godparenthood, his servants threw the food served to the king out of the windows, and Queen *Bertha* gave birth to a goose

as punishment for this incestuous marriage. Today people doubt that the stewards of an excommunicated king of France would throw his dinner out of the window, or that the queen would bring a gosling into the world in such a case.

If there are a few convulsionaries in some corner of a suburb, theirs is a disease of lice that attacks only the lowest rabble. Every day reason makes its way into the shops of France's merchants as into the mansions of its nobles. We must therefore cultivate the fruits of that reason, all the more because it is impossible to prevent them from developing. After France has been enlightened by the *Pascals*, the *Nicoles*, the *Arnaulds*, the *Bossuets*, the *Descartes*, the *Gassendis*, the *Bayles*, the *Fontenelles*, and others, it cannot be governed as it was in the days of the *Garasses* and the *Menots*.

If the masters of error—I mean the great masters, so long paid and honored for brutalizing the human race—were now to order people to believe that grain must rot in order to sprout, that the earth stands motionless on its foundations and does not revolve around the sun, that the tides are not a natural effect of gravitation, that the rainbow is not formed by the refraction and reflection of rays of light, and so on; and if they based their decrees on misunderstood passages of Holy Scripture, how would all educated people regard them? Would the word *beasts* be too strong? And if these wise masters used force and persecution to impose their insolent ignorance, would the words *savage beasts* be misplaced?

The more the monks' superstitions are despised, the more bishops are respected and parish priests esteemed. They do nothing but good, while the monks' Rome-centered superstitions would do much harm. But of all superstitions, is not the most dangerous the hatred of one's neighbor for his opinions? And is it not clear that it would still be more reasonable to worship the holy navel, the holy foreskin, the Virgin *Mary's* milk and robe, than to detest and persecute one's brother?

Chapter XXI



Virtue is worth more than learning.

Fewer dogmas, fewer disputes; and fewer disputes, fewer calamities. If that is not true, I am wrong.

Religion was established to make us happy in this life and the next. What is needed to be happy in the life to come? To be just.

To be happy in this life, as far as the misery of our nature allows, what is needed? To be forbearing.

It would be the height of madness to claim to bring everyone to think alike about metaphysics. It would be far easier to conquer the entire world by force of arms than to conquer every mind in a single city.

Euclid easily succeeded in persuading everyone of the truths of geometry. Why? Because every one of them is an evident corollary of this little axiom: *Two and two make four*. Things are not quite the same in the mixture of metaphysics and theology.

When Bishop *Alexander* and the priest *Arios*, or *Arius*, began to dispute the manner in which the *Word* emanated from the Father, Emperor *Constantine* first wrote them these words, reported by *Eusebius* and *Socrates*: “*You are great fools to dispute things you cannot understand.*”

Had both sides been wise enough to agree that the emperor was right, the Christian world would not have been drenched in blood for three hundred years.

What, indeed, could be madder or more horrible than to tell people, “My friends, it is not enough to be loyal subjects, obedient children, loving fathers, fair-minded neighbors; to practice every virtue, cultivate friendship, shun ingratitude, and worship Jesus Christ in peace. You must also know how one is begotten from all eternity without being made from all eternity. And if you cannot distinguish *consubstantiality* within the hypostasis, we warn you that you will burn forever; meanwhile, we shall begin by cutting your throats”?

Had such a ruling been put before an *Archimedes*, a *Posidonius*, a *Varro*, a *Cato*, a *Cicero*, what would they have answered?

Constantine did not persist in his resolve to silence both sides. He could have summoned the leaders of this hairsplitting to his palace; he could have asked by what authority they were troubling the world: “Do you hold the divine family’s records? What does it matter to you whether the *Word* is made or begotten, provided people remain faithful to him, provided sound morality is preached and practiced if possible? I have committed many faults in my life, and so have you. You are ambitious, and so am I. The empire has cost me deceit and cruelty; I have murdered almost all my relatives, and I repent it. I wish to atone for my crimes by bringing peace to the Roman Empire. Do not prevent me from doing the one good deed that might consign my former barbarities to oblivion. Help me end my days in peace.” Perhaps he would have gained nothing from the disputants; perhaps it flattered him to preside over a council in a long red robe, his head laden with jewels.

