



Treatise on Tolerance

VOLTAIRE

Plain English Translation

MOUSEIA



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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 death of Jean Calas.

A brief account of the death of Jean Calas.

The murder of *Calas*, committed in Toulouse by the sword of justice on March 9, 1762, is one of the most extraordinary events deserving the attention of our time and of future generations. We soon forget the crowds of dead who have perished in countless battles. This is not only because death is the unavoidable fate of war, but because those who die by force of arms could also have killed their enemies, and did not die without defending themselves. Where the danger and the advantage are equal, we stop being shocked, and even our pity grows weaker. But suppose an innocent father is handed over to error, passion, or fanaticism. Suppose the accused has nothing to defend him but his good character, and those who decide his fate risk nothing by killing him except being wrong. Suppose they can kill with impunity by issuing a judgment. Then the public cries out. Everyone fears for themselves. We see that no one's life is safe before a court established to protect the lives of citizens, and everyone joins in demanding retribution.

This strange case involved religion, suicide, and the killing of a family member. 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 stran-

gled his friend, and whether the judges had to blame themselves for having an innocent father broken on the wheel or for sparing a guilty mother, brother, and friend.

Jean Calas, aged sixty-eight, had worked as a merchant in Toulouse for more than forty years. 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 received a small allowance from his father. Calas seemed so far from the absurd fanaticism that breaks every bond of society that he approved of the conversion of his son *Louis Calas*. He had also kept a devoted Catholic servant in his house for thirty years, and she had brought up all his children.

One of *Jean Calas's* sons, named *Marc-Antoine*, was a man of letters. He was thought to have a restless, gloomy, and violent temperament. This young man could not succeed in business, for which he had no aptitude. Nor could he qualify as a lawyer, because he needed certificates proving he was Catholic, which he could not obtain. He decided to end his life and gave one of his friends some hint of his plan. He strengthened his resolve by reading everything ever written about suicide.

At last, one day, after losing his money gambling, he chose that very day to carry out his plan. A friend of his and of his family, named *Lavaisse*, had arrived¹ from Bordeaux the day before. He was nineteen, the son of a well-known Toulouse lawyer, and was known for his honesty and gentle manners. He happened to have supper with the *Calas* family. The father, the mother, their eldest son *Marc-Antoine*, and their second son *Pierre* ate together. After supper they went into a small sitting room. *Marc-Antoine* disappeared. Finally, when young *Lavaisse* was ready to leave, he and *Pierre Calas* went downstairs. There, near the shop, they found *Marc-Antoine* hanging from a door in his shirt, with his clothes folded on the counter. His shirt was not even disarranged. His hair was neatly combed. There was no wound or bruise on his body.²

I pass over all the details the lawyers have reported. I will not describe the parents' grief and despair. Their cries were heard by the neighbors. *Lavaisse* and *Pierre Calas*, beside themselves, ran to get surgeons and the legal authorities.

While they were doing this, and 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 fellow human beings who do not share their religion as monsters. It was in Toulouse that people solemnly thanked God for the death of *Henry III* and swore to cut the throat of the first person who spoke of recognizing the great and good *Henry IV* as king. Every year this city still marks, with a procession and bonfires, the day when 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 crowd shouted that *Jean Calas* had hanged his own son *Marc-Antoine*. The shout was repeated, and in a moment everyone was saying it. 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 no one doubted it. The whole city was convinced that Protestants believe a father and mother have a religious duty to murder their son as soon as he wants to convert.

Once people's minds are inflamed, they do not stop. People imagined that the Protestants of Languedoc had met the day before and chosen, by majority vote, an executioner from their sect. The choice had fallen on young *Lavaisse*. Within twenty-four hours, this young man had received news 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 city magistrate, of Toulouse, was stirred up by these rumors. Wanting to make a name for himself by acting quickly, he conducted proceedings in violation of the rules and ordinances. The *Calas* family, the Catholic servant, and *Lavaisse* were put in chains.

A church summons calling for testimony was published, as defective as the proceedings themselves. Things went further. *Marc-Antoine Calas* had died a Calvinist, and if he had killed himself, 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 desecration.

There are four brotherhoods of penitents in Languedoc: the white, the blue, the gray, and the black. The members wear a long hood with a cloth mask pierced with two holes to let them see. They tried to persuade the Duke of *Fitz-James*, commander of the province, to join 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 real martyr with greater pomp. But this pomp was terrifying. Above a magnificent funeral platform they had set up a skeleton that could be made to move. It represented *Marc-Antoine Calas*, holding a palm branch in one hand and, in the other, the pen with which he was supposed to sign his renunciation of heresy. In fact, it was writing his father's death sentence.

Now the unfortunate man who had killed himself lacked only canonization. All the people regarded him as a saint. Some called on him in prayer; others went to pray at his grave. Some asked him for miracles; others told stories of miracles he had performed. A monk pulled out some of his teeth to obtain lasting relics. A devout woman, who was somewhat deaf, said she had heard the bells ringing. A priest suffering from apoplexy recovered after taking an emetic. Official records were drawn up of these wonders. The writer of this account has a written statement that a young man in Toulouse went mad after praying for several nights at the new saint's tomb and failing to obtain the miracle he begged for.

Some of the magistrates belonged to the white penitents. From that moment, *Jean Calas's* death seemed certain.

What did most to prepare the way for his execution was the approaching date of that strange festival the people of Toulouse celebrate every year in memory of the massacre of four thousand Huguenots. The year 1762 was the two-hundredth anniversary. The city was making preparations for the ceremony, and

this further inflamed the people's already heated imaginations. People said publicly that the scaffold on which the *Calas* family would be broken on the wheel would be the festival's finest ornament. They said Providence itself was bringing these victims to be sacrificed to our holy religion. Twenty people heard these remarks, and still more violent ones. And this is happening in our own day! At a time when philosophy has made so much progress! When a hundred academies are writing to encourage gentler behavior! It seems that fanaticism, recently outraged by the successes of reason, is struggling beneath it with greater fury.

Thirteen judges met every day to conclude the trial. There was no evidence against the family, nor could there be any. But misguided religion took the place of evidence. Six judges long insisted on condemning *Jean Calas*, his son, and *Lavaisse* to the wheel, and *Jean Calas's* wife to the stake. The other seven, more moderate, wanted at least to investigate. Their debates were repeated and lengthy. One judge, convinced that the accused were innocent and the crime impossible, spoke forcefully in their favor. He opposed the zeal for severity with a zeal for humanity. In every house in Toulouse he became the public defender of the *Calas* family, while the constant cries of misled religion demanded these unfortunate people's blood. Another judge, known for his violent temper, spoke against the *Calas* family throughout the city with as much fury as the first showed eagerness to defend them. At last the scandal became so great that both were obliged to withdraw from the case. They retired to the country.

But through a strange misfortune, the judge favorable to the *Calas* family was scrupulous enough to maintain his withdrawal, while the other returned to vote against people he should not have been judging. His vote secured the sentence of death on the wheel. There were eight votes against five, since one of the six opposing judges had finally joined the harsher side after much argument.

When the charge is the killing of a family member, and a father is to be handed over to the most terrible torture, it seems the verdict should be unanimous. The evidence for such an unheard-of crime³ should be plainly obvious to everyone. In a case like this, the slightest doubt should be enough to make a judge tremble before signing a death sentence. Every day we feel the weakness of our

reason and the inadequacy of our laws. But when do their failings become clearer than when a single deciding vote sends a citizen to be broken on the wheel? In Athens, fifty votes beyond half the total were needed before anyone dared pronounce a death sentence. What follows from this? Something we know, to no practical purpose: 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 single-handedly have strangled and hanged a son of twenty-eight who was unusually strong. His wife, his son *Pierre Calas*, *Lavaise*, and the servant must all have helped him carry it out. They had not left one another for a single moment that fatal evening. But this supposition was just as absurd as the other. How could a devoted Catholic servant have allowed Huguenots to murder a young man she had brought up, to punish him for loving her own religion? How could *Lavaise* have come all the way from Bordeaux to strangle his friend, knowing nothing about his supposed conversion? How could a loving mother have laid hands on her son? How could they all have strangled a young man as strong as all of them together without a long and violent struggle, without terrible cries that would have brought the whole neighborhood, without repeated blows, bruises, or torn clothes?

It was obvious that if this family murder could have been committed, all the accused were equally guilty, because they had not left one another for a moment. It was obvious that they were not guilty. It was obvious that the father alone could not be guilty. Yet the judgment condemned this father alone to die on the wheel.

The reasoning behind the judgment was as incomprehensible as everything else. The judges determined to have *Jean Calas* executed persuaded the others that this weak old man could not withstand torture. Under the executioners' blows, he would confess his crime and that of his accomplices. They were confounded when, dying on the wheel, the old man called on God to witness his innocence and begged 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 court's judges pointed out that this judgment contradicted the other and condemned the judges themselves. All the accused had always been together at the time of the supposed murder. Releasing all the survivors therefore proved beyond dispute that the father they had executed was innocent. They then decided to banish his son *Pierre Calas*. This banishment seemed as inconsistent 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 were frightened by the father's execution and the moving piety with which he had died. They imagined they could save their honor by letting people believe they were showing mercy to the son—as though showing such mercy would not itself have been another abuse of office. They thought that banishing this young man, poor and without support, would have no consequences and was 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 unless he renounced his religion. This is what the young man⁴ states under oath.

As *Pierre Calas* was leaving the city, he met an abbé who sought converts and brought him back to Toulouse. He was shut up in a Dominican convent and forced to perform all the duties of a Catholic. This was part of what they wanted. It was the price of his father's blood, and the religion they thought they had avenged seemed satisfied.

The daughters were taken from their mother and shut up in a convent. This woman, almost drenched in her husband's blood, had held her eldest son dead in her arms. Now her other son was banished, her daughters were taken away, and she was stripped of all her property. She was alone in the world, without bread or hope, dying from the weight of her misery. Some people carefully examined every circumstance of this horrible affair. They were so appalled that they urged Madame *Calas*, who had withdrawn into seclusion, to dare to come and ask for justice at the foot of the throne. At that point she could scarcely

support herself; her life was fading. Besides, she was English by birth and had been brought to a French province as a young child. The very name of Paris frightened her. She imagined that the kingdom's capital must be even more barbarous than Toulouse. At last the duty of vindicating her husband's memory overcame her weakness. She arrived in Paris close to death. She was astonished to find a welcome, help, and tears.

In Paris, reason gets the better of fanaticism, however great it may be. In the provinces, by contrast, fanaticism almost always gets the better of reason.

Mr. *de Beaumont*, a celebrated lawyer of the Parlement of Paris, immediately took up her defense and drew up a legal opinion signed by fifteen lawyers. Mr. *Loiseau*, no less eloquent, wrote a statement of the case in the family's favor. Mr. *Mariette*, a lawyer at the Council, drew up a legal petition that convinced everyone who read it.

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

Pity reached even the ministry, despite the constant flood of business that often leaves no room for it, and despite the habit of seeing unfortunate people, which can harden the heart still more. The daughters were returned to their mother. All three were seen wearing black crape and bathed in tears, bringing tears to the eyes of their judges.

Yet this family still had some enemies, because religion was involved. Several people who in France are called *devout*⁶ said openly that it was much better to let an innocent old Calvinist be broken on the wheel than to expose eight judges of Languedoc to admitting they had been wrong. People even used this expression: "There are more magistrates than members of the *Calas* family." From this they concluded that the *Calas* family must be sacrificed to the honor of the judiciary. They did not consider that judges' honor, like everyone else's, consists in repairing their mistakes. In France we do not believe that the pope, assisted by his cardinals, is infallible. We might likewise believe that eight judges

in Toulouse are not infallible. All other sensible and disinterested people said that the Toulouse judgment would be overturned throughout Europe, even if particular considerations prevented its being overturned in the Council.

This was the state of this astonishing affair when it led some impartial but compassionate people to offer the public a few thoughts on tolerance, forbearance, and compassion. The Abbé *Houteville* calls compassion a *monstrous doctrine* in his inflated and factually mistaken tirade. Reason calls it a quality belonging to human nature.

Either the judges of Toulouse, carried away by the crowd's fanaticism, had an innocent father broken on the wheel—something without precedent—or this father and his wife strangled their eldest son, helped in this family murder by another son and a friend—something contrary to nature. In either case, the abuse of the holiest religion has produced a great crime. It is therefore in humanity's interest 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 on it was a small scratch on the tip of the nose and a small mark on the chest, caused by some carelessness while moving it.

³ I know of 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 bathroom. In his absence, *Barbe* had a third made 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 was deeply engraved in them. Her angry father ran after her, sword in hand, but she escaped through a mountain that opened up for her. Her father went around the mountain and caught his daughter. She was whipped naked, but God covered her with a white cloud. Finally her father cut off her head. This is what the Fleur des Saints reports.

The second example is Prince *Hermenegild*. He rebelled against his father the king, 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 religion. I state this before God, July 23, 1762.”

Pierre Calas.

- ⁵ Unauthorized 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 those who devoted themselves to saving the republic. They were men like *Curtius* and the *Decii*.

Chapter II



Consequences of Jean Calas's execution.

If the white penitents caused an innocent man's execution, a family's complete ruin and dispersal, and the disgrace that should attach only to injustice but in fact attaches to punishment; if their rush to celebrate as a saint a man whose body should have been dragged on a hurdle led to a good father being broken on the wheel, then this disaster should surely make them truly penitent for the rest of their lives. They and the judges must weep, but not in a long white robe with a mask over their faces that would hide their tears.

All the brotherhoods are respected. They set an example of piety. But however much good they may do the state, does it equal the terrible harm they have caused? They seem to have been established by the zeal that drives Catholics in Languedoc against those we call Huguenots. You would think people had vowed to hate their fellow human beings. We have enough religion to hate and persecute, but not enough to love and help. And what if these brotherhoods were run by religious fanatics, as some congregations of Artisans and *Gentlemen* once were? Among them, the habit of having visions was turned into an art and a system, as one of our most eloquent and learned magistrates puts it. What if the brotherhoods set up those dark rooms called meditation rooms? In them, devils with horns and claws were painted, along with pits of

flame, crosses, and daggers, with the holy name of Jesus above the picture. What a sight for eyes already under a spell, and for imaginations as inflamed as they were obedient to their spiritual directors!

There have been times, as we know only too well, when brotherhoods were dangerous. The Fraticelli and the Flagellants caused unrest. The League began with associations like these. Why set yourselves apart from other citizens in this way? Did you think it made you more perfect? That in itself insults the rest of the nation. Did you want all Christians to join the brotherhood? What a fine sight Europe would be in hoods and masks, with two little round holes in front of the eyes! Does anyone honestly think God prefers this outfit to an ordinary coat? There is more: this clothing is a uniform for religious disputants, warning their opponents to take up arms. It can stir up a kind of civil war in people's minds. That might end in terrible violence if the king and his ministers were not as wise as the fanatics are senseless.

We know well enough what Christian disputes about doctrine have cost. Blood has flowed on scaffolds and battlefields from the fourth century to our own day. Let us consider here only the wars and horrors stirred up by the quarrels over the Reformation, and see where they began in France. Perhaps a brief and accurate picture of so many disasters will open the eyes of some poorly informed people and move hearts capable of feeling.

Chapter III



An outline of the sixteenth-century Reformation.

When learning revived and people's minds began to become enlightened, there were widespread complaints about abuses. Everyone admits that these complaints were justified.

Pope *Alexander VI* had openly bought the papal crown, and his five illegitimate children shared its benefits. His son, the Cardinal Duke of *Borgia*, worked with his father the pope to kill the *Vitelli*, the *Urbino*, the *Gravina*, the *Oliveretto*, and a hundred other lords in order to seize their lands. *Julius II*, driven by the same spirit, excommunicated *Louis XII*, gave his kingdom to whoever could seize it first, and personally put part of Italy to fire and sword, wearing a helmet and breastplate. *Leo X* sold indulgences to pay for his pleasures, just as people sell goods in a public market. Those who protested against so much robbery were at least not wrong on moral grounds. Let us see whether they wronged us in political terms.

They said that Jesus Christ had never demanded the first year's income from church benefices or reserved church appointments for himself, nor sold dispensations for this world and indulgences for the next. People could therefore do without paying a foreign prince the price of all these things. Even if those first-year payments, lawsuits at the court of Rome, and the dispensations that still exist today cost us only five hundred thousand francs a year, it is clear that in the two hundred and fifty years since *Francis I* we have paid a hundred and

twenty million. Allowing for the changing value of the silver mark, that amounts to about two hundred and fifty million in today's money. So we can admit without blasphemy that the heretics did no great harm to the kingdom by proposing the abolition of these strange taxes, which will astonish future generations. In this they were good at arithmetic rather than bad subjects. Let us add that they alone knew Greek and were familiar with antiquity. Let us not hide the fact that, despite their errors, we owe them the development of the human mind, long buried in the deepest barbarism.

But they denied purgatory, which must not be doubted and which, besides, brought the monks a great deal of money. They did not revere relics, which must be revered and which brought in still more. Finally, they attacked highly respected doctrines.⁷ At first the only answer was to burn them. The king who protected and paid them in Germany led a procession in Paris, after which several of these unfortunate people were executed. This was 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. They were plunged into it and lifted out in turn. They experienced torture and death by degrees, until they died under the longest and most terrible punishment barbarism has ever invented.

Shortly before the death of *Francis I*, some members of the Parlement of Provence, stirred up by churchmen against the inhabitants of Mérindol and Cabrières, asked the king for troops to support the execution of nineteen people from that area whom they had condemned. They had six thousand people slaughtered, sparing neither women, old people, nor children. They burned thirty towns to ashes. These people, unknown until then, were undoubtedly wrong to have been born Waldensians: that was their only crime. For three hundred years they had lived in wildernesses and on mountains that they had made fertile through incredible labor. Their quiet pastoral life recalled the innocence attributed to the world's earliest ages. They knew the neighboring towns only through the trade in produce they took there to sell. They knew nothing of lawsuits or war. They did not defend themselves. They were slaughtered like fleeing animals killed inside an enclosure.⁸

After the death of *Francis I*—a prince better known, however, for his love affairs and misfortunes than for his cruelties—the execution of a thousand heretics, especially that of *Dubourg*, a judge of the Parlement, and finally the massacre of Vassy drove the persecuted to take up arms. Their sect had grown by the light of the burning stakes and under the executioners' blades. Rage replaced patience. They copied their enemies' cruelties. Nine civil wars filled France with slaughter. A peace more disastrous than war produced the *Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre*, which had no precedent in the records of crime. The League murdered *Henry III* and *Henry IV* through the hands of a Dominican friar and a monster who had once been a Feuillant friar. Some people claim that humanity, forbearance, and freedom of conscience are horrible things. But honestly, would they have produced comparable disasters?

- 7 They revived *Berengar's* view of the Eucharist. They denied that a body could be in a hundred thousand different places, even through God's almighty power. They denied that attributes could exist without a substance. They believed it absolutely impossible for what is bread and wine to the eyes, the taste, and the stomach to be annihilated at the very moment it exists. They maintained all these errors previously condemned in *Berengar*. They based their views on several passages from the early Church Fathers, especially *Saint Justin*, who says explicitly in his *Dialogue contre Typhon*: "The offering of fine flour is the symbol of the Eucharist, which Jesus Christ commands us to celebrate in memory of his Passion." "And the offering of fine flour, &c., was a symbol of the bread of the Eucharist, which our Lord Jesus Christ instructed us to make in remembrance of his Passion, &c."

They recalled everything said in the early centuries against the worship of relics. They quoted these words of *Vigilantius*: "Must you respect or even worship worthless dust? Do the souls of the martyrs still love their ashes? The customs of idolaters have entered the Church. People are beginning to light torches in broad daylight. During our lives we can pray for one another, but after death, what use are these prayers?"

But they did not say how strongly *Saint Jerome* had attacked these words of *Vigilanti*. In short, they wanted to bring everything back to the apostolic age. They would not admit that, as the Church had expanded and grown stronger, its discipline had necessarily needed to expand and grow stronger too. They condemned wealth, which nevertheless seemed necessary to maintain the majesty of worship.

