



SHORT WORKS

VOLTAIRE

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SHORT WORKS

BY
VOLTAIRE

TAKEN FROM THE WORKS OF VOLTAIRE

TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM F. FLEMING

AND WITH NOTES BY TOBIAS SMOLLETT

Short Works By Voltaire.

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continued to believe that there were no rewards or punishments after death, and that the faculties of the soul perished with us in like manner as those of the body. They also denied the existence of angels. In a word, they differed much more from the other Jews than the Protestants do from the Catholics; nevertheless, they lived in peaceable communion with their brethren; and some of their sect were admitted to the high-priesthood.

The Pharisees held fatality or predestination,⁵⁹ and believed in the Metempsychosis;⁶⁰ the Essenians thought that the souls of the just went into some

These reverend fathers seem to have been very indifferent philosophers; but there is the greatest reason to believe that their divinity was in the main very sound, inasmuch as, notwithstanding their ignorance of the incomprehensible nature of the soul, they asserted it to be immortal, and endeavored to make it Christian.

We know that the soul is of a spiritual nature, but we do not at all know what spirit is. We are very imperfectly acquainted with matter; nor is it possible for us to have a distinct idea of what is not matter. Hardly capable of understanding what effects our senses have, we cannot of ourselves know anything of what surpasses the bound of those senses. We carry some few words of our common language into the inexorable depths of metaphysics and divinity, in order to acquire some slight idea of those things, which we could never conceive or express; and we use those words as props to support the steps of our feeble understandings in travelling through those unknown regions.

Thus we make use of the word spirit, which is the same as breath or air, to express something which is not matter; and this word breath, air, spirit, inspiring us insensibly with an idea of an uncompounded and light substance, we still refine upon this as much as possible, in order to obtain a proper conception of pure and simple spirituality; but we shall never be able to obtain a distinct notion of this, we do not even know what we say, when we pronounce the word substance; in its literal signification, it signifies something beneath, and thereby shows us that it is incomprehensible; for what is meant by that which is beneath? The knowledge of the secrets of God is not to be acquired in this life. Plunged as we are in mortal obscurity, we fight against one another, and strike at random in the darkness with which we are surrounded, without precisely knowing for what we are fighting.

If mankind would consider all this with attention, every reasonable person will be ready to conclude that we ought to have the greatest indulgence for the opinions of others, and by our conduct endeavor to merit the same from them.

The above remarks are not at all foreign to the principal point in question, which is to know whether men are bound to tolerate one another; inasmuch as by proving that in all times those of different opinions have been alike mistaken, it appears to have been the duty of all mankind in every age to treat each other with kindness and forbearance.

⁵⁹ The doctrine of predestination is of long standing and universal; we find it in Homer. Jupiter was desirous to save the life of his son Sarpedon; but destiny had marked him for death, and Jupiter was obliged to submit. Destiny was, with the philosophers, either the necessary concatenation of causes and effects necessarily produced by nature, or that same concatenation ordained by Providence; the latter of which is most reasonable. We find the whole system of fatality or predestination, comprised in this line of Annæus Seneca: "*Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt.*" It has always been acknowledged that God governs the universe by eternal, universal and immutable laws; this truth gave rise to the many unintelligible disputes concerning free-will, which had never been defined before the great philosopher Locke arose, who has proved it to be the power of acting. God bestows this power, and man, acting freely according to the eternal decrees of Providence, is one of the wheels of the great machine of the universe. Free-will has been a subject of disputation from all antiquity; but no one until of late times was ever persecuted on this subject. How horrible, how absurd is it to have imprisoned and banished on account of this dispute a Pomponne d'Andilly, an Arnauld, a Nicole, a Sacy, and so many others who were the shining lights of France!

⁶⁰ The theological romance of the Metempsychosis came from India, a part of the world to which we are indebted for many more fables than is generally believed. We find this doctrine explained by that beautiful poet Ovid, in the twelfth book of his "*Metamorphoses.*" It has been received in almost every part of the world, and has everywhere met with its opposers; nevertheless, we do not find that any priest among the ancients ever caused a disciple of Pythagoras to be sent to prison.

happy islands,⁶¹ and those of the wicked into a kind of Tartarus, or hell. They offered no sacrifices, and assembled together in particular synagogues of their own. In a word, if we examine closely into the Jewish economy, we shall be surprised to find the most extensive toleration prevailing amidst the most shocking barbarities. This is indeed a contradiction, but almost all people have been governed by contradictions. Happy are those whose manners are mild, while their laws are bloody!