Yet this was what opened the door to all those scourges that came from Asia to inundate the West. From every disputed verse sprang a fury armed with a sophism and a dagger, driving all humanity to madness and cruelty. The Huns, Heruli, Goths, and Vandals who came after did infinitely less harm; and the greatest harm they did was finally to enter into these fatal disputes themselves.

Chapter XXII



On universal tolerance.

No great art, no elaborate eloquence is needed to prove that Christians ought to tolerate one another. I go further: I tell you that we must regard all people as our brothers. What! The Turk my brother? The Chinese my brother? The Jew? The Siamese? Yes, certainly. Are we not all children of the same Father, creatures of the same God?

“But these peoples despise us; they call us idolaters!” Very well: I shall tell them they are quite wrong. It seems to me that I could at least shake the proud obstinacy of an imam or a Buddhist monk if I spoke to them somewhat as follows.

This little globe, which is no more than a point, rolls through space like so many other globes; we are lost in this immensity. A human being, about five feet tall, is surely a very small thing in creation. One of these imperceptible beings says to a few of his neighbors in Arabia or Kaffraria, “Listen to me, for the God of all these worlds has enlightened me. There are nine hundred million little ants like us on earth; but only my anthill is dear to God. All the others have been hateful to him from all eternity. Mine alone will be happy, and all the others eternally wretched.”

They would stop me then and ask what madman had uttered such nonsense. I would be obliged to answer, “You yourselves.” I would then try to soothe them, but that would be very difficult.

I shall now address Christians, and would venture to say, for example, to a Dominican inquisitor of the faith: “My brother, you know that every province of Italy has its own jargon, and that people do not speak in Venice and Bergamo as they do in Florence. The *Crusca* Academy has established the language; its dictionary is a rule from which one must not depart, and *Buon Matei*’s grammar is an infallible guide that must be followed. But do you believe that the academy’s consul, or *Buon Matei* in his absence, could in good conscience have had the tongues cut out of every Venetian and Bergamasque who persisted in speaking their dialect?”

The inquisitor answers me: “There is a great difference: the salvation of your soul is at stake here. It is for your own good that the Directory of the Inquisition orders that you be arrested on the testimony of a single person, even one disgraced and convicted of a crime; that you have no lawyer to defend you; that even your accuser’s name be kept from you; that the inquisitor promise you mercy and then condemn you; that he subject you to five different forms of torture; and that you then be whipped, sent to the galleys, or ceremonially burned.³⁶ Father *Ivonet*, Doctor *Chucalon*, *Zanchinus*, *Campegius*, *Royas*, *Felinus*, *Gomarus*, *Diabarus*, and *Gemelinus* are explicit on this point, and this pious practice admits no contradiction.”

I would take the liberty of replying, “My brother, perhaps you are right. I am convinced of the good you wish to do me; but could I not be saved without all that?”

It is true that these absurd horrors do not defile the face of the earth every day. But they have been frequent, and one could easily compile from them a volume much larger than the Gospels that condemn them. Not only is it very cruel to persecute, in this short life, those who do not think as we do; I wonder whether it is not also very presumptuous to pronounce their eternal damnation. It seems to me that momentary atoms such as ourselves have little right to anticipate the Creator’s judgments in this way. I am far from disputing the maxim *outside the Church there is no salvation*: I respect it, as I respect everything the Church teaches. But in truth, do we know all the ways of God and the full

extent of his mercies? May we not hope in him as well as fear him? Is it not enough to be faithful to the Church? Must every individual usurp the rights of the Divinity and decide, before God does, the eternal fate of all humanity?

When we wear mourning for a king of Sweden, Denmark, England, or Prussia, do we say that we are mourning a reprobate who burns eternally in hell? There are forty million inhabitants of Europe who do not belong to the Church of Rome. Shall we say to each of them, "Sir, since you are infallibly damned, I will neither eat nor enter into contracts nor converse with you"?