- ⁸ The truthful and respected President *de Thou* speaks as follows of these innocent and unfortunate people: *"They were people who, about three hundred years earlier, had taken rough, uncultivated land from its lords in return for rent. Through tireless work and constant cultivation they had made it fertile in crops and fit for livestock. They were very patient in enduring labor and hunger, avoided lawsuits, were generous to the needy, and paid the prince's taxes and the lords' dues diligently and with the utmost honesty. They showed their worship of God through constant prayer and innocent conduct. But they seldom went to the churches of the saints, except when they happened to visit towns near their borders for trade or business. If they ever entered them, they did not bow down before statues of God and the saints, or place candles or offerings before them. They did not ask priests to celebrate services for themselves or the souls of their relatives. They did not mark their foreheads with the cross, as others customarily did. When the sky thundered, they did not sprinkle themselves with holy water, but raised their eyes to heaven and begged God's help. They did not travel on religious pilgrimages or uncover their heads before images of crosses along the roads. They celebrated their services with a different ritual and in the people's language. Finally, they paid no honor to the pope or bishops, but took 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, &c."*

Madame *de Cental*, who owned part of the devastated lands, where nothing could now be seen but the inhabitants' corpses, asked King *Henry II* for justice. He referred her to the Parlement of Paris. The advocate general of Provence, named *Guérin*, the chief author of the massacres, was the only one sentenced to

be beheaded. *De Thou* says that he alone suffered the punishment of the other guilty men, “*because he lacked the support of courtiers*”—because he had no friends at court.

Chapter IV



Whether tolerance is dangerous, and which peoples practice it.

Some have said that showing fatherly kindness to our misguided brothers, who pray to God in bad French, would put weapons in their hands. We would see new battles of Jarnac, Moncontour, Coutras, Dreux, Saint-Denis, &c. I do not know, because I am not a prophet. But it seems to me that it is not consistent reasoning to say: “These men rebelled when I treated them badly, so they will rebel when I treat them well.”

I would venture to invite those at the head of government, and those destined for high office, to consider carefully whether there is really reason to fear that kindness will produce the same rebellions that cruelty brought about. Must what happened in one set of circumstances happen in another? Are the times, opinions, and habits always the same?

The Huguenots were undoubtedly drunk with fanaticism and stained with blood, just as we were. But is the present generation as barbarous as their fathers? Have time, reason with its great advances, good books, and the gentler ways of society had no influence on those who guide these people’s thinking? And do we not see that almost all Europe has changed its appearance over the last fifty years or so?

Everywhere government has grown stronger while people’s behavior has become gentler. Moreover, the general system of public order, supported by large standing armies, leaves no reason to fear a return to those lawless times

when Calvinist peasants fought Catholic peasants, hastily formed into regiments between sowing and harvest.

Different times call for different 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, or because it declared that *Henry III* had lost his right to rule, 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 times of frenzy. That would not only be unjust. It would be as mad as giving purgatives to all the inhabitants of Marseille because they had the plague in 1720.

Shall we sack Rome, as *Charles V*'s troops 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 going to such extremes again?

The fury inspired by dogmatism and the abuse of a misunderstood Christian religion has shed as much blood and caused as many disasters in Germany, England, and even Holland as in France. Yet today religious differences cause no unrest in those states. Jews, Catholics, Greek Christians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Socinians, Mennonites, Moravians, and so many others live as brothers in those countries 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 lead to the grand pensionary being beheaded. In London there is no longer any fear that Presbyterian and Episcopalian quarrels over a liturgy and a surplice will spill a king's blood on a scaffold.¹⁰ Ireland, now populous and prosperous, will no longer see its Catholic citizens spend two months sacrificing its Protestant citizens to God: burying them alive; hanging mothers from gallows, tying daughters to their mothers' necks, and watching them die together; cutting open pregnant women, pulling out their half-formed children, and feeding them to pigs and dogs; putting daggers into the hands of bound prisoners and guiding their arms into the breasts of their wives, fathers, mothers, and daughters. They imagined they were making the prisoners mur-

der their own relatives and damning them all by exterminating them all. This is what *Rapin-Thoyras*, an officer in Ireland and almost a contemporary, reports. It is what all the annals and all the histories of England report, and surely it will never be repeated. Philosophy, philosophy alone, the sister of religion, has disarmed hands that superstition had so long stained with blood. The human mind, waking from its drunkenness, has been astonished at the extremes to which fanaticism carried it.

We ourselves have a wealthy province in France where Lutheranism predominates over Catholicism. The university of 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 all their hearts will be yours.

I am not saying that everyone outside the prince's religion should share the offices and honors of those who belong to the dominant religion. In England, Catholics, regarded as supporters of the Pretender, cannot hold public office. They even pay double taxes. Otherwise, however, they enjoy all the rights of citizens.

Some French bishops have been suspected of thinking it is neither to their honor nor in their interest to have Calvinists in their dioceses, and this has been called the greatest obstacle to tolerance. I cannot believe it. The body of bishops in France consists of people of high birth who think and act with a nobility worthy of their origins. They are charitable and generous; we owe them that recognition. They must realize that members of their dioceses who have fled abroad certainly will not convert there. If they returned to their pastors, they might be enlightened by their teaching and moved by their examples. Converting them would be an honor. The bishops' material interests would not suffer, and the more citizens there were, the more income the prelates' lands would yield.

A bishop of Warmia, in Poland, had an Anabaptist as his tenant farmer and a Socinian as his revenue collector. Someone proposed dismissing and prosecuting one because he did not believe in consubstantiality and the other because he

did not baptize his son until the age of fifteen. The bishop replied that they would be damned for all eternity in the next world, but in this one they were very necessary to him.

Let us step outside our little circle and examine the rest of the globe. The Ottoman sultan peacefully governs twenty peoples of different religions. Two hundred thousand Greek Christians live safely in Constantinople. The mufti himself appoints the Greek patriarch and presents him to the emperor. A Latin patriarch is also allowed there. The sultan appoints Latin bishops to some 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 empty ceremonies."* This empire is full of Jacobites, Nestorians, and Monothelites. There are Copts, Christians of *Saint John*, Jews, Guebres, and Banians. Turkish annals mention no rebellion stirred up by any of these religions.

Go to India, Persia, or Tartary. You will find the same tolerance and the same peace. *Peter the Great* encouraged every form of worship in his vast empire. Trade and farming benefited, and the state never suffered from it.

In the more than four thousand years for which it has been known, the government of China has never adopted anything but the worship of the *Noahides*, the simple adoration of one God. Yet it tolerates the superstitions of *Fo* and a multitude of Buddhist monks 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 generous-minded ruler China has ever had, expelled the Jesuits. But this was not because he was intolerant. On the contrary, it was because the Jesuits were intolerant. In their *Lettres curieuses*, they themselves report what this good prince said to 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 in the same way."* Read the whole speech he was good enough to give them, and you will find him the wisest and most merciful of men. Could he really have kept European natural scientists who, under the pretext of showing ther-

mometers and steam devices at court, had already stirred up a prince of the royal family? And what would this emperor have said if he had read our histories and known about the times of the League and the Gunpowder Plot?

It was enough for him to learn of the disgraceful quarrels among the Jesuits, Dominicans, Capuchins, and secular priests sent from the far side of the world into his states. They came to preach the truth and were cursing one another. So the emperor merely sent foreign troublemakers away. But how kindly he sent them away! What fatherly care he took over their journey and over preventing anyone from insulting them on the road! Even their 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 terrible as those of the League devastated the country. Christianity was finally drowned in floods of blood. The Japanese closed their empire to the rest of the world and regarded us only as wild beasts, like those the English had cleared from their island. The minister *Colbert* understood how much we needed the Japanese, who have no need of us, and tried in vain to establish trade with their empire. He found them unbending.

Our entire continent therefore proves that we should neither preach nor practice intolerance.

Look at the other hemisphere. Consider Carolina, whose lawgiver was the wise *Locke*. There, any head of a household with just seven people in his home can establish a religion of his choice, provided those seven people agree with him. This freedom has caused no disorder. God forbid that we should cite this example to encourage each household to make up its own form of worship. We mention it only to show that tolerance taken to the greatest possible extreme has not been followed by the slightest discord.

And what shall we say of those peaceful *Primitives*, mockingly called *Quakers*? Their customs may be ridiculous, but they have been so virtuous and have taught peace to the rest of humanity in vain. There are a hundred thousand of them in Pennsylvania. Discord and religious controversy are unknown in the

happy homeland they have made for themselves. The very name of their city, Philadelphia, constantly reminds them that human beings are brothers. It is an example and a reproach to peoples who still do not know tolerance.

In short, tolerance has never stirred up a civil war; intolerance has covered the earth with slaughter. Now let us judge between these two rivals: between the mother who wants her son killed and the mother who gives him up so long as he lives.

I am speaking here only of the interests of nations. While respecting theology, as I must, I consider in this section only society's physical and moral welfare. I ask every impartial reader to weigh these truths, correct them, and develop them further. Attentive readers who share their thoughts always go further than the author.¹³

⁹ *Franciscus Gomarus* was a Protestant theologian. Against his colleague *Arminius*, he maintained that God had destined most human beings from all eternity to be burned eternally. This infernal doctrine was supported, appropriately enough, 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 distressed the Church of God as much as possible*”.

¹⁰ A writer of tirades, speaking of England in the *Apologie de la Révocation de l'Edit de Nantes*, says: “*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 has chosen his moment badly to say the English are contemptible and despised by the whole earth. It seems to me that when a nation distinguishes itself by courage and generosity, and is victorious in all four parts of the world, a claim that it is contemptible and despised will not be well received. This strange passage appears in a chapter on intolerance. Those who preach intolerance deserve to write like this. This abominable book, which seems to have been written by the madman of *Verberies*, comes from a man with no pastoral commission—for what pastor would write like

this? The book carries rage so far as to justify the *Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre*. You might think a work full of such dreadful paradoxes would be in everyone's hands, if only for its strangeness. 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 hat manufacturing has collapsed in Caudebec and Neufchâtel because of the refugees' departure. Mr. *Foucaut*, intendant of Caen, says trade in the administrative district has fallen by half. Mr. *de Maupeou*, intendant of Poitiers, says the manufacture of drugget cloth has been destroyed. Mr. *de Bezons*, intendant of Bordeaux, complains that trade in Clérac and Nérac scarcely exists anymore. Mr. *de Miroménil*, intendant of Touraine, says that trade in Tours has declined by ten million a year. And all this is due to persecution. See the *Mémoires des Intendants*, 1698. Above all, count the army and naval officers and the sailors who were forced to go and serve against France, often with a disastrous advantage over it. Then see whether intolerance has done the state any harm. We do not presume here to offer plans to ministers whose ability and high principles are well known, and whose hearts are as noble as their birth. They will see well enough that rebuilding the navy calls for some forbearance toward the inhabitants of our coasts.

Chapter V



How tolerance can be allowed.

I venture to suppose that an enlightened and generous-minded minister, a humane and wise prelate, or a prince who knows that his interest lies in having many subjects and his glory in their happiness, is willing to look at this rough and imperfect piece of writing. He fills its gaps with his own understanding. He says to himself: “What would I risk by seeing the land cultivated and improved by more hardworking hands, tax revenues increased, and the state more prosperous?”

Germany would be a desert covered with the bones of Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anabaptists who slaughtered one another if the Peace of Westphalia had not finally 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 under control on roughly the same terms as Catholics are tolerated in London? The more sects there are, the less dangerous each one is. Having so many different sects weakens each one. All are restrained by just laws that forbid disorderly gatherings, insults, and rebellions, and that are always backed by the power to enforce them.

We know that several heads of families who have made great fortunes abroad 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 sta-

tus, the right to inherit from their fathers, and personal freedom. They ask for no public churches and no right to municipal offices or high positions. Catholics have none of those in London or in several other countries. It is no longer a question of granting vast privileges and fortified places of refuge to a faction. It is a question of letting a peaceful people live and softening decrees that may once have been necessary but are no longer so. It is not for us to tell the ministry what it can do. It is enough to appeal to it on behalf of unfortunate people.

There are so many ways to make them useful and prevent them from ever being dangerous! The wisdom of the ministry and the Council, backed by force, will easily find these methods, which so many other nations use so successfully.

There are still fanatics among the Calvinist rabble, but there are certainly more among the Convulsionary rabble. The lowest of the madmen of *Saint-Médard* count for nothing in the nation; those of the Calvinist prophets have disappeared. If any of these maniacs remain, the great means of reducing their number is to leave this mental disease to the treatment of reason, which enlightens human beings slowly but unfailingly. Reason is gentle and humane. It encourages forbearance, stifles discord, strengthens virtue, and makes obedience to the laws attractive, doing even more than force does to uphold them. And should we count as nothing the ridicule that all sensible, decent people now attach to religious frenzy? That ridicule is a powerful barrier against the wild behavior of every sect. Past times are as though they had never been. We must always start from where we are and from the stage nations have reached.

There was a time when people thought they had to issue judgments against those who taught any doctrine contrary to *Aristotle's* categories, nature's horror of a vacuum, the essential natures of things, or universals existing within things themselves. In Europe we have more than a hundred volumes of law on witchcraft and on how to distinguish false sorcerers from real ones. Excommunicating locusts and insects harmful to crops was once common 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 lunacies, once so important. Others recur from time to time, but when they have

run their course and people have had enough of them, they disappear. If someone today took it into his head to become a Carpocratian, Eutychian, Monothelite, Monophysite, Nestorian, Manichaeon, &c., what would happen? People would laugh at him as they would at a man wearing 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 in those ignorant times when people accepted the most absurd claims without examining them. They dared to condemn this proposition, which is universally true in all cases and at all times: “*Fear of an unjust excommunication must not prevent anyone from doing their duty.*” This was to condemn reason, the liberties of the Gallican Church, and the foundation of morality. It was to tell people: “God commands you never to do your duty whenever you fear injustice.” Common sense has never been defied more shamelessly. The advisers in Rome took no notice. The court of Rome was persuaded that this bull was necessary and that the nation wanted it. It was signed, sealed, and sent. We know what followed. Certainly, if the consequences had been foreseen, the bull would have been softened. The quarrels were fierce; the king’s wisdom and kindness have finally calmed them.

The same is true of many of the points that divide Protestants from us. Some are of no consequence. Others are more serious, but the fury of the dispute over them has died down so much that today the Protestants themselves do not preach religious controversy in any of their churches.

We can therefore seize this time of disgust and weariness—or rather, of reason—as a turning point and a guarantee of public peace. Religious controversy is an epidemic disease that is coming to an end. This plague has been cured and now requires only gentle treatment. In short, the state’s interest is for its sons living abroad to return modestly to their father’s house. Humanity demands it, reason advises it, and sound policy has nothing to fear from it.

Chapter VI



Whether intolerance is justified by natural law and human law.

Natural law is what nature points out to all human beings. You have brought up your child. He owes you respect as his father and gratitude as his benefactor. You have a right to the produce of land you have cultivated with your own hands. You have given and received a promise; it must be kept.

Human law can never be based on anything but this law of nature. The great principle, the universal principle of both, everywhere on earth, is: *“Do not do what you would not want done to you.”* Now, it is hard to see how, under this principle, one person could say to another: *“Believe what I believe, and what you cannot believe, or you will die.”* That is what people say in Portugal, Spain, and Goa. In some other countries today, they are content to say: *“Believe, or I will hate you. Believe, or I will do you all the harm I can. You monster, you do not have my religion, so you have no religion. Your neighbors, your city, and your province must regard you with horror.”*

If human law authorized such behavior, then the Japanese would have to detest the Chinese, who would loathe the Siamese. The Siamese would persecute the Gangarides, who would attack the inhabitants of the Indus. A Mogul would tear the heart out of the first person from Malabar he found. A person from Malabar could cut a Persian’s throat, and the Persian could massacre a Turk. All of them together would fall on the Christians, who have spent so long devouring one another.

The supposed right to intolerance is therefore absurd and barbarous. It is the right of tigers—and much more horrible, because tigers tear apart only to eat, while we have exterminated one another over paragraphs.

Chapter VII



Whether the Greeks knew intolerance.

All the peoples of whom history has given us some faint knowledge regarded their different religions as bonds joining them together. Religion was an association of the human race. There was a kind of right of hospitality among gods as among human beings. When a foreigner arrived in a city, he began by worshipping the local gods. People never failed to honor even their enemies' gods. The Trojans prayed to the gods who were fighting 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 people besieged a city, they offered sacrifices and prayers to that city's gods to win their favor. So even in the midst of war, religion brought people together and sometimes softened their fury, though at other times it commanded inhuman and horrible acts.

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 they seem to have treated people as they treated their gods. They all recognized a supreme God but associated a huge number of lesser divinities with him. They had only one form of public worship but allowed a host of individual systems of belief.

The Greeks, for example, religious as they were, accepted the Epicureans' denial of Providence and the existence of the soul. I will not discuss the other schools, all of which offended the sound ideas we should have of the Creator, and all of

which were tolerated.

Socrates, who came closest to knowing the Creator, is said to have paid the penalty for it and died a martyr for God. He is the only person the Greeks put to death for his opinions. If that really was the reason for his condemnation, it does intolerance no credit. They punished the one man who alone gave glory to God and honored everyone who presented the most unworthy ideas of the divine. In my view, the enemies of tolerance should not use the hateful example of *Socrates'* judges to support their case.

Besides, he was clearly the victim of a furious faction stirred up against him. He had made irreconcilable enemies of the sophists, orators, and poets who taught in the schools, and even of all the tutors who looked after children of high birth. He himself admits, in his speech reported by *Plato*, that he went from house to house proving to these tutors that they were nothing but ignoramus-es. Such behavior 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 the charges were. I find only vagueness in his defense. He is made to say in general terms that he was accused of instilling principles opposed to religion and government in young people. This is how slanderers act every day throughout the world. But a court needs established facts and precise, detailed charges. The trial of *Socrates* provides us with none of these. We know only that at first he had two hundred and twenty votes in his favor. So the court of five hundred 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, when they came to their senses, regarded his accusers and judges with horror; that *Meletus*, the chief author of this judgment, was condemned to death for this injustice; that the others were banished; and that a temple was built to *Socrates*. Philosophy was never so fully avenged or so greatly honored. At bottom, the example of *Socrates* is 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 forms of worship?

A decent man, who is no enemy of reason, literature, honesty, or his country, recently justified the *Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre* by citing the war of the Phocaeans, known as *the Sacred War*. He wrote as though that war had begun over worship, doctrine, or theological arguments. The question was who would own a field—the subject of all wars. Sheaves of wheat are not a symbol of belief. No Greek city ever fought over opinions. Besides, what does this modest and gentle man want? 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 began arguing with the priests of the empire, you do not find a single person persecuted for his beliefs. *Cicero* questioned everything; *Lucretius* denied everything. Neither received even the slightest criticism for it. Freedom went so far that *Pliny* the Naturalist begins his book by denying that there is a God, and saying that if there is one, it is the sun. Speaking of the underworld, *Cicero* says: “*No old woman is so senseless as to believe it*”: “There is not even an old woman foolish enough to believe in it.” *Juvenal* says: “*Not even children believe*”: “Children do not believe in it.” On the Roman stage people sang: “*After death nothing exists, and death itself is nothing*”: “There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing.” We should reject these ideas with horror and, at most, forgive them in a people whom the Gospels had not enlightened. They are false and irreligious. But we must conclude that the Romans were very tolerant, since these ideas never caused the slightest protest.

The great principle of the Roman Senate and 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 ruling people thought only of conquering, governing, and bringing orderly government to the world. They gave us our laws as

well as conquering us. And *Caesar*, who gave us chains, laws, and public games, never tried to force us to give up our Druids in his favor, even though he was the high priest of the nation that ruled us.

The Romans did not practice every religion or give every religion official approval, but they allowed them all. Under *Numa* they had no material objects of worship, no images, no statues. Soon they put up statues to the *major gods*, whom the Greeks introduced to them. The law of the Twelve Tables, "*Do not worship foreign gods*," came to mean only that public worship was reserved for higher or lower divinities approved by the Senate. *Isis* had a temple in Rome until *Tiberius* demolished it. This happened after its priests, bribed by *Mundus*, let him sleep in the temple with a woman named *Paulina*, pretending to be the god *Anubis*. It is true that *Josephus* is the only one who tells this story. He did not live at the time, and he was gullible and given to exaggeration. It seems unlikely that, in a time as enlightened as that of *Tiberius*, a woman of the highest rank would have been foolish enough to believe she was enjoying the favors of the god *Anubis*.