What French ambassador, when presented at an audience with the sultan, will say in his heart, "His Highness will infallibly burn for all eternity because he submitted to circumcision"? If he truly believed that the sultan was God's mortal enemy and the object of his vengeance, could he speak to him? Should he be sent to him? With whom could anyone have dealings? What duty of civil life could anyone ever fulfill, if truly convinced that he was conversing with the damned?

O followers of a merciful God! If your hearts were cruel; if, while worshipping him whose entire law lay in these words, *Love God and your neighbor*, you had burdened that pure and holy law with sophistry and incomprehensible disputes; if you had kindled discord, now over a new word, now over a single letter of the alphabet; if you had attached eternal punishments to the omission of a few words, a few ceremonies that other peoples could not know, I would say to you, shedding tears for the human race, "Come with me to the day when all people will be judged, and God will reward each according to his works.

"I see all the dead of past centuries and of our own appear before him. Are you quite certain that our Creator and Father will say to the wise and virtuous *Confucius*, to the lawgiver *Solon*, to *Pythagoras*, to *Zaleucus*, to *Socrates*, to *Plato*, to the divine *Antonines*, to good *Trajan*, to *Titus*, the delight of humankind, to *Epictetus*, to so many others who were models for humanity: 'Go, monsters! Go suffer punishments infinite in intensity and duration; let your torment be eternal as I am. And you, my beloved *Jean Châtel*, *Ravaillac*, *Damiens*, *Cartouche*, and the rest, who died with the prescribed formulas, share forever at my right hand my dominion and my bliss?'"

You recoil in horror at these words; and now that they have escaped me, I have nothing more to say to you.

³⁶ See the excellent book entitled *Le Manuel de l'Inquisition*.

Chapter XXIII



Prayer to God.

It is no longer to human beings, then, that I turn, but to you, God of all beings, all worlds, and all times—if weak creatures, lost in immensity and imperceptible to the rest of the universe, may dare to ask anything of you, who have given everything, whose decrees are as unchanging as they are eternal. Look with pity on the errors bound to our nature! Let these errors not become our calamities! You did not give us hearts to hate one another, or hands to cut one another's throats. Let us help one another bear the burden of a painful and fleeting life! Let the small differences between the garments covering our frail bodies, between all our inadequate languages, all our ridiculous customs, all our imperfect laws, all our senseless opinions, all our stations in life, so unequal in our eyes and so equal before you—let all these slight shades that distinguish the atoms called human beings not become signals of hatred and persecution! Let those who light candles at midday to honor you tolerate those content with the light of your sun! Let those who cover their robes with white linen to say that we must love you not detest those who say the same beneath a cloak of black wool! Let it be all the same whether we worship you in a jargon formed from an ancient language or in a newer jargon! Let those whose garments are dyed red or violet, who rule over a tiny portion of a little heap of this world's mud and possess a few rounded fragments of a certain metal, enjoy without pride what

they call greatness and wealth, and let others look upon them without envy! For you know that in these vanities there is nothing to envy, nothing to be proud of.

May all people remember that they are brothers! May they abhor the tyranny exercised over souls as they abominate the robbery that forcibly steals the fruits of labor and peaceful industry! If the scourges of war are inevitable, let us not hate one another, let us not tear one another apart in the midst of peace; and let us use the instant of our existence to bless alike, in a thousand different languages, from Siam to California, your goodness, which has given us that instant!

Chapter XXIV



Postscript.

While this work was being written, with the sole aim of making people more compassionate and gentle, another man was writing with precisely the opposite aim; for everyone has his opinion. This man was having a little code of persecution printed, entitled *l'Accord de la Religion & de l'Humanité*. (That is a printer's error: read *de l'Inhumanité*.)

The author of this holy libel relies on *St. Augustine*, who, after preaching gentleness, ended by preaching persecution, since he was then the stronger party and often changed his mind. He also cites *Bossuet*, bishop of Meaux, who persecuted the celebrated *Fénelon*, archbishop of Cambrai, guilty of having published the claim that God was well worth loving for his own sake.

Bossuet was eloquent, I admit; the bishop of Hippo, though sometimes inconsistent, was more articulate than other Africans, I admit that too. But I would take the liberty of saying to them, with *Armande* in *Femmes savantes*:

When you choose someone as your guide,
Resemble them upon their better side.

I would say to the bishop of Hippo, "My lord, you changed your mind; allow me to hold to your first opinion. In truth, I think it the better one."

I would say to the bishop of Meaux, “My lord, you are a great man. I find you at least as learned as *St. Augustine*, and far more eloquent. But why so torment your fellow bishop, who was as eloquent as you in another way, and more lovable?”

The author of the holy libel on inhumanity is neither a *Bossuet* nor an *Augustine*. He seems to me eminently suited to make an excellent inquisitor; I wish he were in Goa at the head of that fine tribunal. He is a statesman too, and parades great political principles. “*If there are many heterodox people among you,*” he says, “*handle them carefully and persuade them; if there are only a few, employ the gallows and the galleys, and you will find it most beneficial.*” That is his advice on pages 89 and 90.

Thank God, I am a good Catholic; I have nothing to fear from what the Huguenots call *martyrdom*. But if this man ever becomes prime minister, as he seems to flatter himself he will in his libel, I warn him that I shall leave for England the day he receives his letters patent.

Meanwhile, I can only thank Providence for allowing people of his sort always to reason badly. He goes so far as to cite *Bayle* among the supporters of intolerance: how sensible and clever! Because *Bayle* allows that seditious people and scoundrels must be punished, our man concludes that peaceable people of good faith must be persecuted with fire and sword, *page 98*.

Almost his entire book is an imitation of the Apology for the *St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre*. He is either that apologist or his echo. In either case, let us hope that neither master nor disciple will govern the state.

But should they become its masters, I submit this petition to them from a distance, concerning two lines on page 93 of the holy libel:

“Must the happiness of the entire nation be sacrificed to the happiness of one twentieth of the nation?”

Suppose that there really are twenty Roman Catholics in France for every Huguenot. I do not propose that the Huguenot should eat the twenty Catholics; but why should those twenty Catholics eat that Huguenot? And why prevent the Huguenot from marrying? Are there not bishops, abbots, and monks who own lands in Dauphiné, in Gévaudan, around Agde and

Carcassonne? Do these bishops, abbots, and monks not have tenant farmers who have the misfortune not to believe in transubstantiation? Is it not in the interest of the bishops, abbots, monks, and public that these farmers should have large families? Will only those who take communion in one kind be allowed to have children? In truth, that is neither just nor decent.

"The revocation of the Edict of Nantes did not cause as much harm as is attributed to it," the author says.

If more harm is indeed attributed to it than it caused, that is exaggeration; and exaggeration is the fault of almost all historians. But reducing the evil of which they are accused to nothing is also the fault of all religious controversialists. Let us believe neither the doctors of Paris nor the preachers of Amsterdam.

Let us take as judge the Count d'*Avaux*, ambassador to Holland from 1685 to 1688. He says, *page 181, tom. 5*, that a single man had offered to uncover more than twenty million that the persecuted were taking out of France. *Louis XIV* replies to Monsieur d'*Avaux*: *"The reports I receive every day of an infinite number of conversions no longer leave me in doubt that the most obstinate will follow the others' example."*

This letter of *Louis XIV* shows that he was entirely sincere in his belief in the extent of his power. Every morning he was told, "Sire, you are the greatest king in the universe; the whole universe will take pride in thinking as you do, as soon as you have spoken." *Péllisson*, who had grown rich as chief clerk of finance; *Péllisson*, who had spent three years in the Bastille as *Fouquet's* accomplice; *Péllisson*, who from a Calvinist had become a deacon and holder of a benefice, who had prayers for Mass and bouquets of verse to *Iris* printed, who had obtained the office administering the revenues of vacant benefices and that of converter—*Péllisson*, I say, brought a long list of abjurations every three months, at seven or eight écus apiece, and made his king believe that whenever he wished he could convert all the Turks at the same price. People took turns deceiving him: could he resist the seduction?