But whether this story is true or false, it is certain that Egyptian superstition had built a temple in Rome with public consent. Jews were trading there as early as the Punic War. They had synagogues there in the time of *Augustus*, and kept them almost continuously, as they have in modern Rome. Could there be a stronger example showing that the Romans regarded tolerance as the most sacred law governing relations between peoples?

We are told that as soon as Christians appeared, these same Romans, who persecuted no one, began persecuting them. It seems clear to me that this claim is quite false. I ask for no other evidence than *St. Paul* himself. Chap. 21. & 22. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that the Jews accused *St. Paul* of wanting to destroy the law of Moses 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 keep the law of Moses.*"

So *Paul*, a Christian, went to carry out 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 with Gentiles, they cried out that it had been defiled. He was seized and taken before the governor *Felix*, and later his case came before the court of *Festus*. A crowd of Jews demanded his death. Actes des Apôtres, Chap. 25. *Festus* answered: *"It is not the Roman custom to condemn a man before the accused has faced his accusers and been given the freedom to defend himself."*

These words are all the more striking from this Roman official because he seems to have had no regard for *St. Paul*, only contempt. Misled by the false light of his reason, he took Paul 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 mad."* In protecting an unknown man whom he could not respect, *Festus* was therefore following nothing but the fairness of Roman law.

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*, but the Jews. *St. James*, the brother of Jesus, was stoned on the orders of a Sadducee 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. Everyone knows the relentless hatred that members of a sect feel toward those who leave it. There were undoubtedly disturbances in the synagogues of Rome. In his Life of Claudius, *Suetonius* says: *"He expelled from Rome the Jews who were continually rioting at Christ's instigation."* He was mistaken in saying it was at Christ's instigation. He could not have known the details concerning a people as despised in Rome as the Jews were. But he was not mistaken about what gave rise to these quarrels. *Suetonius* wrote under *Hadrian*, in the second century. At that time the Romans did not distinguish Christians from Jews. This passage in *Suetonius* shows that, far from oppressing the first Christians, the Romans were then restraining the Jews who persecuted them. They wanted

Rome's synagogue to show its separated brothers the same tolerance that the Senate showed it. The expelled Jews soon returned. They even rose to public office, despite the laws that excluded them from it. *Dio Cassius* and *Ulpian* tell us this.¹⁵ Is it possible that after Jerusalem's destruction the emperors freely gave public honors to Jews, while persecuting Christians, whom they regarded as a Jewish sect, and handing them over to executioners and wild beasts?

"*Nero* persecuted them," we are told. *Tacitus* tells us that they were accused of setting Rome on fire and were handed over to the people's fury. Was their belief at issue in such an accusation? Certainly not. Should we say that the Chinese whom the Dutch slaughtered a few years ago in the suburbs of Batavia were sacrificed to religion? However eager people may be to deceive themselves, it is impossible to blame intolerance for the disaster that befell a few unfortunate half-Jews, half-Christians under *Nero*.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Jews no longer had the power to impose death sentences after *Archelaus* was exiled among the Allobroges and Judea was governed as a province of the empire. Even so, the Romans often looked the other way when the Jews carried out a judgment of zeal. That is, in a sudden riot they would stone, out of religious zeal, someone they believed had blasphemed.

¹⁵ Ulpianus l.... tit. II. "*They allowed those who follow the Jewish superstition to obtain public office, 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*. He spoke of Christians as people spoke of them in his own time. I would venture to say that, in *Tacitus's* style, the words "*convicted of hatred of the human race*" might just as well mean "*found to be hated by the human race*" as "*found to hate the human race.*"

What were these first missionaries actually doing in Rome? They were trying to win a few souls. They taught them the purest morality. They did not rise against any authority. Their hearts were extremely humble, like their social

standing and circumstances. They were barely known, barely separated from the other Jews. How could the human race, which knew nothing about them, hate them? And how could they be found guilty of hating the human race?

When London burned, Catholics were blamed. But that was after religious wars and 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 see through the darkness of history. *Tacitus* gives no reason for the suspicion that *Nero* himself wanted to burn Rome to ashes. There would have been much more reason to suspect *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 given *Charles II* an excuse. But *Nero* had no excuse, pretext, or interest in it. Such senseless rumors may circulate among the common people of any country. In our own day we have heard some just as foolish and unjust.

Tacitus, who understood the character of rulers so well, should also have understood the people's character. They are always full of themselves, always extreme in their violent, short-lived opinions, incapable of seeing anything, and capable of saying anything, believing anything, 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. Even when the distribution fell on a Sabbath, their share was held over for another day. This was probably in recognition of the money they had given the state. In every country they have bought tolerance, and very quickly recovered 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 unhealthy climate had killed them, it would have been a small loss, "*a loss of little value.*"

I will add that *Philo* regards *Tiberius* as a wise and just ruler. I readily believe that he was just only when justice agreed with his interests. But the good that *Philo* says of him makes me doubt, a little, the horrors that *Tacitus* and

Suetonius accuse him of. It does not seem likely to me that a sick old man of seventy retired to the island of Capri to indulge in elaborate forms of sexual excess barely possible in nature, and unknown even to Rome's most unrestrained young people. Neither *Tacitus* nor *Suetonius* had known this emperor. They enjoyed collecting popular rumors. *Octavian*, *Tiberius*, and their successors had been hated because they ruled a people who should have been free. Historians took pleasure in slandering them, and people took those historians at their word because memoirs, journals from the time, and documents were then lacking. So the historians cite no one. They could not be contradicted. They slandered anyone they wanted and settled posterity's judgment as they pleased. A sensible reader must judge how far to distrust historians' truthfulness; how much to believe public events attested by serious writers born in an enlightened nation; and what limits to put on belief in stories those same writers tell without any evidence.

Chapter IX



On martyrs.

There were Christian martyrs later on. It is very hard to know exactly 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 people with a particular form of worship have been hunted down and prosecuted when every other form was allowed?

Rulers such as *Titus*, *Trajan*, the *Antonines*, and *Decius* were not barbarians. Can we imagine that they would have denied Christians alone a freedom enjoyed by the whole world? Would anyone even have dared accuse them of having secret mysteries, when the mysteries of *Isis*, *Mithras*, and the goddess of Syria, all foreign to Roman worship, were allowed without objection? Persecution must have had other causes. Private hatred, backed by reasons of state, must have shed Christian blood.

For example, when *St. Lawrence* refuses to hand over to the prefect of Rome, *Cornelius Secularis*, the Christians' money in his keeping, it is natural that the prefect and the emperor should be angry. They did not know that *St. Lawrence* had distributed this money to the poor and had done a charitable and holy deed. They saw him as someone defying authority and put him to death.¹⁷

Consider the martyrdom of *St. Polyeuctus*. Was he condemned for his religion alone? He goes into the temple where thanks are being offered to the gods for the emperor *Decius's* victory. There he insults the priests and knocks down and

breaks the altars and statues. What country in the world would forgive such an attack? The Christian who publicly tore up the emperor *Diocletian's* edict, bringing the great persecution on his brothers during the last two years of that ruler's reign, had a zeal not guided by knowledge. It was deeply unfortunate that he caused his own community's disaster. This thoughtless zeal, which often broke out and which several Fathers of the Church themselves condemned, was probably the source of all the persecutions.

Of course I am not comparing the first Sacramentarians with the first Christians. I am not putting error on a level with truth. But *Farel*, *John Calvin's* predecessor, did the same thing in Arles that *St. Polyuctus* had done in Armenia. A statue of *St. Anthony* the Hermit was being carried through the streets in a procession. *Farel* and some of his followers attacked the monks carrying *St. Anthony*, beat them, scattered them, and threw *St. Anthony* into the river. He deserved death, which he escaped because he had time to flee. Suppose he had merely shouted at these monks that he did not believe a raven had brought half a loaf of bread to *St. Anthony* the Hermit, or that *St. Anthony* had talked with centaurs and satyrs. He would have deserved a severe 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, there would have been nothing to reproach him for.

What! The Romans would have allowed the infamous *Antinous* to be ranked among the lesser gods, yet torn apart and thrown to wild beasts everyone whose only offense was quietly worshiping a righteous man! What! They would have acknowledged a supreme God,¹⁸ a sovereign God, master of all the lesser gods, as the formula "*God, best and greatest*" attests, yet hunted down people who worshiped one God!

It is not believable that there was ever an Inquisition against Christians under the emperors—that is, that officials went to their homes to question them about their beliefs. No Jew, Syrian, Egyptian, bard, Druid, or philosopher was ever troubled on that point. The martyrs, then, were those who spoke out against the false gods. It was very wise and very religious not to believe in them.

But if Christians were not content to worship one God in spirit and in truth, and violently attacked the established religion, however absurd it might be, we have to admit that they themselves were intolerant.

In his Apology, *Tertullian* 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 officials' zeal. Chap. 35. He admits that Christians refused to decorate their doors with laurel branches during public celebrations of the emperors' victories. This blameworthy display could easily be taken as a crime against the sovereign.

The first legal severity against Christians was *Domitian's*. But it went no further than exile lasting less than a year. *Tertullian* says: "*He readily stopped what he had begun, recalling those he himself had banished.*" *Lactantius*, whose style is so heated, acknowledges that from *Domitian* to *Decius*—Chap. 3.—the Church was peaceful and flourishing. This long peace, he says, was broken when that detestable animal *Decius* oppressed the Church: "*After many years there appeared the detestable animal Decius to torment the Church.*"

I do not intend to discuss here the learned *Dodwell's* view that there were few martyrs. But if the Romans had persecuted the Christian religion so much, if the Senate had killed so many innocent people with unusual tortures, 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 those bishops, *St. Irenaeus* counts only *Telesphorus* as a martyr, in the year 139 of the common era. And there is no evidence 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 the old martyrologies list almost all the first popes. But the word *martyr* was then used only in its true sense: *martyrdom* meant *testimony*, not *execution*.

It is hard to reconcile this fury of persecution with the Christians' freedom to hold the fifty-six councils that Church writers count in the first three centuries. There were persecutions. But if they had been as violent as people say, *Tertullian*, who wrote so forcefully against the established religion, would probably not have died in his bed. We know very well that the emperors did not

read his Apology. An obscure work written in Africa does not reach the people responsible for 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, preaching 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 only at long intervals.*” “*Yet,*” he says, “*Christians leave nothing undone to get everyone to embrace their religion. They travel through cities, towns, and villages.*”

Certainly these continual journeys could easily have been labeled seditious by hostile priests. Yet these missions were tolerated, despite the Egyptian people, always unruly, rebellious, and cowardly. These were people who had torn a Roman apart for killing a cat, people contemptible in every age, whatever the admirers of the pyramids may say.¹⁹

Who was more likely to turn the priests and the government against him than *St. Gregory Thaumaturgus*, a disciple of *Origen*? During the night *Gregory* had seen an old man sent by God, accompanied by a woman shining with light. This woman was the Holy Virgin, and the 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. Rain forced him to spend the night there, and 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 would no longer give oracles. He called them. The devils came to tell him they would not come anymore. They explained that they could no longer live in the temple because *Gregory* had spent the night there and made signs of the cross. The priest had *Gregory* seized. *Gregory* answered him: “*I can drive demons out of wherever I want and make them go in wherever I please.*” “*Then make them go back into my temple,*” said the priest. So *Gregory* tore a small piece from a book he was holding and wrote these words on it:

"Gregory to Satan: I order you to go back into this temple." The note was placed on the altar. The demons obeyed and gave their oracles as usual that day. After that, as everyone knows, they stopped.

St. Gregory of Nyssa reports these events in his *Life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus*. The idol priests must certainly have been angry with *Gregory* and, in their blindness, denounced him to the authorities. Yet their greatest enemy suffered no persecution.

The history of *St. Cyprian* says that he was the first bishop of Carthage sentenced to death. *St. Cyprian's* martyrdom dates from the year 258 of our era. So for a very long time no bishop of Carthage was put to death 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 angry with him. *St. Cyprian* writes to *Cornelius*, bishop of Rome: *"There was recently a popular disturbance in Carthage, and twice people shouted that I should be thrown to the lions."* It is very likely that the violent outbursts of Carthage's savage people finally caused *Cyprian's* death. And certainly it was not the emperor *Gallus* who condemned him from so far away for his religion, since he left *Cornelius*, who lived right under his eyes, in peace.

So many hidden causes often combine with the apparent one, so many unknown forces help persecute someone, that in later centuries it is impossible to untangle the hidden source of even the most important people's misfortunes. It is all the more impossible to do so for the execution of a private individual who could have been known only to his own community.

Notice that *St. Gregory Thaumaturgus* and *St. Dionysius*, bishop of Alexandria, who were not executed, lived at the same time as *St. Cyprian*. Why were they left in peace, though they were at least as well known as this bishop of Carthage? And why was *St. Cyprian* handed over to execution? Is there not some reason to think that one fell victim to powerful personal enemies, slander, and the pretext of reasons of state, so often combined with religion, while the others had the good fortune to escape human malice?

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

St. Simeon, for example, was accused before *Shapur* of being a Roman spy. The account of his martyrdom says that King *Shapur* asked him to worship the sun. But we know that the Persians did not worship the sun. They regarded it as an emblem of the good principle, *Oromase*, or *Orosmade*, the creator God whom they acknowledged.

However tolerant we may be, we cannot help feeling some indignation at the ranters who accuse *Diocletian* of persecuting Christians from the moment he took the throne. Let us trust *Eusebius of Caesarea*. His testimony cannot be rejected. As *Constantine's* favorite and his writer of praise, and a fierce enemy of the previous emperors, he must be believed when he clears them. Here are his words: Hist. Ecclésiastiq. Liv. 8. "For a long time the emperors gave Christians great signs of goodwill. They entrusted provinces to them. Several Christians lived in the palace. The emperors even married Christian women. *Diocletian* took *Prisca* as his wife, and her daughter became the wife of *Maximian Galerius*, etc."

Let this decisive testimony teach people to stop slandering. Consider whether the persecution stirred up by *Galerius*, after nineteen years of a reign marked by mercy and benefits, must not have arisen from some intrigue unknown to us.

Consider how absurd the story of the Theban, or Thebaean, legion is, supposedly massacred to the last man for its religion. It is ridiculous to claim that this legion was brought from Asia by way of the Great St. Bernard Pass. It is impossible that it was summoned from Asia to put down a rebellion in Gaul a year after that rebellion had been suppressed. It is equally impossible that six thousand infantrymen and seven hundred cavalrymen were slaughtered in a pass where two hundred men could stop a whole army. The account of this sup-

posed butchery begins with an obvious falsehood: “*When the earth groaned under Diocletian’s tyranny, heaven was filling with martyrs.*” Yet this episode, as we have said, supposedly happened in 286, when *Diocletian* was most favorable to Christians and the Roman Empire was 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 slave born in Canopus.*” It would be as if they had had a Jewish legion. We have the names of the thirty-two legions that made up the Roman Empire’s main forces. The Theban legion certainly is not among them. Let us put this tale alongside the Sibyls’ acrostic verses predicting Jesus Christ’s miracles, and so many forged documents that false zeal poured out to exploit people’s willingness to believe.

- 17 We certainly respect everything the Church makes worthy of respect. We call on the holy martyrs. But while honoring *St. Lawrence*, may we not doubt that *St. Sixtus* told him, “*You will follow me in three days*”? May we not doubt that in this short interval the prefect of Rome sent to demand the Christians’ money from him; that the deacon *Lawrence* had time to gather all the city’s poor; that he walked ahead of the prefect to lead him to where these poor people were; that he was tried and tortured; that the prefect ordered a blacksmith to make a gridiron large enough to roast a man; that Rome’s highest official personally attended this strange execution; and that *St. Lawrence*, lying 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 hardly fits the Roman character. And how can it be that no pagan writer mentioned any of these events?
- 18 We need only open *Virgil* to see that the Romans acknowledged a supreme God, ruler of all heavenly beings.

*O you who govern the affairs of humans and gods
With eternal command, and terrify with your thunderbolt,
O Father, O eternal power over humans and gods, etc.*

Horace expresses it much more strongly:

*From whom nothing greater than himself is born,
And nothing lives that is his equal or his second.*

Nothing but the oneness of God was sung in the mysteries into which almost all Romans were initiated. See the beautiful hymn of *Orpheus*. Read the letter from *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, and beyond words*. *Lactantius* himself, who cannot be accused of being too lenient, admits in his Book V that *the Romans subject all the gods to the supreme God: "He makes them subject and subordinate to God."* Even *Tertullian*, in his *Apology*, admits that the whole empire acknowledged one God as master of the world, whose power and majesty are infinite: *"The ruler of the world, of perfect power and majesty."* Above all, open *Plato*, Cicero's teacher in philosophy. There you will see that *there is only one God, that we must worship him, love him, and work 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 claim needs proof. We must admit that ever since history replaced fable, the Egyptians appear only as a people as cowardly as they are superstitious. *Cambyzes* takes Egypt in a single battle. *Alexander* gives it laws without fighting a single battle, without any city daring to wait for a siege. The *Ptolemies* take it without a blow. *Caesar* and *Augustus* subdue it just as easily. *Omar* takes all Egypt in a single campaign. After *Omar*, the Mamluks, people from Colchis and the region around Mount Caucasus, become its masters. It is they, not the Egyptians, who defeat *St. Louis's* army and take that king prisoner. Finally, when the Mamluks have become Egyptians—that is, soft, cowardly, idle, and fickle, like the native inhabitants of that climate—they fall under the yoke of *Selim I* in three months. He hangs their sultan and leaves this province annexed to the Turkish Empire, until other barbarians take it one day.

Herodotus reports that in the age of fable an Egyptian king named *Sesostris* left his country with the definite intention of conquering the world. Obviously such a plan is worthy only of *Picrochole* or *Don Quixote*. Quite apart from the fact that the name *Sesostris* is not Egyptian, we can put this event, like all earlier ones, among the tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*. Nothing is more common among conquered peoples than to spread fables about their former greatness, just as in certain countries some wretched families claim descent from ancient rulers. The Egyptian priests told *Herodotus* that this king, whom he calls *Sesostris*, had gone off to conquer Colchis. That is like saying that a king of France left Touraine to conquer Norway.

These tales can be repeated in thousands upon thousands of books without becoming any more plausible. It is much more natural to suppose that the strong, fierce inhabitants of the Caucasus, the Colchians and the other Scythians, who came so often to ravage Asia, pushed as far as Egypt. And if the priests of Colchis later brought home the practice of circumcision, that does not prove that the Egyptians had conquered them. *Diodorus* of Sicily reports that all the kings defeated by *Sesostris* came every year from the depths of their kingdoms to bring him their tribute. He says that *Sesostris* used them as carriage horses, having them harnessed to his chariot to go to the temple. These *Gargantua* stories are faithfully copied every day. Those kings were certainly obliging to come so far to serve as horses in this way.

As for the pyramids and the other ancient monuments, they prove nothing but the pride and bad taste of Egypt's rulers, and the enslavement of a foolish people. They used their arms, their only possession, to satisfy their masters' crude taste for display. Even in the times people praise so highly, this people's government seems absurd and tyrannical. It is claimed that all the land belonged to their monarchs. Such slaves were just the people to conquer the world!

The Egyptian priests' profound learning is another of the most enormous absurdities of ancient history—that is, of fable. People who claimed that over eleven thousand years the sun had risen twice in the west and set twice in the east, restarting its course, were surely far below the author of the Liège Almanac. The religion of these priests, who governed the state, could not com-

pare with that of the most savage peoples of America. We know that they worshiped crocodiles, monkeys, cats, and onions. Perhaps in the whole world today only the worship of the great *Lama* is equally absurd.

Their arts are hardly better than their religion. There is not a single ancient Egyptian statue that is bearable. Everything good they had was made in Alexandria under the *Ptolemies* and the *Caesars*, by Greek artists. They needed a Greek to teach them geometry.

The famous *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 very eloquent piece of rhetoric, but a historian should be more of a philosopher than an orator. In any case, this reflection on the Egyptians is offered only as a conjecture. What other name can we give to anything said about antiquity?