Yet the same Monsieur d'*Avaux* informs the king that a man named *Vincent* employs more than five hundred workers near Angoulême, and that his departure will cause harm, *page 194, tom. 5*.

The same Monsieur d'*Avaux* mentions two regiments that the Prince of Orange is already having raised by French refugee officers; he mentions sailors who deserted three ships to serve aboard the Prince of Orange's vessels. Besides these two regiments, the Prince of Orange is also forming a company of refugee cadets commanded by two captains, *page 240*. On May 9, 1686, this ambassador further writes to Monsieur de *Seignelay* that "*he cannot conceal from him the distress he feels at seeing France's manufacturing industries established in Holland, which they will never leave.*"

Add to all this testimony that of every intendant of the kingdom in 1698, and judge whether the revocation of the Edict of Nantes did not do more harm than good, despite the opinion of the respectable author of *l'Accord de la Religion & de l'inhumanité*.

A marshal of France, known for his superior intelligence, said a few years ago, "*I do not know whether the dragonnades were necessary, but it is necessary never to repeat them.*"

I admit that I thought I had gone a little too far when I published the letter from Father *Le Tellier's* correspondent, in which that member of a religious congregation proposes barrels of gunpowder. I said to myself, "People will not believe me; they will regard this letter as a forgery." Happily, my scruples were dispelled when I read these gentle words on page 149 of *l'Accord de la Religion & de l'Inhumanité*:

"The complete extinction of the Protestants in France would no more weaken France than bloodletting weakens a patient of sound constitution."

This compassionate Christian, who said just now that Protestants make up one twentieth of the nation, therefore wishes the blood of that twentieth part to be spilled, and regards this operation as no more than letting a small basin of blood! God preserve us from his three-twentieths levy!

If this worthy man proposes killing one twentieth of the nation, why should Father *Le Tellier's* friend not have proposed blowing up, slaughtering, and poisoning one third? It is therefore very likely that the letter to Father *Le Tellier* was actually written.

The holy author finally concludes that intolerance is an excellent thing, *because*, he says, *it was not expressly condemned by* Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ did not condemn those who would set fire to the four corners of Paris either. Is that a reason to canonize arsonists?

Thus, while nature makes her gentle, beneficent voice heard on one side, fanaticism, nature's enemy, shrieks its howls; and when peace presents itself to humanity, intolerance forges its weapons. O arbiters of nations, who have given peace to Europe, judge between the spirit of peace and the spirit of murder.

Chapter XXV



Continuation and conclusion.

We learn that on March 7, 1763, the entire Council of State having assembled at Versailles, with the ministers of state in attendance and the chancellor presiding, Monsieur *de Crosne*, master of requests, reported on the *Calas* case with a judge's impartiality, the precision of a thoroughly informed man, and the simple, truthful eloquence of an orator and statesman—the only eloquence suited to such an assembly. An immense crowd of people of every rank waited in the palace gallery for the council's decision. The king was soon informed that every vote, without a single exception, had ordered the Toulouse parlement to send the council the trial documents and the grounds for its judgment, which had caused *Jean Calas* to die on the wheel. His Majesty approved the council's ruling.

There is, then, humanity and justice among human beings! And above all in the council of a king who is loved and deserves to be. The case of an unfortunate family of obscure citizens has occupied His Majesty, his ministers, the chancellor, and the entire council, and has been examined as thoughtfully as the greatest matters of war and peace could be. Love of equity and concern for the human race have guided every judge. Thanks be given to that God of mercy who alone inspires equity and every virtue!

We attest that we have never known either the unfortunate *Calas*, whom the eight judges of Toulouse put to death on the flimsiest evidence, against the ordinances of our kings and the laws of every nation; or his son *Marc-Antoine*, whose strange death led those eight judges into error; or the mother, as worthy of respect as she is unfortunate; or her innocent daughters, who have traveled two hundred leagues with her to lay their calamity and their virtue at the foot of the throne.

God knows that we were moved only by a spirit of justice, truth, and peace when we wrote our thoughts on tolerance on the occasion of *Jean Calas*, whom the spirit of intolerance put to death.

We did not believe we were offending the eight judges of Toulouse by saying that they were mistaken, as the entire council has presumed. On the contrary, we opened a way for them to justify themselves before all Europe: to acknowledge that ambiguous evidence and the cries of a senseless multitude took their judgment by surprise; to ask the widow's forgiveness; and to repair, as far as they can, the complete ruin of an innocent family by joining those who help it in its affliction. They unjustly put the father to death; it falls to them to take a father's place toward his children, supposing these orphans are willing to receive from them a slight token of a most just repentance. It will be noble of the judges to offer it, and of the family to refuse.

Above all, it falls to *Monsieur David*, a capitoul of Toulouse, if he was the first persecutor of innocence, to set an example of remorse. He insulted a father dying on the scaffold. Such cruelty is unheard of; but since God forgives, human beings must also forgive those who repair their injustices.

This letter, dated February 20, 1763, was sent to me from Languedoc.

...

...

"Your work on tolerance seems to me full of humanity and truth; but I fear it may do the Calas family more harm than good. It may embitter the eight judges who voted for the wheel. They will ask the parlement to have your book burned; and the fanatics—for there are always some—will answer the voice of reason with cries of fury, and so on."

Here is my reply:

"The eight judges of Toulouse may have my book burned if it is good; nothing could be easier. The Provincial Letters, which were doubtless much better, were burned too. Everyone may burn in his own home the books and papers that displease him.

"My work can do neither good nor harm to the Calas family, whom I do not know. The king's council, impartial and firm, judges according to the laws, according to equity, on the documents and the proceedings—not on a piece of writing that is not a legal pleading, and whose substance is entirely foreign to the case before it.

"Folio volumes might be printed for or against the eight judges of Toulouse, and for or against tolerance, without either the council or any court regarding those books as documents in the case.

"I agree that there are fanatics who will shout, but I maintain that there are many wise readers who will reason.

"I learn that the Toulouse parlement and some other courts have a peculiar jurisprudence: they admit quarters, thirds, and sixths of a proof. Thus, with six pieces of hearsay on one side, three on the other, and four quarters of a presumption, they construct three complete proofs; and on this splendid demonstration they break a man on the wheel without mercy. A slight acquaintance with the art of reasoning would suffice to make them adopt another method. What is called a half-proof can only be a suspicion: strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a half-proof. Either something is proved or it is not; there is no middle ground.

"A hundred thousand suspicions combined can no more establish a proof than a hundred thousand zeros can make a number.

"There are quarter tones in music, though they cannot be performed; but there is no quarter of a truth or quarter of an argument.

"Two witnesses who stand by their testimony are held to constitute a proof; but that is not enough. Those two witnesses must be free of passion and prejudice, and above all what they say must not offend reason.

“Four of the most respectable persons might claim that they had seen an infirm old man seize a vigorous young man by the collar and throw him forty paces through a window: plainly, those four witnesses would have to be put in a madhouse.

“Yet the eight judges of Toulouse condemned Jean Calas on a far more improbable accusation, for there was no eyewitness who said he had seen an infirm old man of sixty-eight hang, single-handed, an extremely robust young man of twenty-eight.

“Some fanatics merely said that other fanatics had told them they had heard other fanatics say that Jean Calas, by supernatural strength, had hanged his son. An absurd judgment was therefore delivered on absurd accusations.

“There is no remedy for such jurisprudence except for those who buy the right to judge human beings to pursue better studies in the future.”

This work on tolerance is a petition that humanity most humbly submits to power and prudence. I am sowing a seed that may one day yield a harvest. Let us expect everything from time, from the king's goodness, from his ministers' wisdom, and from the spirit of reason that is beginning to shed its light everywhere.