²⁰ *St. Ignatius's* death is not being questioned. But read the account of his martyrdom: will a sensible person not feel some doubts arise? The unknown author of this account says that *Trajan thought something would be missing from his glory unless he brought the Christians' God under his rule*. What an idea! Was *Trajan* a man who wanted to triumph over the gods? When *Ignatius* appeared before the emperor, the ruler said to him: "*Who are you, unclean spirit?*" It is hardly likely that an emperor spoke to a prisoner and condemned him personally. That is not how sovereigns act. If *Trajan* had *Ignatius* brought before him, he did not ask, "*Who are you?*" He knew perfectly well. Could a man like *Trajan* have spoken the words "*unclean spirit*"? Can we not see that this is an exorcist's expression, put into an emperor's mouth by a Christian? 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, be put in chains, etc.*" A sophist hostile to Christians might call Jesus Christ "*the Crucified*." But it is hardly likely that this term would have been used in a legal sentence. Crucifixion was so

common among the Romans that legal language could not use “*the Crucified*” to identify the object of Christian worship. That is not how laws and emperors pronounce judgment.

Then *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*, then, had no intention of bringing their God under his rule. Or, if those Christians were suffering persecution, *Ignatius* was being extremely reckless in writing to them. He was exposing them, giving them away, making himself their informer.

It seems that those who drew up these acts should have paid more attention to plausibility and fitness. The martyrdom of *St. Polycarp* raises still more doubts. We are told that a voice called from heaven, “*Courage, Polycarp!*” Christians heard it, but the others heard nothing. We are told that when *Polycarp* had been tied to the stake and the wood was blazing, the flames drew away from him and formed an arch over his head; that a dove came out of it; that the saint, spared by the fire, gave off a fragrance of spices that filled the whole gathering; but that the man whom fire dared not approach could not withstand the edge of a sword. We must admit that people who find more piety than truth in these stories deserve to be forgiven.

Chapter X



The danger of false legends and persecution.

Falsehood has deceived people for far too long. It is time to recognize the few truths we can make out through the clouds of fables that cover Roman history from *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* onward, and that have almost always surrounded the records of other ancient nations.

How can anyone believe, for example, that the Romans, that serious, strict people from whom we received our laws, sentenced Christian virgins, girls of high birth, to prostitution? That is a very poor understanding of the stern dignity of our lawmakers, who punished the Vestal Virgins' lapses so severely. *Ruinart's Authentic Acts* report these shameful things. But should we believe *Ruinart's Acts* as we believe the Acts of the Apostles? Following *Bollandus*, these *Authentic Acts* say that in the city of Ancyra there were seven Christian virgins, each about seventy years old. The governor *Theodectes* condemned them to be handed over to the city's young men. But the virgins were spared, as one would expect. He then forced 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 let these holy women die, for fear they might give in to temptation. God answered him. The governor had them thrown into a lake with stones around their necks. They immediately appeared to *Theodotus* and begged him not to let "*their bodies be eaten by fish.*" Those were their very words.

The holy tavern keeper and his companions went by night to the edge of the lake, which soldiers were guarding. A heavenly torch led them all the way. When they reached the guards, a heavenly horseman in full armor chased the guards away, lance in hand. *St. Theodotus* recovered the virgins' bodies from the lake. He was taken before the governor, and the heavenly horseman did not prevent his head from being cut off. Let us keep repeating that we honor true martyrs, but that this story from *Bollandus* and *Ruinart* is hard to believe.

Must I tell the story of young *St. Romanus* here? *Eusebius* says he was thrown into the fire. Some Jews who were present mocked Jesus Christ for letting those who professed his faith burn, after God had brought *Shadrach*, *Mesbach*, and *Abednego* out of the fiery furnace. The Jews had barely spoken when *St. Romanus* came triumphantly out of the flames. The emperor ordered him pardoned and told the judge that he wanted no quarrel with God. Strange words for *Diocletian*! Despite the emperor's mercy, the judge ordered *St. Romanus's* tongue cut out. Though he had executioners, he had a doctor perform this operation. Young *Romanus*, who had stammered from birth, spoke fluently as soon as his tongue was cut out. The doctor was reprimanded. To show that the operation had been performed according to the rules of his profession, he took a passerby and cut off exactly as much of his tongue as he had cut from *St. Romanus's*. The passerby died on the spot: "for," the author learnedly adds, "*anatomy teaches us that a man cannot live without a tongue.*" Really, if *Eusebius* wrote such nonsense, if it was not added to his writings, how much trust can we put in his history?

We are given the martyrdom of *St. Felicity* and her seven children, supposedly sent to their deaths by the wise and religious *Antoninus*, without being told who wrote the account. It is very likely that some author, more zealous than truthful, wanted to imitate the story of the *Maccabees*. The account begins like this: "*St. Felicity was a Roman woman; she lived in the reign of Antoninus.*" These words make it clear that the author did not live at the same time as *St. Felicity*. He says that the praetor judged them from his tribunal on the Field of *Mars*. But the prefect of Rome held his court on the Capitol, not on the Field

of *Mars*. After being used for popular assemblies, the Field was then used for military reviews, races, and military games. That alone proves the account is fabricated.

It also says that after the judgment the emperor assigned different judges to carry out the sentence. That is completely contrary to the procedures of those times, and of all times.

There is also a *St. Hippolytus* who is supposedly dragged by horses, like *Hippolytus*, the son of *Theseus*. The ancient Romans never knew this form of execution. The similarity of the names alone led to the invention of this fable.

Notice, too, that in the accounts of martyrdoms, written entirely by Christians themselves, we almost always see crowds of Christians freely visiting the condemned person in prison, following him to his execution, collecting his blood, burying his body, and working miracles with his relics. If religion alone had been persecuted, would these openly Christian people not have been killed too? They were helping their condemned brothers and were accused of performing magic with the remains of martyred bodies. Would they not have been treated as we treated the Waldensians, Albigensians, Hussites, and the different Protestant sects? We slaughtered and burned them in crowds, without distinction of age or sex. Is there a single detail in the verified accounts of ancient persecutions that comes close to the *St. Bartholomew's Day* massacre or the massacres in Ireland? Is there a single one resembling the annual festival still celebrated in Toulouse? It is a cruel festival that should be abolished forever, in which an entire people thanks God in a procession and congratulates itself for having slaughtered four thousand of its fellow citizens two hundred years ago.

I say this with horror, but truthfully: it is we Christians who have been persecutors, executioners, murderers! And of whom? Our brothers. It is we who destroyed a hundred cities with a crucifix or Bible in our hands, who never stopped shedding blood and lighting fires for executions, from *Constantine's* reign to the frenzies of the cannibals who lived in the Cévennes. Thank heaven, those frenzies no longer exist today.

We still sometimes send poor people from Poitou, Vivarais, Valence, and Montauban to the gallows. Since 1745 we have hanged eight of those called preachers, or ministers of the Gospel. Their only crime was praying to God for the king in their local dialect and giving a drop of wine and a piece of leavened bread to a few foolish peasants. None of this is known in Paris, where pleasure is the only important thing and people know nothing about what happens in the provinces or abroad. These trials are over in an hour, more quickly than a deserter is tried. If the king knew about them, he would grant pardons.

Catholic priests are not treated like this in any Protestant country. There are more than a hundred Catholic priests in England and Ireland. They are known, and during the last war they were allowed to live very peacefully.

Will we always be the last to adopt other nations' sound views? They have reformed. When will we reform? It took sixty years to make us accept what *Newton* had demonstrated. We are only just beginning to dare to save our children's lives through inoculation. We have been practicing the true principles of agriculture for only a very short time. When will we begin practicing the true principles of humanity? And how can we have the nerve to reproach pagans for making martyrs when we have been guilty of the same cruelty in the same circumstances?

Let us grant that the Romans killed a great many Christians for their religion alone. In that case, the Romans were very much to blame. Would we want to commit the same injustice? While reproaching them for persecuting, would we want to be persecutors?

Suppose someone dishonest enough or fanatical enough said to me here: "Why are you laying out our errors and faults? Why destroy our false miracles and false legends? They nourish many people's religious devotion. Some errors are necessary. Do not tear a deep-rooted ulcer from the body if doing so would destroy the body itself." Here is what I would answer.

All these false miracles, by which you shake the faith owed to real ones, all these absurd legends you add to the truths of the Gospel, extinguish religion in people's hearts. Too many people who want to learn, but do not have time to learn enough, say: "The teachers of my religion have deceived me, so there is no reli-

gion. It is better to throw ourselves into the arms of nature than into the arms of error. I would rather depend on natural law than on human inventions.” Others have the misfortune to go further still. They see that deception has put a bridle on them, and they do not even want the bridle of truth. They lean toward atheism. People become depraved because others have been deceitful and cruel.

These are certainly the consequences of all pious frauds and superstitions. People usually 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*, said nothing but foolish things; 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 passing life in which we have so badly misunderstood him and committed so many crimes in his name, will be willing to comfort us for so many terrible misfortunes. For when we consider the religious wars, the forty papal schisms, almost all bloody, the frauds, almost all disastrous, and the irreconcilable hatreds kindled by different opinions—when we see all the evils false zeal has caused—human beings have long had their hell in this life.

Chapter XI



Abuses of intolerance.

But what! Is every citizen to be allowed to trust only his own reason and think whatever that reason, enlightened or mistaken, tells him? He must be allowed to,²¹ provided he does not disturb public order. Whether a person believes or does not believe is not within his control. But he can choose to respect his country's customs. And if you said it was a crime not to believe in the dominant religion, you would be accusing the first Christians, your own forefathers, and justifying those whom you accuse of sending them to their deaths.

You answer that there is a great difference: all religions are human works, while the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church alone is God's work. But honestly, because our religion is divine, must it rule through hatred, rage, exile, confiscation of property, prisons, torture, murder, and thanksgiving to God for those murders? The more divine the Christian religion is, the less it is for human beings 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! In short, would you use executioners to uphold the religion of a God whom executioners killed, and who preached only gentleness and patience?

Please consider the terrible consequences of a right to be intolerant. Suppose 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 latitude. What exception would exempt the highest peo-

ple in the state from the same penalties? Religion binds the monarch and beggars equally. Accordingly, more than fifty theologians or monks have asserted this monstrous horror: that it is permissible to depose and kill sovereigns who do not think like the dominant Church. The kingdom's sovereign law courts have never stopped condemning these abominable rulings by abominable theologians.²²

Henry the Great's blood was still steaming when the Parlement of Paris issued a ruling establishing the Crown's independence as a fundamental law. Cardinal *Du Perron*, who owed his cardinal's robes to *Henry the Great*, opposed the court's ruling at the Estates-General of 1614 and had it suppressed. All the journals of the time report the terms *Du Perron* used in his speeches: "*If a ruler became an Arian,*" he said, "*we would certainly be obliged to depose him.*"

Certainly not, Cardinal. Let us accept your imaginary case: one of our kings reads the history of the councils and the Fathers; he is also struck by the words "*my Father is greater than I*" and takes them too literally; he hesitates between the Council of Nicaea and that of Constantinople, and declares himself for *Eusebius of Nicomedia*. I would obey my king no less, and consider myself no less bound by the oath I had sworn to him. And if you dared rise against him, and I were one of your judges, I would declare you guilty of a crime against the sovereign.

Du Perron took the argument further; I am shortening it. This is not the place to examine these outrageous fantasies in depth. I will limit myself to saying, with all citizens, that obedience was owed to *Henry IV* not because he was crowned at Chartres, but because the unquestionable right of birth gave the Crown to this ruler, who deserved it through his courage and goodness.

Then let us be allowed to say that every citizen should inherit his father's property by the same right. There is no reason why he should deserve to lose it and be dragged to the gallows because he agrees with *Ratramnus* against *Paschasius Radbertus*, and with *Berengar* against *Scotus*.

We know that not all our doctrines 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

Church, that he proceeded from the Father alone. Finally it added to the Creed that he also proceeded from the Son. I ask whether, on the day after this decision, a citizen who kept to the previous day's creed would have deserved death. Would it be any less cruel and unjust to punish someone today for thinking 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 was established only recently. 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 behave in our endless disputes, it is surely from the Apostles and the Evangelists. There was enough to cause a violent split between *St. Paul* and *St. Peter*. In his Epistle to the Galatians, *Paul* expressly says that he opposed *Peter* to his face because *Peter* was at fault, because he was pretending, as was *Barnabas*. Before *James* arrived they had eaten with the Gentiles; afterward they quietly withdrew and separated themselves from the Gentiles for fear of offending the circumcised. "*I saw*," he adds, "*that they were not walking straight according to the Gospel. I said to Cephas: If you, a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, why do you force the Gentiles to live as Jews?*"

Here was a subject 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 in 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 this fundamental issue did not disturb the peace among either the Apostles or the first Christians.

If the Evangelists had been like modern writers, they would have had a very broad field for attacking one another. *St. Matthew* counts twenty-eight generations from *David* to Jesus. *St. Luke* counts forty-one, and these generations are completely different. Yet we see no disagreement arise among the disciples over these apparent contradictions, which several Fathers of the Church have recon-

ciled very well. Charity was not harmed; peace was preserved. What greater lesson could there be in tolerating one another in our disputes and being humble about everything we do not understand?

In his Epistle to some Jews in Rome who had converted to Christianity, *St. Paul* uses the whole end of Chapter III to say that faith alone brings glory and works justify no one. *St. James*, on the contrary, in Chapter II of his Epistle to the twelve tribes scattered throughout the earth, repeatedly says that we cannot be saved without works. This is what has separated two great religious communities among us, yet did not divide the Apostles.

If persecuting those with whom we argue were a holy act, we would have to admit that whoever had the most heretics killed would be the greatest saint in heaven. How would a man who had merely stripped his brothers of their property and plunged them into dungeons compare with a zealot who massacred hundreds on *St. Bartholomew's Day*? Here is the proof.

St. Peter's successor and his consistory cannot be wrong. They approved, celebrated, and consecrated the act of *St. Bartholomew's Day*. Therefore that act was very holy. Therefore, of two murderers equally devout, the one who disemboweled twenty-four pregnant Huguenot women must be raised to twice the heavenly glory of the one who 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, members of religious orders, and Catholic women they slaughtered. These are strange qualifications for 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 ruler excommunicated by the pope, in whatever country that ruler is found, because the universe belongs to the pope, and whoever accepts this mission does a very charitable deed.*" This proposition, invented in the mad-houses of hell, did more than anything else to turn all France against the Jesuits. More than ever, they were then reproached for this doctrine, which they had so often taught and so often disowned. They thought they could justify them-

selves by pointing to much the same rulings in *St. Thomas* and several Dominicans.[A] Indeed, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, the Angelic Doctor and interpreter of the divine will—those are his titles—asserts that an apostate ruler loses his right to the Crown and must no longer be obeyed;[B] that the Church can punish him with death; that the emperor *Julian* was tolerated only because Christians lacked the strength to do otherwise;[C] that by right every heretic should be killed;[D] that those who free the people from a ruler who governs tyrannically deserve great praise, etc., etc. The Angel of the Schools is greatly respected. But if, in the days of *Jacques Clément*, his fellow Dominican, and the Feuillant *Ravaillac*, he had come to France to defend 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 even further than *St. Thomas*, and that the Franciscan *Jean Petit* went infinitely further than *Gerson*. Several Franciscans defended *Jean Petit's* horrible theses. We must admit that this devilish doctrine of regicide comes entirely from the mad idea, long held by almost all monks, that the pope is a God on earth who can dispose of kings' thrones and lives as he pleases. In this we have fallen far below those Tatars who believe the great *Lama* is immortal. He distributes the contents of his commode to them; they dry these relics, put them in shrines, and devoutly kiss them. For my part, I admit that for the sake of peace I would rather wear such relics around my neck than believe that the pope has the slightest authority over kings' worldly affairs, or even mine, under any circumstances whatever.

Chapter XII



Was intolerance a matter of divine law in Judaism, and was it always put into practice?

I believe we call the commands God himself has given *divine law*. He wanted the Jews to eat a cooked lamb with lettuce, standing with a staff in their hands to commemorate the *Passover*. He ordered that the high priest be consecrated by putting blood on his right ear, right hand, and right foot. These customs seem strange to us, but they did not to the ancient world. He wanted the goat *Hazazel* to carry the people's sins. Deutér. Chap. 14. He forbade them to eat fish without scales, pigs, hares, hedgehogs, owls, griffons, ixions, and so on.

He established the festivals and ceremonies. To other nations, all these things seemed arbitrary, a matter of human law and custom. But because God himself commanded them, they became divine law for the Jews, just as everything Jesus Christ, son of *Mary* and son of God, commanded us is divine law for us.

Let us not ask here why God replaced the law he had given *Moses* with a new one, or why he required more of *Moses* than of the patriarch *Abraham*, and more of *Abraham* than of *Noah*.²³ He seems willing to adapt his demands to the times and to the size of the human population. These are the gradual steps of a father. But these depths are too great for our weak sight. Let us stay within our subject and first see what intolerance was like 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 harsh laws about worship, and still harsher punishments. Many commentators find it hard to reconcile *Moses* accounts with passages in *Jeremiah* and *Amos*, and with the famous speech of *St. Stephen* recorded in Acts of the Apostles. *Amos* says the Jews always worshiped *Moloch*, *Remphan*, and *Kium* in the wilderness. *Jeremiah* expressly says that God asked their fathers for no sacrifices when they left Egypt. In his speech to the Jews, *St. Stephen* puts it this way: "They worshiped the army of heaven. They offered neither sacrifices nor sacrificial victims in the wilderness for forty years. 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 these gods. As proof they quote these words from Deuteronomy: Deuté. Chap. 12, v. 8. *When you are in the land of Canaan, you will not do as we do today, when everyone does what seems right to him.*²⁴

They support their view by pointing out that no religious act by the people in the wilderness is mentioned. No Passover was celebrated, no Pentecost. There is no mention of a celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, and no public prayer was established. Finally, circumcision, the seal of God's covenant with *Abraham*, was not practiced.

They also rely on the story of *Joshua*. Josué, Ch. 14. v. 15 & suiv. This conqueror tells the Jews: "You have a choice. Choose whichever course you please: to worship the gods you served in the land of the Amorites, or those you acknowledged in Mesopotamia." The people answer: "That will not be our course. We will serve *Adonai*." *Joshua* replied: "You have made your own choice. Now remove the foreign gods from among you." So under *Moses* they had unquestionably had other gods besides *Adonai*.

There is no point here in refuting the critics who think *Moses* did not write the Pentateuch. Everything on that subject was said long ago. 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 seems enough to me that Holy Scripture proves that, despite the extraordinary punishment the Jews brought on themselves by worshiping *Apis*, they retained complete freedom for a long time. Perhaps even the slaughter of twenty-three thousand men that *Moses* carried out over the calf his brother had set up taught him that severity achieved nothing, and forced him to overlook the people's passion for foreign gods.

He himself, Nomb. Chap. 21, v. 9. seems soon to break the law he has given. He has forbidden every image, yet he sets up a bronze serpent. The same exception to the law appears later in *Solomon's* temple. This prince has twelve oxen carved to support the temple's great basin. Cherubim are placed in the Ark; they have an eagle's head and a calf's head. Apparently it was this badly made calf's head, found in the temple by Roman soldiers, that led people to believe for so long that the Jews worshiped a donkey.

The ban on worshiping foreign gods achieves nothing: *Solomon* practices idolatry undisturbed. *Jeroboam*, to whom God gave ten shares of the kingdom, has two golden calves set up and reigns for twenty-two years, combining 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*, Liv. IV. des Rois, Chap. 16. sets up an altar belonging to the king of Syria in the temple, replacing the altar of burnt offerings. In short, there is no sign of religious coercion. I know that most of the Jewish kings destroyed and murdered one another. But they always did so 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. some brought heaven into their acts of revenge. *Elijah* brought fire down from heaven to consume the priest of *Baal*. *Elisha* brought bears to eat forty-two small children who had called him *bald-head*. But these are rare miracles, and acts it would be rather cruel to try to imitate.

Another objection is raised, Nomb. Chap. 31. that the Jewish people were very ignorant and very barbarous. We are told that in their war against the Midianites,²⁵ *Moses* ordered them to kill all the male children and all the moth-

ers, and divide the spoils. In the camp the victors found 675,000 sheep, 72,000 oxen, 61,000 donkeys, and 32,000 girls. They divided these up 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*.