Nature says to all people: “I brought you all into the world weak and ignorant, to vegetate for a few minutes upon the earth and fertilize it with your corpses. Since you are weak, help one another; since you are ignorant, enlighten and bear with one another. Even if you all held the same opinion—which certainly will never happen—and there were only one person of a contrary opinion, you ought to forgive him; for it is I who make him think as he does. I gave you arms to cultivate the earth and a small glimmer of reason to guide you. I placed a seed of compassion in your hearts to help you bear life together. Do not stifle that seed; do not corrupt it. Know that it is divine, and do not substitute the wretched frenzies of the schools for nature's voice.

“It is I alone who still unite you, despite yourselves, through your mutual needs, even in the midst of your cruel wars, so lightly undertaken, that eternal theater of mistakes, accidents, and misfortunes. It is I alone who, within a nation, check the fatal consequences of the endless division between the nobility and the judiciary, between those two bodies and the clergy, even between the

townsman and the farmer. None of them knows the bounds of his rights; yet despite themselves, in the end they all listen to my voice speaking to their hearts. I alone preserve equity in the courts, where without me everything would be left to indecision and caprice amid a confused mass of laws, often made at random and for a passing need, differing from province to province, from town to town, and almost always contradicting one another in the same place. I alone can inspire justice when the laws inspire only legal wrangling. Whoever listens to me always judges well; whoever seeks only to reconcile contradictory opinions is the one who goes astray.

“There is an immense building whose foundation I laid with my own hands. It was solid and simple; everyone could enter it safely. People wished to add the strangest, crudest, and most useless ornaments. The building is falling into ruin on every side; people seize its stones and throw them at one another’s heads. I cry to them, ‘Stop! Clear away these deadly ruins of your own making, and live with me in peace in the unshakable building that is mine.’”

Newly Added Article



Giving an account of the final judgment delivered in favor of the Calas family. From March 7, 1763, to the final judgment, another two years passed: so easy is it for fanaticism to take the life of the innocent, and so difficult for reason to obtain justice for them. Unavoidable delays, necessarily bound up with legal formalities, had to be endured. The less those formalities had been observed in condemning Calas, the more rigorously the Council of State had to observe them. An entire year was not enough to compel the Toulouse parlement to send the council the complete proceedings, to examine them, and to report on them. Monsieur de Crosne was again entrusted with this arduous task. An assembly of nearly eighty judges quashed the Toulouse judgment and ordered a complete review of the trial.

Other important matters then occupied almost all the kingdom's courts. The Jesuits were being expelled; their society was being abolished in France. They had been intolerant and persecutors³⁷; they were persecuted in their turn.

The absurd business of confession certificates, of which they were believed to be the secret authors and were publicly the supporters, had already revived the nation's hatred against them. The immense bankruptcy of one of their missionaries³⁸, a bankruptcy believed to be partly fraudulent, completed their ruin. Those two words alone, *missionaries* and *bankrupts*, so ill-suited to be joined together, brought a sentence of condemnation into every mind. Finally, the ruins of Port-Royal³⁹ and the bones of so many celebrated men, whom they

had insulted in their graves and who had been exhumed at the beginning of the century by orders dictated by the Jesuits alone, all rose against their expiring influence. The history of their proscription may be read in the excellent book entitled *Sur la Destruction des jésuites en France*⁴⁰, an impartial work because it is a philosopher's, written with Pascal's subtlety and eloquence, and above all with a superior enlightenment not obscured, as in Pascal, by prejudices that have sometimes beguiled great men.

This great affair, in which some supporters of the Jesuits said that religion was being outraged, while most believed it was being avenged, caused the public to lose sight of the Calas trial for several months. But once the king assigned the final judgment to the court called the *Requests of the Royal Household*, that same public, which likes to pass from one scene to another, forgot the Jesuits, and the Calas family claimed all its attention.

The chamber of the Requests of the Royal Household is a sovereign court composed of masters of requests, judging lawsuits between officers of the royal household and cases referred to it by the king. No court better informed about the case could have been chosen: these were precisely the same magistrates who had twice judged the preliminary proceedings for the review, and who knew both the substance and the procedure thoroughly. Jean Calas's widow, his son, and Monsieur de Lavoisier surrendered themselves to prison again. The elderly Catholic servant was brought from the depths of Languedoc: she had not left her masters and mistress for a moment during the time when, against all probability, they were supposed to have been strangling their son and brother. At last the court deliberated on the same documents that had served to condemn Jean Calas to the wheel and his son Pierre to banishment.