In fact, the Jews sacrificed human beings to God. The sacrifice of *Jephthah*²⁶ is evidence of this, as is King *Agag*,²⁷ cut to pieces by the priest *Samuel*. To encourage them, even *Ezekiel*, Ezéch. Chap. 39, v. 18. promises that they will eat human flesh. "*You will eat*," he says, "*the horse and the rider; you will drink the blood of princes*." In this people's whole history there is not one act of generosity, greatness of spirit, or kindness. Yet rays of universal tolerance keep breaking through the cloud of this long and dreadful barbarism.

Jephthah, Juges, Chap. 11, v. 24. who was inspired by God and sacrificed his daughter to him, says to the Ammonites: "*Does what your god Chemosh has given you not belong to you by right? Then let us take the land our God has promised us*." This declaration is explicit. It can have far-reaching implications. At the very least, it is clear proof that God tolerated *Chemosh*. For Holy Scripture does not say: "You think you have a right to the lands you say the god *Chemosh* gave you." It says outright: "You have a right to them"—*They are owed to you by right*. This 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 undeniable proof that the Jews allowed tolerance and the greatest freedom. *Micah's* mother, a very rich woman from Ephraim, had lost eleven hundred pieces of silver. Her son returned them. She dedicated this money to the Lord and had idols made from it. She built a small chapel. A Levite served it for ten pieces of silver, a tunic, and a cloak a year, together with his food. *Micah* exclaimed: Chap. 17 v. dernier. "*Now God will do me good, since I have a priest of the line of Levi in my house*."

Meanwhile, six hundred men of the tribe of *Dan* were looking to take some village in the country and settle there. They had no Levite priest with them, but needed one to secure God's favor for their undertaking. So they went to *Micah's* house and took his ephod, idols, and Levite, despite the priest's objec-

tions 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* to commemorate their victory, and placed *Micah's* idol on an altar. More remarkably still, *Jonathan*, the grandson of *Moses*, was the high priest of this temple, where they worshiped both the God of Israel and *Micah's* idol.

After *Gideon's* death, the Hebrews worshiped *Baal-berith* for nearly twenty years and gave up worshiping *Adonai*. No leader, judge, or priest called for vengeance. Their crime was great, I admit. But if even this idolatry was tolerated, how much more must differences within true worship have been tolerated? Some offer the following as proof of intolerance. The Lord himself allowed the Philistines to capture his Ark in battle. He punished them only by striking them with a disease of the private parts resembling hemorrhoids, knocking down the statue of *Dagon*, and sending a mass of rats into their fields. But to calm his anger, the Philistines sent the Ark back, drawn by two cows nursing their calves, and offered God five golden rats and five golden anuses. The Lord then killed seventy elders of Israel and fifty thousand of the people for looking at the Ark. The answer is that the Lord's punishment did not fall on a belief, a difference in worship, or any form of idolatry.

If the Lord had wanted to punish idolatry, he would have killed all the Philistines who dared to capture his Ark and who worshiped *Dagon*. Instead, he killed fifty thousand and seventy of his own people simply because they had looked at his Ark when they were not supposed to. So different are the laws and customs of that time, and the whole Jewish order, from everything we know. So far above our ways are God's unfathomable ways. "*The severity shown*," says the sensible Dom Calmet, "*toward this great number of men will seem excessive only to those who have not understood how much God wanted his people to fear and respect him, and who judge God's intentions and plans only by the weak light of their own reason.*"

God therefore does not punish a foreign form of worship, but the desecration of his own: improper curiosity, disobedience, perhaps even a rebellious spirit. It is clear that in the Jewish theocracy, such punishments belong to God alone.

We cannot repeat too often that those times and customs have nothing in common with ours.

Finally, in later centuries, when *Naaman* the idolater asked *Elisha*, Liv. IV. des Rois, Chap. 20, v. 25. whether he was allowed to accompany his king into the temple of Remnon and *worship there with him*, did not this same *Elisha*, who had had children eaten by bears, answer him: “*Go in peace*”?

There is much more. The Lord orders *Jeremiah* to put ropes, collars,²⁸ and yokes around his neck and to send them to the petty kings, or Melchims, of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Tyre, and Sidon. *Jeremiah* gives them this message from the Lord: 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 *Zedekiah*, the Jewish Melk, or petty king, had thrown into a dungeon, obtained *Zedekiah*’s pardon and advised him on God’s behalf, Jérém. Chap. 18, v. 19. to surrender to the king of Babylon. “*If you go and surrender to his officers,*” he says, “*your soul will live.*” So God finally takes the side of an idolatrous king. He hands over to him the Ark, the mere sight of which had cost fifty thousand and seventy Jews their lives. He hands over the Holy of Holies and the rest of the temple, whose construction had cost one hundred eight thousand talents of gold, one million seventeen thousand talents of silver, and ten thousand gold drachmas, left by *David* and his officers to build the house of the Lord. Without counting the money *Solomon* spent, this comes to about nineteen billion sixty-two million at today’s rate. Never was idolatry better rewarded. I know this account is exaggerated and that there is probably a copying 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 name of his servant, given to *Nebuchadnezzar*, is the true priceless treasure.

God, Isaïe, Chap. 44 & 45. shows no less favor to *Kir*, or *Koresh*, or *Kosroes*, whom we call *Cyrus*. He calls him *his Christ*, *his Anointed*, although he was not anointed in the usual sense of that word and followed the religion of *Zoroaster*.

He calls him his *Shepherd*, although in human eyes he was a usurper. There is no greater sign of special favor anywhere in Holy Scripture.

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

- 23 Since we intend to add a few useful notes to this work, we will point out 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*. He excludes only blood, which he does not allow people to consume. God adds that *he will take vengeance on every animal that has shed human blood*.

From these passages and several others we can infer what the whole ancient world believed, what has been believed down to our own day, and what all sensible people think: animals have some understanding. God does not make a covenant with trees and stones, which have no feeling. He makes one with animals, to which he has chosen to give feeling often more keen than ours, and some ideas necessarily linked to that feeling. That is why he does not want us to be so barbarous as to feed on their blood. Blood really is the source of life, and therefore of feeling. Drain an animal of all its blood, and every organ stops working. Scripture is therefore quite right to say in a hundred places that the soul—that is, what was called the sensitive soul—is in the blood. This very natural idea has been shared by all peoples.

This idea is the basis of the compassion we owe animals. Of the seven precepts of the *Noahides* accepted among the Jews, one forbids eating a limb from a living animal. This precept proves that people had been cruel enough to mutilate animals to eat their severed limbs, leaving the animals alive so they could feed on their bodies piece by piece. This custom did in fact survive among some barbarous peoples, as we see from the sacrifices on the island of Chios to *Bacchus Omadios*, the eater of raw flesh. So, while allowing us to use animals for food,

God recommends that we treat them with some humanity. We must admit that it is barbarous to make them suffer. Certainly only habit can lessen our natural horror at cutting the throat of an animal we have fed with our own hands. There have always been peoples who felt very strong objections to this. Those objections still endure on the Indian peninsula. The whole school of *Pythagoras*, in Italy and Greece, consistently abstained from eating flesh. In his book on abstinence, *Porphyry* reproaches his disciple for leaving his school only to indulge his barbarous appetite.

It seems to me that anyone who dares to claim that animals are only machines must have abandoned the natural light of reason. It is an obvious contradiction to admit that God has given animals all the organs of feeling and then maintain that he has given them no feeling.

It also seems to me that anyone who cannot distinguish their different cries of need, pain, joy, fear, love, anger, and all their emotions can never have observed animals. It would be very strange if they expressed so well things they did not feel.

This observation can give thoughtful minds much to consider about the power and goodness of the Creator. He chooses to grant life, feeling, ideas, and memory to the beings his own almighty hand has made. We do not know how these organs were formed, how they develop, how life is received, or by what laws feelings, ideas, memory, and will are linked to that life. In this deep and permanent ignorance, which is part of our nature, we argue endlessly 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 about the golden calf—which is simply the god *Apis*—was added to the books of *Moses*, along with several other chapters.

Ibn Ezra was the first to believe he could prove that the Pentateuch was compiled in the time of the kings. *Wollaston*, *Collins*, *Tindal*, *Shaftesbury*, *Bolingbroke*, and many others have argued that carving thoughts into polished stone, brick, lead, or wood was the only way of writing. They say that in *Moses*

time the Chaldeans and Egyptians wrote in no other way. At that time, they say, people could carve only a very abbreviated account, in hieroglyphs, of the main facts they wanted to pass on to later generations, not detailed histories. It would have been impossible to carve large books in a wilderness where people moved so often, where no one could supply or cut clothing, or even mend sandals, and where God had to perform a forty-year miracle to preserve his people's clothes and shoes. They say it is unlikely that there were so many engravers of written characters when the most necessary crafts were lacking and people could not even make bread. If they are told that the tabernacle's pillars were bronze and their capitals solid silver, they reply that the order may have been given in the wilderness, but it was only carried out in happier times.

They cannot understand how this poor people could have asked for a solid gold calf to worship at the very foot of the mountain where God was speaking to *Moses*, amid the thunder and lightning they could see, and with the sound of the heavenly trumpet they could hear. They are astonished that on the very day before *Moses* came down the mountain, this whole people turned to *Moses*' brother to ask 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 could make a gold statue in less than three months, and that even the most advanced chemistry could not reduce it to a powder people could swallow. So *Aaron*'s wrongdoing and *Moses*' operation would both have been miracles.

Their humanity and kindness of heart mislead them and keep them from believing that *Moses* had twenty-three thousand people slaughtered to atone for this sin. They cannot imagine twenty-three thousand men letting Levites massacre them 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. He was made high priest while the bloody corpses of twenty-three thousand of his brothers lay piled at the foot of the altar where he was about to sacrifice.

They raise the same objections about the twenty-four thousand Israelites massacred on *Moses*' orders to atone for the offense of a single man caught with a Moabite girl. So many Jewish kings, especially *Solomon*, married foreign women

without punishment that these critics cannot accept that a union with a Moabite woman was such a great 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 down in *Boaz's* bed, received six bushels of barley from him, later married him, and became an ancestor of *David*. *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 *David* was also descended from this *Solomon*. *Rahab* is even regarded as a prefiguration of the Christian Church. Several Fathers take this view, especially *Origen* in his seventh homily on *Joshua*.

Bathsheba, the wife of *Uriah*, by whom *David* had *Solomon*, was a Hittite. Going further back, the patriarch *Judah* married a Canaanite woman. His children married *Tamar*, of the line of *Aram*. This woman, with whom *Judah* unknowingly committed incest, was not of the line of *Israel*.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ chose to become flesh among the Jews in a family descended from five foreigners, to show that foreign nations would share in his inheritance.

As already stated, Rabbi *Ibn Ezra* was the first who dared to claim that the Pentateuch was compiled long after *Moses*. He bases his claim on several passages: "The Canaanites were then in this country. Mount Moriah, called the mountain of God. The bed of *Og*, king of Bashan, can 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, which discuss things that happened after *Moses*, cannot be by *Moses*. The reply to these objections is that these passages are notes added much later by copyists. *Newton*, whose name should otherwise only be spoken with respect, but who could make mistakes because 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 his argument on chapter 36 of Genesis; four chapters of *Judges*, 17, 18, 19, and 21; *Samuel*, chapter 8; *Chronicles*, chapter 2; and the Book of *Ruth*, chapter 4. Indeed, if chapter 36

of Genesis speaks of kings, if they are mentioned in the books of Judges, and if the Book of *Ruth* speaks of *David*, all these books seem to have been compiled in the time of the kings. Some theologians, led by the famous *Le Clerc*, also take this view. But this opinion has only a few followers whose curiosity probes these depths. Such curiosity is certainly not among human duties. When the learned and the ignorant, princes and shepherds, appear after this short 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 knowing exactly what year the Pentateuch was written or of having separated the text from the notes used by the scribes. God will not ask whether we sided with the Masoretes against the Talmud, or whether we ever mistook a *kaph* for a *beth*, a *yod* for a *vau*, or a *daleth* for a *resh*. He will certainly judge us by our actions, not by our understanding of Hebrew. We firmly accept the Church's decision, as a believer reasonably should.

Let us end this note with an important passage from Leviticus, Levit. Chap. 17. a book composed after the worship of the golden calf. It orders the Jews to stop worshipping 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 home of superstition and sorcery. But it is believed that the custom of our supposed witches of going to the Sabbath, worshipping a goat there, and giving themselves over with it to unimaginable obscenities, horrible even to think of, came from the ancient Jews. Indeed, it was they who taught witchcraft in part of Europe. What a people! Such strange infamy seemed to deserve a punishment like the one the golden calf brought on them. Yet the lawgiver is content simply to forbid it. This fact is reported here only to make the Jewish nation known. Bestiality must have been common among them, Lévit. Chap. 18 v. 23. since theirs is the only known nation whose laws had to forbid a crime that no lawgiver elsewhere had even suspected.

We may suppose that, during the hardships and shortages the Jews endured in the wildernesses of Paran, Horeb, and Kadesh-barnea, the female sex, weaker than the other, had died off. The Jews must indeed have lacked girls, since

whenever they take a town or village, whether to the left or right of the Asphaltic Lake, they are always ordered to kill everyone except girls of marriageable age.

The Arabs who still inhabit part of these wildernesses always stipulate in their agreements with caravans that they be given girls of marriageable age. It is likely that in these dreadful lands young men carried the corruption of human nature so far as to mate with goats, as some shepherds in Calabria are said to do.

It remains to be seen whether these matings produced monsters, and whether there is any basis for the old stories of satyrs, fauns, centaurs, and minotaurs. History says there is. 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. It begins toward the north at the stream of Arnon and ends at the stream of Zared, among the rocks on the eastern shore of the Asphaltic Lake. A small band of Arabs inhabits this country today. It may be about eight leagues long and a little less wide.

²⁶ The text makes it certain that *Jephthah* sacrificed his daughter. “*God did not approve these vows,*” says *Dom Calmet* in his dissertation on the vow of *Jephthah*: “*but once they have been made, he wants them carried out, if only to punish those who made them, or to curb the carelessness with which people would make them if they did not fear having to fulfill them.*” *St. Augustine* and almost all the Fathers condemn *Jephthah*’s action. It is true that Scripture says *he was filled with the spirit of God*, and that *St. Paul*, in chapter 11 of his Epistle to the Hebrews, praises *Jephthah*, placing him with *Samuel* and *David*.

In his letter to *Julian*, *St. Jerome* says: “*Jephthah sacrificed his daughter to the Lord, and that is why the Apostle counts him among the saints.*” Here are judgments on both sides on which we are not allowed to pass our own judgment. We should be afraid even to have an opinion.

²⁷ The death of King *Agag* can 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. His exact words were: Liv. I. des Rois, Chapitre 15. “*Kill everyone, from men to women, down to small children and those still nursing.*”

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

“The zeal that inspired this prophet,” says *Dom Calmet*, “put the sword in his hand on this occasion to avenge the Lord’s glory and to humble *Saul*.”

In this fatal episode we see a dedication to God, a priest, and a victim. It was therefore a sacrifice.

Every people whose history we have has sacrificed human beings to God, except the Chinese. *Plutarch* reports that even the Romans sacrificed them during the Republic.

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

I have pointed out elsewhere that this violation of the law of nations against *Caesar’s* hostages, and these human victims sacrificed, to complete the horror, by women’s hands, rather contradict *Tacitus’* praise of the Germans in his treatise *De moribus Germanorum*. In that work, *Tacitus* seems more concerned with satirizing the Romans than praising the Germans, whom he did not know. Let us mention in passing that *Tacitus* preferred satire even to truth. He wants to make everything hateful, even actions that are neither good nor bad. His malice pleases us almost as much as his style, because we like slander and wit.

Let us return to human victims. Our ancestors sacrificed them just as the Germans did. This is the lowest point of stupidity our nature reaches when left to itself, and one result of our weak judgment. We said: “We must offer God what we have that is most precious and most beautiful. Nothing is more precious to us than our children. So we must choose the most beautiful and youngest to sacrifice to God.”

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

Sanchuniathon, quoted by *Eusebius*, reports that in times of great danger the Phoenicians sacrificed their dearest child, and that *Ilus* sacrificed his son *Jehud* at about the time God tested *Abraham's* faith. It is difficult to penetrate the darkness of this ancient past. But it is all too true that these horrible sacrifices were practiced almost everywhere. Peoples abandoned them only as they became more civilized. Civilized manners bring humanity.

- 28 People who know little about ancient customs and judge only by what they see around them may be surprised by these odd practices. But we must remember that in those days, in Egypt and much of Asia, most things were expressed through images, hieroglyphs, signs, and symbols.

The prophets, called *seers* among the Egyptians and Jews, not only spoke in allegories but acted out the events they foretold through signs. Thus *Isaiah*, *Isaïe*, Chapitre 8. the first of the four great Jewish prophets, takes a scroll and writes on it: *Shas bas, plunder, quickly*. Then he approaches the prophetess. She conceives and gives birth to a son, whom he calls *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*. This symbolizes the harm the peoples of Egypt and Assyria will do to 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 freed 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 the whole beard and the hair of the feet of the king of Assyria.*"

This prophecy about bees, a beard, and shaved hair of the feet can only be understood by people who know certain customs. People called swarms together with the sound of a small flute or another rustic instrument. Cutting off a man's beard was the greatest insult one could offer him. Pubic hair was called the hair of the feet, and it was only shaved in cases of foul diseases such as leprosy. All these images, so foreign to our way of writing, mean only that in a few years the Lord will free his people from oppression.

The same *Isaiah*, *Isaïe*, Chapitre 20 walks completely naked to show that the king of Assyria will take a crowd of captives from Egypt and Ethiopia who will have nothing to cover their nakedness.

Ezekiel eats the parchment scroll, *Ezéchi.* Chap. 4 & suiv. presented to him. Then he covers his bread with excrement and lies on his left side for three hundred ninety days, and on his right side for forty days. This shows that the Jews will lack bread and represents 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 stands for those who are to die in the city; the second, those who will be killed around its walls; the third, those who are to be taken to Babylon.

The prophet *Hosea*, *Ozéé*, Chap. 3. unites with an adulterous woman, whom he buys for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley. “*You will wait for me,*” he tells her, “*for many days, and during that time no man will approach you. This represents the state in which the children of Israel will remain for a long time, without kings, princes, sacrifices, an altar, or an ephod.*” In short, the Nabi, the seers, the prophets, almost never make a prediction without representing what they predict by a sign.

So *Jeremiah* is only following custom when he binds himself with ropes and puts collars and yokes on his back to signify the slavery of the people to whom he sends these symbols. If we pay attention, those times are like an old world that differs in every way from the new one. Civil life, laws, ways of making war, religious ceremonies: everything is completely different. We need only open *Homer* and the first book of *Herodotus* to be convinced that we have no resemblance to the peoples of remote antiquity, and that we should distrust our judgment when we try to compare their customs with ours.

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

There were kinds of human beings that no longer exist. The races of giants, the *Rephaim*, *Emim*, *Nephilim*, and *Anakim*, have disappeared. In *la Cité de Dieu*, Livre V, *St. Augustine* says he saw an ancient giant’s tooth as large as a hundred of our molars. *Ezekiel* speaks of the *Gammadim* pygmies, a cubit tall, who

fought at the siege of Tyre. On almost all these points, sacred authors agree with secular ones. Diseases and remedies were not the same as they are today. The possessed were cured with a root called *Barad*, set in a ring that was held under their noses.

In the end, that entire ancient world was so different from ours that we cannot draw any rule of conduct from it today. And if, in that remote past, people persecuted and oppressed one another in turn over their worship, we should not imitate that cruelty under the law of grace.

Chapter XIII



The Jews' extreme tolerance.

So under *Moses*, the judges, and the kings, we keep seeing examples of tolerance. There is much more. *Moses* says several times, Exode, Chap. 20, v. 5. *that God punishes fathers through their children down to the fourth generation.* This threat was necessary for a people to whom God had revealed neither the soul's immortality nor punishments and rewards in another life. These truths were not announced to them in the Ten Commandments or in any law in Leviticus or Deuteronomy. They were beliefs 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 want to go to heaven.*" He says: "*Honor your father and mother so that you may live long on earth.*" Deutér. Chap. 28. He threatens them only with bodily evils: dry scabies, festering scabies, malignant ulcers on their knees and calves, their wives' unfaithfulness, having to borrow at interest from foreigners and being unable to lend at interest, dying of famine, and being forced to eat their children. Nowhere does he tell them that their immortal souls will suffer torment or enjoy happiness after death. God, who led his people himself, punished or rewarded them immediately after their good or bad actions. Everything concerned this life. This is the proof the learned Bishop *Warburton* offers to demonstrate that Jewish law was divine.²⁹ Since God himself was their king and administered justice immediately after disobedience or obedience, he had no need to reveal a teaching he

was reserving for the time when he would no longer govern his people. Those who ignorantly claim that *Moses* taught the immortality of the soul take away one of the New Testament's greatest advantages over the Old. It is certain that the law of *Moses* announced only punishments in this life, down to the fourth generation. Yet despite the precise wording of this law, despite God's explicit declaration that he would punish down to the fourth generation, *Ezekiel* announces, Ezéch. Chap. 18, v. 20.

Ezéch. Chap. 20, v. 25. the exact opposite to the Jews. He tells them that the son will not bear his father's wrongdoing. 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 still included in the canon of authors inspired by God. It is true that the synagogue did not allow it to be read before the age of thirty, as *St. Jerome* tells us. But this was for fear that young people would misuse the all too frank descriptions in chapters 16 and 23 of the sexual misconduct 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 belief—a process that probably began as early as the Babylonian captivity—the sect of the Sadducees continued to believe that there were neither punishments nor rewards after death. They believed that the ability to feel and think perished with us, just like the energy to act and the ability to walk and digest. They denied the existence of angels. They differed much more from other Jews than Protestants differ from Catholics. Yet they remained in communion with their brothers. There were even high priests from 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 made no sacrifices. They met among themselves in a separate synagogue. In short, anyone who closely examines Judaism will be astonished to find the greatest tolerance amid the most barbarous horrors. It is a contradiction, certainly. Almost all peoples have governed themselves through contradictions. Happy is the contradiction that brings gentle customs to a people with bloody laws!

²⁹ There is only one passage in the laws of *Moses* from which we might conclude that he knew the belief prevalent 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 diviners who predict the future by examining clouds, who charm snakes, who consult the spirit of Python, seers, or those with special knowledge who question the dead and ask them for the truth.*”

From this passage it seems that if people called up the souls of the dead, this supposed sorcery assumed that souls continued to exist. It is also possible that the magicians *Moses* speaks of, who were only crude deceivers, had no clear idea of the sorcery they believed they were performing. They made people believe that they forced the dead to speak, that their magic restored these bodies to the state they had been in while alive. They did not even examine whether the immortality of the soul could be inferred from their ridiculous performances. Sorcerers have never been philosophers. They have always been stupid tricksters performing for fools.

We may also note how strange it is that the word *Python* appears 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 accurate translation.

This language presents insurmountable difficulties. It is a mixture of Phoenician, Egyptian, Syrian, and Arabic, and this ancient mixture is now greatly altered. Hebrew never had more than two verb forms, the present and the future. The other forms have to be guessed from the meaning. Different vowels were often expressed by the same characters—or rather, the vowels were not expressed at all. The inventors of vowel points only increased the difficulty. Each adverb has twenty different meanings. The same word is used in opposite senses. Add to this confusion the language’s dryness and poverty. Without the arts, the Jews could not express what they did not know. In short, Hebrew is to Greek what a peasant’s language is to that of a member of the Academy.

30 *Ezekiel's* view finally prevailed in the synagogue. But there were always Jews who believed in eternal punishments and also believed that God punished children for their fathers' wrongdoing. Today they are punished beyond the fiftieth generation, and still have eternal punishments to fear. People ask how the descendants of the Jews who were not accomplices in the death of Jesus Christ—those in Jerusalem who took no part in it, and those scattered across the rest of the earth—can be punished in this life through their children, who are as innocent as their fathers. This punishment in this life—or rather, this way of living differently from other peoples, carrying on trade without a homeland—may not be regarded as a punishment compared with the eternal torments they bring on themselves through their unbelief, and which they can avoid through sincere conversion.

31 Those who have tried to find the teaching of hell and paradise as we understand them in the Pentateuch have been strangely mistaken. Their error rests only on an empty argument over words. The Vulgate translated the Hebrew word *Sheol*, the pit, as *Infernum*. The Latin word *Infernum* was translated into French as *Enfer*. This ambiguity was used to make people believe that the ancient Hebrews had the idea of the Greeks' *Hades* and *Tartarus*, which other nations had known earlier under other names.

Chapter 16 of Numbers reports that the earth opened its mouth beneath the tents of *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*. It swallowed them, their tents, and their possessions, and they were thrown alive into the grave, underground. This passage certainly says nothing about the souls of these three Hebrews, the torments of hell, or eternal punishment.

It is strange that the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique* says under *Enfer* that the ancient Hebrews *acknowledged its reality*. If that were true, it would create an impossible contradiction in the Pentateuch. How could *Moses* have spoken of punishments after death in one single, isolated passage, but not have mentioned them in his laws? Chapter 32 of Deuteronomy is quoted, but cut short. Here is the whole passage: "*They have provoked me with what was not God, and angered me with their vanity. And I will provoke them with what is not a people,*

and anger them with a foolish nation. A fire has been kindled in my fury, and it will burn to the depths of the earth. It will devour the earth down to its seed and burn the foundations of the mountains. I will heap evils on them and fill them with my arrows. They will be consumed by hunger; birds will devour them with bitter bites. I will unleash on them the teeth of beasts that crawl furiously over the earth, and of snakes.”

Is there the slightest connection between these expressions and the idea of punishments in hell as we understand them? Rather, these words seem to have been quoted only to show clearly that the ancient Jews knew nothing of our hell.

The author of this article also quotes the passage in chapter 24 of *Job*: “*The adulterer’s eye watches for darkness, saying: No eye will see me; and he will cover his face. He breaks into houses in the darkness, as he had said during the day, and they have not known the light. If dawn suddenly appears, they think it the shadow of death, and so they walk in darkness as in light. He is light on the surface of the water. Let his share be cursed on earth; let him not walk along the vineyard’s path; let him pass from snow waters to excessive heat. And they have sinned the grave*”; or else, “*the grave has scattered those who sin*”; or else, according to the Septuagint, “*their sin has been called to mind.*”

I quote the passages in full and literally. Otherwise it is always impossible to form an accurate idea of them.

Tell me, is there the slightest word there from which we can conclude that *Moses* taught the Jews the clear and simple doctrine of punishments and rewards after death?

The Book of *Job* has nothing to do with the laws of *Moses*. Besides, it is very likely that *Job* was not Jewish. This is *St. Jerome’s* opinion in his Hebrew Questions on Genesis. The word *Satan*, which appears in *Job*, was not known 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. So *Job* is quoted here very inappropriately.

The last chapter of *Isaiah* is also quoted: “*From month to month and Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh will come to worship me, says the Lord. They will go out and see at the dumping ground the corpses of those who have done wrong. Their worm will not die, their fire will not go out, and they will be exposed to the eyes of all flesh until everyone has seen enough.*”

Certainly, if they are thrown on the dumping ground, exposed to the view of passersby until everyone has seen enough, and eaten by worms, this does not mean that *Moses* taught the Jews the immortality of the soul. And the words *the fire will not go out* do not mean that corpses exposed to public view suffer the eternal punishments of hell.

How can anyone quote a passage from *Isaiah* to prove that the Jews in *Moses*’ time had received the teaching of the soul’s immortality? According to the Hebrew reckoning, *Isaiah* prophesied in the year of the world 3380. *Moses* lived around the year of the world 2500. Eight centuries passed between them. To misuse the right to quote in this way is an insult to common sense, or simply a joke: it claims to prove that one author held an opinion by a passage from an author who came eight hundred years later and did not discuss that opinion. There is no doubt that the immortality of the soul, and punishments and rewards after death, are announced, acknowledged, and established in the New Testament. There is no doubt that they appear nowhere in the Pentateuch.

When the Jews later came to believe in the soul’s immortality, they gained no understanding of its spiritual nature. Like almost all other nations, they thought the soul was something thin and airy, a light substance that retained some likeness to the body it had given life to. These were what people called shades, the spirits of bodies. Several Fathers of the Church held this opinion. In *de l’Ame*, Chap. 22, *Tertullian* puts it this way: *We define the soul as born from the breath of God, immortal, bodily, having a shape, and simple in substance*; “We define the soul as born from the breath of God, immortal, bodily, having a shape, and simple in substance.”

St. Irenaeus says in Livre II, Chap. 34: *Souls are immaterial compared with mortal bodies*. “Souls are immaterial compared with mortal bodies.” He adds that “Jesus Christ taught that souls retain 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 definite in his commentary on *St. Matthew*. He plainly attributes a bodily substance to the soul: *By their nature they receive a bodily substance.*

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

We might reproach these respected men for their bad philosophy. But we may suppose that their theology was fundamentally very sound. Although they did not know the soul's incomprehensible nature, they affirmed its immortality and wanted it to be Christian.

We know that the soul is spiritual, but we do not know at all what spirit is. Our knowledge of matter is very incomplete, and it is impossible for us to have a clear idea of what is not matter. Knowing very little about what touches our senses, we can know nothing on our own about what lies beyond them. We carry a few words from our everyday language into the depths of metaphysics and theology, to give ourselves some faint idea of things we can neither understand nor express. We try to lean on these words to support our weak understanding, if possible, in these unknown regions.

Thus we use the word *spirit*, which corresponds to *breath* and *wind*, to express something that is not matter. But this word—*breath*, *wind*, *spirit*—brings us back against our will to the idea of a thin, light substance. We strip away still more of that idea, as far as we can, to try to conceive of a purely spiritual nature. But we never reach a clear notion. We do not even know what we are saying when we pronounce the word *substance*. Literally it means what is underneath. That very meaning warns us that it is incomprehensible, for what, in fact, is this thing underneath? Knowledge of God's secrets is not given to us in this life. Plunged here into deep darkness, we fight one another and strike at random in this night, without knowing exactly why we are fighting.

If we take the trouble to think carefully about all this, no reasonable person can fail to conclude that we must be forgiving of other people's opinions, and deserve forgiveness ourselves.

These remarks are not outside the heart of the question, which is whether people should tolerate one another. For if they prove how much people on all sides have been mistaken in every age, they prove that in every age people should have treated one another with tolerance.

- ³² The belief in fate is ancient and universal. You find it throughout *Homer*. *Jupiter* would like to save his son *Sarpedon's* life, but Destiny has condemned him to death, and *Jupiter* can only obey. Among philosophers, Destiny meant either the necessary chain of causes and effects necessarily produced by nature, or that same chain ordered by Providence, which is much more reasonable. The whole system of fate is contained in this line by *Annaeus Seneca*: "*Fate leads the willing and drags the unwilling*". People have always agreed that God governs the universe through eternal, universal, unchanging laws. This truth was the source of all those unintelligible arguments about freedom, because no one ever defined freedom until the wise *Locke* came along. He proved that freedom is the power to act. God gives this power, and man, acting freely according to God's eternal commands, is one of the wheels in the great machine of the world. The whole ancient world argued about freedom, but no one persecuted anyone over it until our own time. What an absurd horror that a *Pomponne d'Andilly*, an *Arnauld*, a *Sacy*, a *Nicole*, and so many others who were the light of France should have been imprisoned and exiled over this argument!
- ³³ The theological fantasy of the transmigration of souls comes from India, from which we have received far more fables than is generally thought. This belief is explained in the admirable twelfth book of *Ovid's* *Metamorphoses*. It has been accepted almost everywhere on earth and has always been challenged. But we find no sign that any priest in the ancient world ever had a royal order for imprisonment issued against a disciple of *Pythagoras*.
- ³⁴ Neither the ancient Jews, nor the Egyptians and Greeks of their time, believed that a person's soul went to heaven after death. The Jews thought 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 a few openings. Among the ancient Greeks, the gods' palace stood on Mount Olympus. In *Homer's* time the home of heroes after death was on an island beyond the Ocean. The Essenes held this opinion too.

After *Homer*, planets were assigned to the gods. But people had no more reason to put a god on the moon than the moon's inhabitants would have 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. So asking what the ancients thought about heaven is a very pointless question. The best answer is that they did not think.

Chapter XIV



Did Jesus Christ teach intolerance?

Let us now see whether Jesus Christ established bloody laws, whether he ordered intolerance, whether he had the Inquisition's dungeons built, whether he set up the executioners of the *autos-da-fé*.

Unless I am mistaken, there are only a few passages in the Gospels from which a persecuting mind 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 his servants to tell them: St. Math. Chap. 22. "*I have killed my oxen and poultry; everything is ready; come to the wedding.*" Some ignore 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 people out onto the highways to invite everyone they find to the feast. One guest sits down without putting on a wedding garment. He is put in chains and thrown into the outer darkness.

Clearly, since this allegory concerns only the kingdom of heaven, no one should take it as a right to tie up or imprison a neighbor who comes 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 invite princes of the Empire to supper, these princes will kill the pages. The

invitation to the feast means the preaching of salvation. The murder of the prince's messengers represents the persecution of those who preach wisdom and virtue.

The other parable is about a private citizen who invites his friends to a large supper. St. Luc, Chap. 14. When he is ready to sit down, he sends his servant to notify 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 inspect 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: people do not test oxen at suppertime. A third replies that he has just married, and certainly his excuse is very acceptable. Angry, the master of the house has blind and lame people brought to his feast. Seeing that there are still empty places, he tells his servant: "*Go out onto the highways and along the hedges, and force people to come in.*"

It is true that we are not expressly told that this parable represents the kingdom of heaven. The words "*Force them to come in*" have been abused all too much. But plainly one servant cannot physically force everyone he meets to come and eat at his master's house. Besides, guests forced to come in this way would not make the meal very pleasant. According to the most respected commentators, "*Force them to come in*" means only: ask, plead, press, persuade. What connection, tell me, do this request and this supper have with persecution?

If we take things literally, must we be blind, lame, and brought in by force to belong to the Church? Jesus says in the same parable: "*Do not invite your friends or your rich relatives to dinner.*" Has anyone ever inferred from this that we really must not dine with relatives and friends as soon as 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, wanting to build a tower, does not first calculate the cost?*" Is anyone in the world so unnatural as to conclude that we must hate our father and mother? Is it not easy to understand that these words mean: "Do not hesitate between me and your dearest affections"?

People quote the passage from *St. Matthew*: “Whoever does not listen to the Church should be like a pagan and a customs collector.” St. Math. Chap. 8, v. 17. This certainly does not say we should persecute pagans or the contractors who collect the king’s taxes. They are cursed, it is true, but they are not handed over to the secular authorities for punishment. Far from taking any citizen’s right away from these contractors, we have given 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 mistaken brothers as much tolerance as we lavish respect on our brothers the tax contractors?

Another passage that has been grossly abused is the one in *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark* which says that Jesus, hungry in the morning, approached a fig tree and found only leaves, because it was not the season for figs. He cursed the fig tree, and it immediately withered.

There are several different explanations of this miracle. But is there a single one that could authorize persecution? A fig tree could not produce figs around the beginning of March, and it was made to wither. Is that a reason to make our brothers wither with grief at every time of year? Let us respect everything in Scripture that may raise difficulties in our curious and vain minds, but not abuse it to become harsh and unforgiving.

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 cannot see that these two examples are simply God choosing to administer justice himself for a breach of the law? Turning the forecourt of the Lord’s house into a merchants’ shop showed disrespect for it. The Sanhedrin and priests might allow this trade to make sacrifices easier, but that was no defense. The God to whom the sacrifices were made could certainly end this desecration, though he was hidden in human form. In the same way, he could punish those who brought entire herds of forbidden animals into the country, under a law that he himself had chosen to observe. These examples

have not the slightest connection with persecution over religious beliefs. The spirit of intolerance must rest on very bad reasons, since it searches everywhere for the emptiest excuses.

Almost all the rest of Jesus Christ's words and actions teach gentleness, patience, and tolerance. There is the father who welcomes the prodigal son; the worker 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 simply recommends faithfulness to the woman taken in adultery. He even chooses to share in the innocent joy of the guests at Cana, who are already warmed by wine and ask for more. He is willing to perform a miracle for them and changes water into wine.

He does not even lash out at *Judas*, who is to betray him. He orders *Peter* never to use the sword. He rebukes the sons of *Zebedee*, who wanted to follow *Elijah's* example and bring fire down from heaven on a town that had refused to lodge him.

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 died because of the hatred of the Sophists, priests, and leading citizens. The lawgiver of the Christians fell under the hatred of the scribes, Pharisees, and priests. *Socrates* could have avoided death and chose not to. Jesus Christ offered himself voluntarily. The Greek philosopher not only forgave his slanderers and 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 infinitely superior lawgiver of the Christians asked his Father to forgive his enemies.

If Jesus Christ seemed afraid of death, if his anguish was so extreme that his sweat was mixed with blood—the most violent and rarest symptom—it was because he chose to lower himself to all the weakness of the human body he had taken on. His body trembled, but his soul was unshakable. He was teaching us that true strength and greatness consist in enduring suffering under which our nature gives way. It takes extraordinary courage to go toward death while fearing it.

Socrates had called the Sophists ignorant and exposed their dishonesty. Jesus, using his divine rights, called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, St. Math. Chap. 23. fools, blind men, wicked men, snakes, and a brood of vipers.

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

Now, if they sought false testimony, they were not accusing him of having publicly preached against the law. In fact, he obeyed the law of *Moses* from childhood until 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 form of legal impurity was washed away by baptism. This was how priests were consecrated. People immersed themselves in water at the solemn Feast of Atonement, and converts were baptized.

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

Two witnesses came forward and accused him of saying *that he could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days*. St. Math. chap. 26, v. 61. Such a statement was incomprehensible to the worldly-minded Jews, but it was not an accusation of wanting 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 just man,³⁵ just as the words *son of Belial* were used to mean a wicked man. The uneducated 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 sitting at the right hand of the power of God, coming on the clouds of heaven.*”

The angry Sanhedrin considered this answer blasphemy. The Sanhedrin no longer had the power to execute people. They brought Jesus before the Roman governor of the province and falsely accused him of disturbing the public peace. They claimed that he said people should not pay tribute to *Caesar* and also called himself king of the Jews. So it is entirely clear that he was accused of a crime against the state.

On learning that he was a Galilean, the governor *Pilate* first sent him to *Herod*, tetrarch of Galilee. *Herod* thought it impossible that Jesus could aspire to lead a faction or claim kingship. He treated him with contempt and sent him back to *Pilate*. *Pilate* showed the shameful weakness of condemning him to calm the uproar directed against himself, all the more so because he had already faced a Jewish revolt, as *Josephus* tells us. *Pilate* did not show the generosity that the governor *Festus* later showed.

Now I ask: is tolerance or intolerance a matter of divine law? If you want 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 inexpressible 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 terror of God fell on the people, meaning a great terror. A great wind is a wind of God; *Saul's* illness, 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 these words as blasphemy, that may be further proof that they knew nothing of the mystery of the Incarnation, and of God, Son of God, sent to earth to save humankind.

Chapter XV



Statements against Intolerance.

It is an offense against God to take away people's freedom in matters of religion and prevent them from choosing a god. No person, no god, would want forced service. (*Apologétique, ch. 24.*)

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

Forced religion is no longer religion. People must be persuaded, not compelled. Religion cannot be ordered. (*Lactance, Liv. 3.*)

It is a hateful heresy to try to drag people over by force, beatings, and imprisonment when you have failed to convince them by reason. (*St. Athanase, Liv. I.*)

Nothing is more opposed to religion than compulsion. (*St. Justin, Martyr, Liv. 5.*)

"Should we persecute people whom God tolerates?" said *St. Augustine, before his quarrel with the Donatists made him too harsh.*

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

Advise people; do not force them. (*Lettres de saint Bernard.*)

We do not claim to destroy errors through 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 comes through persuasion, not commands. (*Fléchier, Evêque de Nîmes, Lettre 19.*)

We should not even use insulting words. (*L'Evêque du Belley dans une Instr. pastorale.*)

Remember that illnesses of the soul cannot be cured by force and violence. (*Le Cardinal le Camus, Instruction pastorale de 1688.*)

Give everyone civil toleration. (*Fénelon, Archevêque de Cambrai, au Duc de Bourgogne.*)

Enforcing 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. You do not persuade people by making threats ring out everywhere. (*Tillemont, Hist. Eccl. tom. 6.*)

We thought it consistent with fairness and sound reason to follow the example of the early Church, which did not use violence to establish and spread religion. (*Remontr. du Parlement de Paris à Henri II.*)

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

Faith cannot be driven into people with sword blows. (*Cérisier, sur les regnes de Henri IV & de Louis XIII.*)

The zeal that claims to plant religion in people's hearts is barbaric, as though persuasion could result from force. (*Boulainvilliers, Etat de la France.*)

Religion is like love: commands have no power over it, and force has even less. Nothing is less subject to outside control 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 given you a great blessing. But should those who have their Father's inheritance hate those who do not? (*Esprit des Loix, Liv. 25.*)

We could make an enormous book out of passages like these alone. Today our histories, speeches, sermons, works on morals, and catechisms all express and teach this sacred duty of leniency. What fatal influence, what inconsistency could make our practice contradict a principle we proclaim every day? When our actions contradict our moral teaching, it is because we think we stand to

gain by doing the opposite of what we teach. But we certainly gain nothing by persecuting people who disagree with us and making them hate us. Once again, then, intolerance is absurd. But, someone will say, the people who have an interest in restricting consciences are not absurd. The next short chapter is addressed to them.