It was then that a new memorial by the eloquent Monsieur de Beaumont⁴¹ appeared, and another by young Monsieur de Lavoisier, so unjustly implicated in these criminal proceedings by the judges of Toulouse, who, to crown their contradictions, had not declared him acquitted. The young man himself wrote a statement of his case that everyone judged worthy to appear beside Monsieur de Beaumont's. He had the double advantage of speaking for himself and for a family whose chains he had shared. It had rested with him alone to break his

own chains and leave the prisons of Toulouse, had he been willing merely to say that he had left the Calas family for a moment at the time when the father and mother were alleged to have murdered their son. He had been threatened with execution; torture and death had been held before his eyes. One word could have restored his freedom: he preferred to expose himself to execution rather than utter that word, which would have been a lie. He set out all these details in his statement with a candor so noble, so simple, so free of any ostentation that he moved everyone whom he sought only to convince, and won admiration without aspiring to fame.

His father, a famous lawyer, had no part in this work: he suddenly found himself equaled by his son, who had never practiced at the bar.

Meanwhile, people of the highest standing flocked to Madame Calas's prison, where her daughters had confined themselves with her. Visitors were moved to tears. Humanity and generosity lavished help upon them. What is called *charity* gave them none. Charity, which moreover is so often petty and insulting, belongs to the devout, and the devout still held out against the Calas family.

The day arrived—March 9, 1765—when innocence triumphed completely. Monsieur de Baquencourt having reported on the entire proceedings and examined the case down to its slightest circumstances, every judge, with one unanimous voice, declared the family innocent and wrongfully and abusively judged by the Toulouse parlement. They restored the father's good name. They allowed the family to apply to the proper authority to bring proceedings against their judges and obtain the costs, damages, and compensation that the Toulouse magistrates should have offered of their own accord.

There was universal joy in Paris. People gathered in public squares and promenades; they hurried to see this family, so unfortunate and so fully vindicated; they applauded the judges as they passed and showered blessings upon them. What made the spectacle still more moving was that this day, the ninth of March, was the very day on which Calas had perished by the cruelest of executions three years before.

The masters of requests had rendered complete justice to the Calas family, and in doing so had merely done their duty. There is another duty, that of beneficence, more rarely fulfilled by courts, which seem to believe themselves established only to be equitable. The masters of requests resolved to write as a body to His Majesty, begging him to repair the family's ruin through his gifts. The letter was written. The king answered by having thirty-six thousand livres paid to the mother and children; and of those thirty-six thousand livres, three thousand went to the virtuous servant who had steadfastly defended the truth in defending her employers.

By this act of goodness, as by so many other deeds, the king deserved the name that the nation's love has given him⁴². May this example help inspire tolerance in humanity, without which fanaticism would lay waste the earth, or at least forever darken it! We know that only a single family is at issue here, and that the rage of sects has destroyed thousands. But today, when a shadow of peace allows all Christian societies to rest after centuries of slaughter, it is in this time of tranquility that the Calas family's misfortune must make a deeper impression, much like a thunderbolt falling in the serenity of a beautiful day. Such cases are rare, but they happen; and they are the effect of that dark superstition which leads weak souls to impute crimes to anyone who does not think as they do.

³⁷ Voyez page 96.

³⁸ Le Père La Valette; voyez tome XVI, page 100.

³⁹ Voyez tome XV, page 39 et suiv.

⁴⁰ Par d'Alembert, 1765, in-12; 1767, in-12; et dans les Œuvres de cet auteur.

⁴¹ *Mémoire à consulter et Consultation pour les enfants du défunt J. Calas, marchand à Toulouse*. Délibéré, à Paris, ce 22 janvier 1765. Signé: Lambon, Mallard, d'Outremont, Mariette, Gerbier, Legouvé, Loyseau de Mauléon, Élie de Beaumont.

⁴² Voyez tome XXIII, page 268.