Chapter XVI



Dialogue between a Dying Man and a Healthy Man.

A citizen lay dying in a provincial town. A healthy man came to abuse him in his last moments and said:

“You wretch! Think as I do this instant. Sign this document. Admit that five propositions are in a book that neither you nor I have ever read. Agree this instant with *Lanfranc* against *Berengar*, with *St. Thomas* against *St. Bonaventure*. Accept the second Council of Nicaea against the Council of Frankfurt. Explain to me at once 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 will have your body thrown on the rubbish heap. Your children will not inherit, your wife will lose her dowry, and your family will beg for bread that people like me will not give them.”

The Dying Man.

“I can barely understand what you are saying. Your threats reach my ears in a blur. They trouble my soul and make my death terrible. In God’s name, have pity on me!”

The Brute.

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

The Dying Man.

“Oh! You can see that in these last moments all my senses are failing. Every doorway to my understanding is shut. My ideas are slipping away; my thought is going out. Am I in any condition to argue?”

The Brute.

“Well, if you cannot believe what I want you to, say you believe it. That is enough for me.”

The Dying Man.

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

The Brute.

“Never mind. You will have the pleasure of being buried in a cemetery, and your wife and children will have enough to live on. Die a hypocrite. Hypocrisy is a good thing. As people say, it is the tribute vice pays to virtue. A little hypocrisy, my friend—what does it cost?”

The Dying Man.

“Oh! You despise God, or you do not acknowledge him, since you ask me to lie at the point of death. Yet you too must soon face his judgment, and you will answer for this lie.”

The Brute.

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

The Dying Man.

“Forgive me, my brother. I fear you know no God. The God I worship is now restoring my strength so that I can tell you, in a dying voice, that if you believe in God, you must treat me with charity. He gave me my wife and children. Do not let them die in poverty. As for my body, do what you like with it; I leave it to you. But believe in God, I beg you!”

The Brute.

“Do what I told you, without arguing. I want it; I order it.”

The Dying Man.

“And what do you gain by tormenting me so much?”

The Brute.

“What! What do I gain? If I get your signature, it will earn me a good position as a canon.”

The Dying Man.

“Ah, my brother! My last moment has come. I am dying. I will pray to God to move your heart and convert you.”

The Brute.

“To hell with the impudent fellow who would not sign! I will sign for him and imitate his handwriting.”

The following letter supports the same moral lesson.

Chapter XVII



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

My Reverend Father,

I am obeying Your Reverence's instructions to present the best ways of freeing Jesus and his Society from their enemies. I believe there are only five hundred thousand Huguenots left in the kingdom. Some say a million; others, a million and a half. Whatever their number, here is my opinion, which I most humbly submit to yours, as I should.

- 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 to instruct the public but also to make a beautiful spectacle.
- ² I would have all the fathers and mothers murdered in their beds. Killing them in the streets might cause a disturbance. Several might even escape, which must be avoided above all. This execution necessarily follows from our principles. For if we must kill one heretic, as so many great theologians prove, we obviously must kill them all.
- ³ The next day I would marry all the girls to good Catholics, since we must not reduce the state's population too much after the last war. As for boys of fourteen and fifteen, already full of bad principles that we cannot hope to remove,

my opinion is that they must all be castrated, so that this breed never reproduces. 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 we must do the same to all the Lutherans of Alsace. In 1704 I noticed two old women from that country laughing on the day of the battle of Höchstädt.

⁵ The question of the Jansenists may seem a little more troublesome. I believe there are at least six million of them. But a mind like yours should not be frightened by that. I count among the Jansenists all the parlements, which so unworthily defend the liberties of the Gallican Church. It is for Your Reverence, with your usual good judgment, to weigh the ways of bringing all these stubborn minds into submission. The Gunpowder Plot did not succeed as hoped, because one of the conspirators made the mistake of wanting to save his friend's life. But since you have no friends, there is no reason to fear the same problem. You will find it very easy to blow up all the kingdom's sovereign law courts with the invention of the monk *Schwarz*, called *gunpowder*. I calculate that, on average, each parlement needs thirty-six barrels of powder. Multiplying twelve parlements by thirty-six barrels gives only four hundred and thirty-two barrels. At a hundred crowns each, that makes a total of a hundred and twenty-nine thousand six hundred livres. That is 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 know the kingdom's laws perfectly.

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

Your Reverence will use the same methods of conversion on a few stubborn bishops. Their bishoprics will be handed over to the Jesuits under 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 approval.

⁷ Since the Jansenists are said to take communion at least at Easter, it would not be a bad idea to sprinkle the communion wafers with the drug used to bring Emperor *Henry VII* to justice. Some critic may tell me that in this operation we would risk giving rat poison to Molinists too. That is a strong objection. But no project is without drawbacks, and no system is without some weak point that threatens to bring it down. If we let these little difficulties stop us, we would never get anything done. Besides, since our aim is to produce the greatest possible good, we should not be shocked if that great good brings with it a few bad consequences of no importance.

We have nothing to reproach ourselves with. It has been proved that all the so-called Reformed and all the Jansenists are destined for hell. We are therefore only bringing forward the moment when they take possession of their inheritance.

It is just as clear that paradise belongs by right to the Molinists. So, by killing them accidentally and without any bad intention, we bring their joy forward. In both cases we are the servants of Providence.

As for anyone a little alarmed by the number, Your Paternity can point out that from the Church's flourishing days down to 1707, that is, over about fourteen hundred years, theology has brought about the slaughter of more than fifty million people. I propose to strangle, cut the throats of, or poison only about six million five hundred thousand.

Someone may also object that my calculation is wrong and that I break the rule of three. They will say that if, in fourteen hundred years, only fifty million people have died over theological distinctions, dilemmas, and arguments with unstated premises, that makes only thirty-five thousand seven hundred and fourteen people a year, plus a fraction. So for the present year I am killing six million sixty-four thousand two hundred and eighty-five people too many, plus a fraction. But really, this quibbling is childish. We could even call it ungodly. For does my method not plainly save the lives of all Catholics until the end of the world? We would never finish if we tried to answer every criticism.

With profound respect, I remain, Your Paternity's

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

This plan could not be carried out because it took a long time to make the 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 could legitimately follow part of Father *Le Tellier*'s correspondent's plans. It seems harsh to carry out every part of this project. Still, we must see on what occasions we should break on the wheel, hang, or send to the galleys people who disagree with us. That is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter XVIII



The Only Cases in Which Human Law Allows Intolerance.

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 stop being fanatics before they can deserve toleration.

Suppose some young Jesuits know that the Church abhors the damned, that a papal bull condemns the Jansenists, and that the Jansenists are therefore damned. If they then go and burn down a house of the Oratorian Fathers because *Quesnel* the Oratorian was a Jansenist, clearly we will have to punish these Jesuits.

Likewise, if they have spread criminal principles, if the rules of their order go against the kingdom's laws, we cannot avoid dissolving their Society and abolishing the Jesuits to make citizens of them. For them this is really an imaginary evil and a genuine good. What harm is there in wearing a short coat instead of a cassock and being free instead of enslaved? In peacetime, whole regiments are disbanded without complaint. Why do the Jesuits cry out so loudly when they are disbanded to bring about peace?

Suppose the Franciscans, carried away by holy zeal for the Virgin *Mary*, go and demolish the church of the Dominicans, who think that *Mary* was born in original sin. Then we will have to treat the Franciscans much as we treat the

Jesuits.

The same applies to Lutherans and Calvinists. It will do them no good 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." Clearly, in that case, they are wolves themselves.

One of the most astonishing examples of fanaticism was a small sect in Denmark whose basic principle was the best in the world. These people wanted to secure eternal salvation for their brothers and sisters. But the consequences of that principle were strange. 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 around cutting the throats of any newly baptized boys and girls they could find. This was surely doing them the greatest possible good: it protected them at once from sin, the miseries of this life, and hell. It sent them to heaven without fail. But these charitable people did not consider that we are not allowed 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 worldly enough to prefer having their sons and daughters with them to seeing their throats cut so they can go to paradise; and, in short, that the magistrate must punish murder even when it is committed with good intentions.

The Jews would seem to have more right than anyone to rob and kill us. Although the Old Testament has a hundred examples of toleration, it also has some examples of severity and some harsh laws. God sometimes ordered them to kill idolaters and spare only girls of marriageable age. They regard us as idolaters. Although we tolerate them today, if they were in charge they might well leave only our daughters alive in the world.

Above all, they would be absolutely obliged to murder all the Turks. There is no difficulty about that, since the Turks hold the country of the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Jerseneans, Hivites, Araceans, Cineans, Hamathites, and Samareans. All these peoples were condemned to destruction. Their country, which was more than twenty-five leagues long, was given to the Jews in several successive covenants. They must recover their property. The Muslims have been usurping it for more than a thousand years.

If the Jews reasoned this way today, clearly the only answer we could give them would be to impale them.

These are more or less the only cases in which intolerance seems reasonable.

Chapter XIX



Account of a Religious Dispute in China.

In the first years of the great Emperor *Kangxi's* reign, a mandarin in Canton heard a great noise coming from the house next door. He asked whether someone was being killed. He was told that the chaplain of the Danish Company, a chaplain from Batavia, and a Jesuit were arguing. He sent for them, had tea and preserves served, and asked why they were quarreling.

The Jesuit answered that it was very painful for him, who was always right, to deal with people who were always wrong. At first he had argued with the greatest restraint, but eventually he had lost patience.

As tactfully as possible, the mandarin made them see how necessary courtesy is in an argument. He told them that people never got angry in China and asked what the dispute was about.

The Jesuit answered, "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 should respect the opinions of a large assembly. I do not know what the Council of Trent is, but several people always know more than one. No one should believe that he knows more than every-

one else and that reason lives only in his own head. That is what our great *Confucius* teaches. If you take my advice, you will do very well to defer to the Council of Trent.”

The Dane then spoke. “My lord speaks with the greatest wisdom. We respect large assemblies as we should. That is why 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. So then, you and this Dutchman agree against this poor Jesuit?”

“Not at all,” said the Dutchman. “This man’s opinions are almost as outrageous as those of this Jesuit, who is acting so sweetly toward you here. It is unbearable.”

“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? Should you not therefore have the same doctrines?”

“You see, my lord,” said the Jesuit, “these two men are mortal enemies, and both argue against me. So clearly both of them are wrong, and I alone am right.” “That is not so clear,” said the mandarin. “It is just possible that all three of you are wrong. I would be interested to hear you one at a time.”

The Jesuit then made a fairly long speech. During it the Dane and the Dutchman shrugged their shoulders, and the mandarin understood nothing. The Dane spoke next. His two opponents looked at him with pity, and the mandarin understood no more than before. The Dutchman met with the same response. Finally all three spoke at once and hurled insults at one another. The decent mandarin had great difficulty calling a halt. He told them, “If you want your teaching to be tolerated here, start 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, “If I had been there, you would not have won. I would have proved you guilty of lying and idolatry.” The quarrel grew heated. The Dominican and the Jesuit grabbed each other by the hair. Informed of the scandal, the mandarin sent them both to prison. A junior mandarin asked the

judge, "How long does Your Excellency want them kept under arrest?" "Until they agree," said the judge. "Ah!" said the junior mandarin. "Then they will be in prison all their lives." "Well then," said the judge, "until they forgive each other." "They will never forgive each other," said the other. "I know them." "Well then," said the mandarin, "until they pretend to forgive each other."

Chapter XX



Is It Useful to Keep the People Superstitious?

Human beings are so weak and so perverse that they are surely better off under the rule of every possible superstition, provided none is murderous, than living without religion. People have always needed restraint. Though it was ridiculous to sacrifice to fauns, woodland gods, and water nymphs, worshiping these imaginary pictures of the divine was far more reasonable and useful than giving way to atheism. An atheist who was argumentative, violent, and powerful would be as destructive a scourge as a bloodthirsty believer in superstition.

When people have no sound ideas about God, false ideas take their place, just as in bad times people trade with bad money when they have no good money. The pagan feared committing a crime because he feared punishment by false gods. The Malabari fears punishment by his idol. Wherever an established society exists, a religion is necessary. Laws watch over crimes that have been committed; religion watches over secret crimes.

But once people have come to accept a pure and holy religion, superstition becomes not only useless but very dangerous. We should not try to feed acorns to those whom God is pleased to feed bread.

Superstition is to religion what astrology is to astronomy: the very foolish daughter of a very wise mother. These two daughters ruled the whole earth for a long time.

In our barbarous centuries, when scarcely two feudal lords had a New Testament at home, it may have been forgivable to offer fables to the common herd—that is, to those feudal lords, their foolish wives, and their brutish vassals. They were made to believe that *St. Christopher* had carried the child Jesus from one riverbank to the other. They were fed stories about sorcerers and people possessed by demons. They readily imagined that *St. Genou* cured gout and *St. Clare* cured bad eyes. The children believed in werewolves, and their fathers in *St. Francis's* cord. The number of relics was beyond counting.

The rust left by so many superstitions remained among the people for some time, even after religion was finally purified. We know that when *de Noailles*, Bishop of Châlons, had the supposed relic of Jesus Christ's holy navel removed and thrown into the fire, the whole town of Châlons brought a lawsuit against him. But he had as much courage as devotion. He soon managed to persuade the people of Champagne that they could worship Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth without having his navel in a church.

Those called Jansenists did a great deal to remove, little by little, most of the false ideas that disgraced the Christian religion from the nation's mind. People stopped believing that merely reciting the thirty-day prayer to the Virgin *Mary* was enough to obtain anything they wanted and to sin without punishment.

At last, the middle class began to suspect that it was not *St. Geneviève* who brought or stopped the rain, but God himself who controlled the elements. The monks were astonished that their saints no longer worked miracles. If the writers of the life of *St. Francis Xavier* returned to the world, they would not dare to write that this saint raised nine dead people, that he was at sea and on land at the same time, and 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*, who was related to him through 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 we doubt that an excommunicated king of France's stewards would throw his dinner out the window, or that the queen would give birth to a gosling in such a case.

If a few people go into religious convulsions in some corner of a suburb, it is like an infestation of lice, affecting only the lowest rabble. Every day reason makes its way into French merchants' shops as well as noblemen's mansions. We must therefore cultivate the fruits of reason, all the more because we cannot stop 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, we cannot govern it as it was governed in the days of the *Garasses* and the *Menots*.

Suppose the teachers of error—I mean the great teachers, so long paid and honored for making the human race stupid—ordered us today to believe that grain must rot before it can sprout; that the earth rests motionless on its foundations and does not move around the sun; that the tides are not a natural effect of gravity; that the rainbow is not formed by the refraction and reflection of light rays; and so on. Suppose they based these orders on misunderstood passages of Holy Scripture. How would all educated people regard them? Would *beasts* be too strong a word? And if these wise teachers used force and persecution to establish the rule of their arrogant ignorance, would *wild beasts* be out of place? The more the monks' superstitions are despised, the more the bishops are respected and the parish priests valued. They do nothing but good, while the monastic superstitions coming from beyond the Alps would do great harm. But of all superstitions, is not the most dangerous the one that makes us hate our neighbor for his opinions? And is it not obvious that worshipping the holy navel, the holy foreskin, the Virgin *Mary's* milk and dress would still be more reasonable than hating and persecuting our brother?

Chapter XXI



Virtue Is Better than Learning.

Fewer dogmas mean fewer disputes, and fewer disputes mean fewer disasters. If that is not true, I am wrong.

Religion was established to make us happy in this life and the next. What do we need to be happy in the next life? To be just.

What do we need to be happy in this life, as far as our miserable human condition allows? To be tolerant.

Trying to make everyone think alike about metaphysics would be the height of madness. Conquering the whole world by force of arms would be much easier than conquering every mind in a single town.

Euclid easily managed to convince everyone of the truths of geometry. Why? Because every one of them follows obviously from 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 arguing about how the *Word* emanated from the Father, Emperor *Constantine* first wrote them these words, reported by *Eusebius* and *Socrates*: “*You are great fools to argue about things you cannot understand.*”

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

For what could be more insane and more horrible than telling people, “My friends, it is not enough to be loyal subjects, obedient children, loving fathers, and fair neighbors; to practice every virtue, cultivate friendship, avoid ingratitude, and worship Jesus Christ in peace. You must also know how someone can be begotten from all eternity without being made from all eternity. And if you cannot distinguish *sameness of substance* in the divine person, we warn you that you will burn forever. Meanwhile, we will begin by cutting your throats”?

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

Constantine did not stick to his decision to silence both sides. He could have summoned the leaders of this quibbling to his palace. He could have asked them by what authority they were disturbing the world: “Do you have the divine family’s records? What does it matter to you whether the *Word* was made or begotten, provided people are faithful to him, preach sound morals, and practice them if they can? I have committed many faults in my life, and so have you. You are ambitious, and so am I. Gaining the empire cost me deceit and cruelty. I have murdered nearly all my relatives, and I regret it. I want to make up for my crimes by bringing peace to the Roman Empire. Do not stop me from doing the one good thing that might make people forget my past barbarities. Help me end my days in peace.” Perhaps he would have gained nothing from the disputants. Perhaps he was flattered to preside over a council in a long red robe, with his head covered in jewels.

Yet this was what opened the door to all the scourges that came from Asia and flooded the West. From every disputed verse came a fury armed with a false argument and a dagger, making everyone mad and cruel. The Huns, Heruli, Goths, and Vandals who came afterward did infinitely less harm. The greatest harm they did was finally to join in these fatal disputes themselves.

Chapter XXII



Universal Tolerance.

It takes no great skill or elaborate eloquence to prove that Christians should tolerate one another. I go further: I say we must regard all people as our brothers and sisters. What! The Turk my brother? The Chinese? The Jew? The Siamese? Yes, of course. Are we not all children of the same Father and creatures of the same God?

But these peoples despise us; they call us idolaters! Well, I will tell them they are very wrong. I think I could at least shake the proud stubbornness of an imam or a Buddhist monk if I spoke to them something like this.

This little globe, no more than a speck, moves through space like so many other globes. We are lost in this vastness. A human being, about five feet tall, is certainly a very small part of creation. One of these imperceptible beings says to a few 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. He has hated all the others from all eternity. Mine alone will be happy, and all the others will be unhappy forever." They would stop me then and ask, "Who is the madman who said this nonsense?" I would have to answer, "You yourselves." I would then try to calm them down, but that would be very difficult.

I will now speak to Christians. I would dare to say, for example, to a Dominican inquisitor of the faith, “My brother, you know that every province of Italy has its own way of speaking, and that people do not speak in Venice and Bergamo as they do in Florence. The *Crusca* Academy has fixed the language. Its dictionary is a rule from which no one should 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 all the Venetians and people of Bergamo who persisted in speaking their dialects?”

The inquisitor answers, “There is a great difference. Here your soul’s salvation is at stake. It is for your own good that the Directory of the Inquisition orders your arrest on the testimony of a single person, even one who is disgraced and has a criminal record; that you have no lawyer to defend you; that you are not even told your accuser’s name; that the inquisitor promises you mercy and then condemns you; that he subjects you to five different tortures; and that you are then whipped, sent to the galleys, or burned in a ceremony.³⁶ Father *Ivonet*, Doctor *Chucalon*, *Zanchinus*, *Campegius*, *Royas*, *Felinus*, *Gomarus*, *Diabarus*, and *Gemelinus* are explicit on this, and this pious practice allows no objection.” I would take the liberty of answering, “My brother, perhaps you are right. I am convinced that you want to do me good. But could I not be saved without all that?”

It is true that these absurd horrors do not stain the earth every day. But they have been frequent, and we could easily make a book of them 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 like us have little right to anticipate the Creator’s judgments in this way. I am very far from challenging the statement *outside the Church there is no salvation*. I respect it, as I do everything the Church teaches. But in truth, do we know all God’s ways and the full extent of his mercy? Are we not

allowed to hope in him as much as we fear him? Is it not enough to be faithful to the Church? Must every individual seize God's rights and decide the eternal fate of all people before God does?

When we mourn a king of Sweden, Denmark, England, or Prussia, do we say we are mourning a damned soul burning forever in hell? Europe has forty million inhabitants who do not belong to the Church of Rome. Shall we say to each one, "Sir, since you are certainly damned, I will neither eat, make agreements, nor talk with you"?

What French ambassador, when admitted to an audience with the Ottoman sultan, would say in his heart, "His Highness will certainly burn for all eternity because he submitted to circumcision"? If he really believed 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 we do business? What duty of civil life could we ever fulfill if we were really convinced that we were dealing with damned souls?

Followers of a merciful God! If your hearts were cruel; if, while worshipping the one whose whole law was contained in these words, *Love God and your neighbor*, you had burdened that pure and holy law with false reasoning and incomprehensible disputes; if you had stirred up conflict, sometimes over a new word, sometimes over a single letter of the alphabet; if you had attached eternal punishments to the omission of certain words or ceremonies that other peoples could not have known, I would say to you, weeping for the human race, "Come with me to the day when all people will be judged and God will repay each according to their deeds.

"I see all the dead of past centuries and our own appearing before him. Are you quite sure that our Creator and Father will say to the wise and virtuous *Confucius*, to the lawgiver *Solon*, to *Pythagoras*, *Zaleucus*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, the divine *Antonines*, good *Trajan*, *Titus*, the delight of the human race, *Epictetus*, and so many other people who were models for humanity: 'Go, monsters! Go and suffer punishments infinite in intensity and duration. Let your torment be

eternal like me. And you, my beloved *Jean Châtel*, *Ravaillac*, *Damiens*, *Cartouche*, and *the rest*, who died using the prescribed formulas, share my kingdom and happiness forever at my right hand’?”

You recoil in horror at these words. 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 that I speak, but to you, God of all beings, all worlds, and all times—if weak creatures, lost in immensity and invisible to the rest of the universe, may dare to ask anything of you, who have given everything, whose decrees are unchangeable and eternal. Please look with pity on the errors that belong to our nature! Do not let those errors become our disasters! You did not give us hearts to hate one another or hands to cut one another's throats. Help us support one another under the burden of a hard and passing life! May the small differences between the clothes covering our weak bodies, between all our inadequate languages, all our ridiculous customs, all our imperfect laws, all our senseless opinions, and all our social ranks, so unequal in our eyes and so equal before you—may all these slight differences between the atoms called human beings never be signals for hatred and persecution! May those who light candles at midday to honor you tolerate those content with the light of your sun! May those who cover their robes with white linen to say that we must love you never hate those who say the same under coats of black wool! May worshiping you in a jargon formed from an ancient language or in a newer jargon make no difference! May those whose clothes are dyed red or violet, who rule a small part of a small heap of this world's mud and own a few rounded

pieces of a certain metal, enjoy without pride what they call greatness and wealth. May others look on them without envy! For you know that in these vanities there is nothing to envy or to be proud of.

May all people remember that they are brothers and sisters! May they abhor tyranny over souls, just as they hate the robbery that forcibly takes the fruits of peaceful work and industry! If the scourges of war are unavoidable, let us not hate or tear one another apart in peacetime. Let us use the moment of our existence, from Siam to California, to praise alike in a thousand different languages your goodness, which gave us that moment!

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 exactly the opposite aim. Everyone has an opinion. This man was publishing a short code of persecution entitled *l'Accord de la Religion & de l'Humanité*. That is a printer's error: read *de l'Inhumanité*.

The author of this holy pamphlet relies on *St. Augustine*, who, after preaching gentleness, finally preached persecution, since he was then on the stronger side and often changed his mind. He also cites *Bossuet*, Bishop of Meaux, who persecuted the famous *Fénelon*, Archbishop of Cambrai, guilty of having published the idea that God is well worth loving for his own sake.

Bossuet was eloquent, I admit. The Bishop of Hippo, sometimes inconsistent, was more fluent 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,
You should copy their better side.

I would say to the Bishop of Hippo, "My lord, you changed your mind. Allow me to keep to your first opinion. In truth, I think it is 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 much more eloquent. But why torment your fellow bishop so much? He was as eloquent as you, in another style, and more lovable.”

The author of the holy pamphlet on inhumanity is neither a *Bossuet* nor an *Augustine*. He seems perfectly suited to be an excellent inquisitor. I wish he were in Goa at the head of that fine tribunal. He is also a statesman and displays great political principles. “*If you have,*” he says, “*many people of unorthodox beliefs among you, treat them gently and persuade them. If there are only a few, put the gallows and the galleys to use, and you will do very well out of it.*” That is what he advises on pages 89 and 90.

Thank God, I am a good Catholic. I have no reason to fear what the Huguenots call *martyrdom*. But if this man ever becomes prime minister, as his pamphlet suggests he hopes to do, I warn him that I will leave for England on 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 skillful! Because *Bayle* agrees that people stirring up rebellion and crooks must be punished, our man concludes that peaceful people acting in good faith must be persecuted with fire and sword, *page 98*.

Almost his whole book imitates the defense of the *St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre*. Either he is that apologist or he echoes him. In either case, we must hope that neither master nor pupil will govern the state.

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

“Must the happiness of the whole nation be sacrificed to the happiness of one-twentieth of it?”

Suppose there really are twenty Roman Catholics in France for every Huguenot. I am not suggesting that the Huguenot should eat the twenty Catholics. But why should those twenty Catholics eat the Huguenot? And why stop this Huguenot from marrying? Are there not bishops, abbots, and monks who own land in Dauphiné, in Gévaudan, near Agde, and near Carcassonne?

Do these bishops, abbots, and monks not have tenant farmers unfortunate enough not to believe in transubstantiation? Is it not in the interest of the bishops, abbots, monks, and the public that these farmers have large families? Will only those who receive communion in one form be allowed to have children? Really, that is neither just nor decent.

“The revocation of the Edict of Nantes did not produce as many harmful effects as people attribute to it,” says the author.

If people do attribute more to it than it produced, they are exaggerating. Exaggeration is the fault of almost all historians. But reducing the harm they are accused of to nothing is also the fault of all religious controversialists. Let us believe neither the doctors of Paris nor the Protestant preachers of Amsterdam. Let us take as our judge the Count d’*Avaux*, ambassador to Holland from 1685 to 1688. He says, *page 181, tom. 5*, that one man alone had offered to uncover more than twenty million that the persecuted were taking out of France. *Louis XIV* answered d’*Avaux*: *“The reports I receive every day of countless conversions leave me in no doubt that the most stubborn will follow the example of the others.”* This letter from *Louis XIV* shows that he sincerely believed in the extent of his power. Every morning he was told, “Sire, you are the greatest king in the universe. The whole universe will be proud to think as you do, as soon as you speak.” *Pélisson*, who had grown rich as chief financial clerk; *Pélisson*, who had spent three years in the Bastille as *Fouquet*’s accomplice; *Pélisson*, who had gone from Calvinist to deacon and holder of a benefice, who published prayers for Mass and bouquets of verse for *Iris*, who had obtained the administration of vacant benefices and the post of converter—*Pélisson*, I say, brought in a long list of renunciations of Protestantism every three months, at seven or eight crowns each. He made his king believe that whenever he wished, he could convert all the Turks at the same price. They took turns deceiving him. Could he resist their persuasion?

Yet the same d’*Avaux* informed the king that a man named *Vincent* employed more than five hundred workers near Angoulême and that his departure would cause harm, *page 194, tom. 5*.

The same d'Avaux mentions two regiments that the Prince of Orange was already having recruited by refugee French officers. He mentions sailors who deserted three ships to serve aboard those of the Prince of Orange. Besides these two regiments, the Prince of Orange was also forming a company of refugee cadets commanded by two captains, *page 240*. On May 9, 1686, this ambassador also wrote to *de Seignelay* that *he could not hide his distress at seeing French industries establish themselves in Holland, which they would never leave*. Add to all this testimony that of all the kingdom's intendants in 1698, and judge whether the revocation of the Edict of Nantes did not produce 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 exceptional intelligence, said a few years ago, "*I do not know whether using dragoons to force conversions was necessary, but it is necessary never to do it again.*"

I admit that I thought I had gone a little too far in publishing the letter from Father *Le Tellier's* correspondent, in which this member of the congregation proposes barrels of gunpowder. I said to myself, "People will not believe me. They will think this letter is a forgery." Fortunately, my doubts disappeared when I read these gentle words in *l'Accord de la Religion & de l'Inhumanité*, *page 149*:

"The total extinction of Protestants in France would weaken France no more than bloodletting weakens a patient with a strong constitution."

So this compassionate Christian, who has just said that Protestants make up one-twentieth of the nation, wants the blood of that twentieth spilled. He sees this operation as no more than drawing a small bowl of blood! With him around, may God preserve us from the three twentieths!

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

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

So, while nature speaks in its gentle and kindly voice on one side, fanaticism, nature’s enemy, howls on the other. While peace presents itself to humanity, intolerance forges its weapons. You who decide the fate of nations, who have given peace to Europe, decide between the peaceful spirit and the murderous one.

Chapter XXV



Continuation and Conclusion.

We learn that on March 7, 1763, the whole Council of State met at Versailles, with the ministers of state attending and the chancellor presiding. *De Crosne*, a master of requests, presented the *Calas* case with a judge's impartiality, the accuracy of someone thoroughly informed, and the simple, truthful eloquence of an orator and statesman—the only kind appropriate to such an assembly. An enormous crowd of people of every rank waited in the palace gallery for the Council's decision. The king was soon informed that every member, without a single exception, had voted to order the parlement of Toulouse 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 decision.

So humanity and justice do exist among people, especially 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. It has been discussed and examined as carefully as the greatest questions of war and peace could be. A love of fairness and concern for the human race guided all the judges. Thanks be to the God of mercy, who alone inspires fairness and every virtue!

We bear witness that we never knew the unfortunate *Calas*, whom the eight judges of Toulouse put to death on the weakest circumstantial evidence, against the ordinances of our kings and the laws of all nations. Nor did we know his son *Marc-Antoine*, whose strange death led these eight judges into error; the mother, as worthy of respect as she is unfortunate; or her innocent daughters, who traveled two hundred leagues with her to lay their disaster 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 in connection with *Jean Calas*, whom the spirit of intolerance killed.

We did not think we were offending the eight judges of Toulouse by saying they were mistaken, as the whole Council has presumed. On the contrary, we opened a way for them to clear themselves before all Europe. That way is to admit that ambiguous evidence and the cries of a senseless crowd misled their judgment; to ask the widow's forgiveness; and to repair, as far as they can, the complete ruin of an innocent family, by joining those helping it in its distress. They unjustly killed the father. It is for them to take a father's place for the children, assuming these orphans are willing to accept from them a small sign of a very justified repentance. It would be noble of the judges to offer it and of the family to refuse it.

It is especially for *Mr. David*, a municipal magistrate of Toulouse, to set an example of remorse, if he was the first to persecute the innocent. He insulted a father dying on the scaffold. Such cruelty is unheard of. But since God forgives, people too must forgive anyone who repairs his 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 fanatics—will answer the voice of reason with furious cries, etc."

Here is my answer:

"The eight judges of Toulouse can have my book burned if it is good. Nothing could be easier. They burned the Provincial Letters, which were certainly much better. Anyone can burn books and papers they dislike in their own home.

"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 and fairness, on the documents and the proceedings—not on a piece of writing that is not a legal document and whose substance is entirely unrelated to the case it is judging.

"People could publish volumes in folio for or against the eight judges of Toulouse, and for or against tolerance. Neither the Council nor any court will regard those books as documents in the case.

"I agree that some fanatics will shout. But I maintain that many sensible readers will reason.

"I learn that the parlement of Toulouse and some other courts have a strange system of evidence. 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 produce three complete proofs. On the strength of this fine demonstration, they break a man on the wheel without mercy. A little knowledge of reasoning would be enough to make them adopt another method. What is called a half-proof can only be a suspicion. Strictly speaking, there is no half-proof. Either something is proved or it is not; there is no middle ground.

"A hundred thousand suspicions together can no more establish 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 considered to establish proof. But that is not enough. Those two witnesses must be free from passion and prejudice. Above all, what they say must not contradict reason.

"Four people of the utmost respectability might say that they saw a feeble old man seize a strong young man by the collar and throw him forty paces through a window. Clearly, those four witnesses would have to be put in a madhouse.

“Yet the eight judges of Toulouse condemned Jean Calas on a much more unlikely accusation. There was no eyewitness who said he had seen a feeble old man of sixty-eight hang an extremely strong young man of twenty-eight all by himself.

“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. So an absurd judgment was passed on absurd accusations.

“There is no remedy for such a system of justice except for those who buy the right to judge people to study better from now on.”

This work on tolerance is a petition that humanity most humbly presents to power and wisdom. I am planting a seed that may one day produce a harvest. Let us place all our hopes in time, the king’s goodness, the wisdom of his ministers, and the spirit of reason that is beginning to spread its light everywhere.

Nature says to everyone, “I made you all weak and ignorant at birth, to vegetate for a few minutes on earth and fertilize it with your corpses. Since you are weak, help one another. Since you are ignorant, enlighten and tolerate one another. Even if you all held the same opinion—which certainly will never happen—and only one person held a different one, you should forgive him, for I am what makes him think as he does. I gave you arms to cultivate the earth and a little glimmer of reason to guide you. I placed a seed of compassion in your hearts so you could help one another bear life. Do not smother that seed or corrupt it. Know that it is divine. Do not replace nature’s voice with the miserable fury of the schools.

“I alone still unite you, despite yourselves, through your mutual needs, even amid your cruel wars, undertaken so lightly: an endless theater of mistakes, accidents, and disasters. I alone hold back, within a nation, the disastrous consequences of the endless division between the nobility and the magistrates, between those two bodies and the clergy, and even between townspeople and farmers. None of them knows the limits of their rights. But in the long run, despite themselves, they all listen to my voice speaking to their hearts. I alone preserve fairness in the courts. Without me everything there would be left to uncertainty and whim, amid a confused heap of laws often made at random to meet a passing need, differing from province to province and town to town,

and almost always contradicting one another in the same place. I alone can inspire justice when laws inspire only quibbling. Whoever listens to me always judges well. Whoever seeks only to reconcile contradictory opinions 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 wanted to add the strangest, crudest, and most useless decorations. The building is falling apart on every side. People pick up its stones and throw them at one another’s heads. I cry out to them: Stop! Clear away these deadly ruins that you have made, and live with me in peace in the unshakable building that is mine.”

Newly Added Article



An account of the final judgment in favor of the Calas family.

Two more years passed between March 7, 1763, and the final judgment. So easy is it for fanaticism to take an innocent life, and so hard for reason to secure justice for it. The unavoidable delays required by legal formalities had to be endured. The less those formalities had been followed in condemning Calas, the more rigorously the Council of State had to follow them. A whole year was not enough to force the parlement of Toulouse to send the Council the entire record of the proceedings, and then to examine that record and report on it. De Crosne was again given this difficult task. An assembly of nearly eighty judges overturned the Toulouse judgment and ordered a complete review of the trial. Other important cases then occupied almost all the kingdom's courts. The Jesuits were being expelled and their Society abolished in France. They had been intolerant persecutors³⁷; now they were persecuted in turn.

The absurd business of confession certificates, which they were thought to have secretly devised and which they publicly supported, had already revived the nation's hatred of them. The enormous bankruptcy of one of their missionaries³⁸, believed to be partly fraudulent, completed their downfall. The mere words *missionaries* and *bankrupts*, so ill suited to go together, pronounced their condemnation in everyone's mind. Finally, the ruins of Port-Royal³⁹ and the bones of so many famous men, whom they had insulted in their graves and had dug up at the beginning of the century under orders dictated by the Jesuits

alone, all rose against their dying influence. The story of their expulsion can be read in the excellent book entitled *Sur la Destruction des jésuites en France*⁴⁰. It is an impartial work because it is by a philosopher, written with Pascal's subtlety and eloquence, and above all with a superior understanding not clouded, as Pascal's was, by prejudices that have sometimes misled great men.

This great affair, in which some Jesuit supporters said religion was being insulted while the majority thought it was being avenged, caused the public to lose sight of the Calas trial for several months. But when the king assigned the final judgment to the court called *the Court of Requests of the Royal Household*, the same public, which likes moving from one scene to another, forgot the Jesuits, and the Calas family took all its attention.

The Court of Requests of the Royal Household is a sovereign law court made up of masters of requests. It judges lawsuits between officers of the royal court and cases the king refers to it. No court better informed about the case could have been chosen. These were precisely the same magistrates who had twice ruled on the preliminary stages of the review and who knew both the facts and the procedure perfectly. Jean Calas's widow, his son, and de Lavoisier returned to prison. The old Catholic servant was brought from deep in Languedoc. She had never left her master, her mistress, and their family for a moment during the time when, against all likelihood, they were supposed to have been strangling their son and brother. Finally, deliberations began on the same documents that had been used to condemn Jean Calas to the wheel and his son Pierre to exile.

It was then that a new legal brief appeared by the eloquent de Beaumont⁴¹, along with another by young de Lavoisier, whom the judges of Toulouse had so unjustly implicated in these criminal proceedings and, in the ultimate contradiction, had not declared acquitted. This young man wrote a statement of his case himself, which everyone considered worthy to appear beside de Beaumont's. He had the double advantage of speaking for himself and for a family whose chains he had shared. He could have broken his own chains and left the prisons of Toulouse simply by saying that he had left the Calas family for a moment during 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 risk execution rather than speak that word, which would have been a lie. He set out all these details in his statement with such noble, simple honesty, so far from any showiness, that he moved everyone he had only meant to convince and won admiration without seeking a reputation.

His father, a famous lawyer, had no part in this work. He suddenly found himself equaled by his son, who had never practiced law.

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

The day came—March 9, 1765—when innocence triumphed completely. After de Baquencourt had reported the entire proceedings and investigated the case down to the smallest details, all the judges unanimously declared the family innocent and wrongfully and abusively judged by the parlement of Toulouse. They cleared the father's name. They allowed the family to apply to the proper authority to bring a personal action against their judges and obtain the costs and damages that the Toulouse magistrates should have offered on their own.

There was universal joy in Paris. People gathered in public squares and walks. They hurried to see this family, so unfortunate and so fully vindicated. They applauded as the judges passed and showered blessings on them. What made the scene still more moving was that this day, March ninth, was the very day on which Calas had died under the cruelest torture three years earlier.

The masters of requests had given the Calas family complete justice, and in doing so had only done their duty. There is another duty, that of doing good, more rarely fulfilled by courts, which seem to think they exist only to be fair. The masters of requests decided to write as a body to His Majesty, begging him to repair the family's ruin with gifts. The letter was written. The king answered

by having thirty-six thousand livres given to the mother and children. Of those thirty-six thousand livres, three thousand went to the virtuous servant who had constantly defended the truth by defending her employers.

By this kindness, as by so many other actions, the king deserved the name that the nation's love has given him⁴². May this example help inspire tolerance in people, without which fanaticism would devastate the earth or at least always make it miserable! We know that only one family is involved here, and that sectarian rage has destroyed thousands. But today, when a shadow of peace lets all Christian communities rest after centuries of slaughter, it is in this quiet time that the Calas family's misfortune must make a stronger impression, rather like a thunderbolt striking in the calm of a fine day. Such cases are rare, but they happen. They are the effect of that gloomy superstition that leads weak minds to accuse anyone who thinks differently from them of crimes.

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.