⁶¹ Neither the ancient Jews, the Egyptians, nor the Greeks, their contemporaries, believed that the soul of man went to heaven after death. The Jews thought that the sun and moon were placed some leagues above us in the same circle, and that the firmament was a thick and solid vault, that supported the weight of the waters, which, however, sometimes ran out through the crevices in this vault. The ancient Greeks placed the palace of their gods upon Mount Olympus. And the abode of heroes after death was, in Homer's time, thought to be in an island beyond the ocean. This likewise was the opinion of the Essenians.

After Homer, planets were assigned to the gods; but there was no more reason for men to place a god in the moon than for the inhabitants of the moon to place a god in our planet of the earth. Juno and Iris had no other palaces assigned them but the clouds, where there was no place to rest the soles of their feet. Among the Sabæans every deity had its star. But as the stars are little suns, it would be impossible to live there without partaking of the nature of fire. Upon the whole, then, it is needless to inquire what the ancients thought of heaven; since the best answer that can be given is, they thought nothing about it.

CHAPTER 14. IF NON-TOLERATION WAS TAUGHT BY CHRIST

Let us now see whether Christ established sanguinary laws, whether He enjoined non-toleration, instituted the horrors of the inquisition, or the butchery of an *auto da fé*.

There are, unless I am much mistaken, very few passages in the New Testament from which the spirit of persecution can have inferred that tyranny and constraint in religious matters are permitted: one is the parable wherein the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king who made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to invite guests to the wedding, saying, "Tell them which were bidden, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage."⁶² But those who were bidden made light of the invitation, one going to his farm and another to his business, and the rest of them took the king's servants and slew them. Upon which he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers and burnt up their city. After this he sent out into the highways to invite all that could be found to come to the marriage; but one of the guests happening to sit down to table without a wedding garment, the king ordered him to be bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness.

But it is clear that this allegory relates only to the kingdom of heaven; therefore, assuredly no man can assume a right from thence to fetter or imprison his neighbor who should come to dine with him without being properly dressed; nor do I believe that history furnishes us with any instance of a prince causing one of his courtiers to be hanged upon such an occasion; and there is little reason to apprehend that when the emperor sent his pages to any of the princes of the empire to invite them to an entertainment those princes would fall upon the pages and kill them.

The invitation to the marriage feast is a type of the preaching of the gospel, and the murder of the king's servants is figurative of the persecution of those who preach wisdom and virtue.

The other parable is that of a private person who made a great supper, to which he invited many of his friends,⁶³ and when he was ready to sit down to table sent his servants to tell them that all things were ready; but one excused himself by saying that he had bought a piece of ground and must needs go and see it, an excuse which was not admissible, as no one goes to visit their lands in the night-time; another said he had bought five yoke of oxen and was going to prove them; he was as much to blame as the other, since no one would go to prove oxen at supper-time; the third said he had married a wife and could not come; this last was certainly a

⁶² Matthew xxii. 1-13.

⁶³ St. Luke xiv.

very good excuse. The master of the house being very angry at this disappointment, told his servants to go into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor, and the maimed, the halt and the blind; this being done, and finding that there was yet room, he said unto his servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them (that you find) to come in."

It is true that we are not expressly told that this parable is a type of the kingdom of heaven, and the words "compel them to come in" have been perverted to very bad purposes; but it is very evident that one single servant could not *forcibly* compel every person he met to come and sup with his master; besides, the company of people so compelled would not have made the supper very agreeable. "Compel them to come in," therefore, means nothing more, according to commentators of the best reputation, than pray, desire, press them to come in; therefore, what connection, for heaven's sake, can prayers and invitations have with persecution?

But to take things in a literal sense, is it necessary to be maimed, halt, and blind, or to be compelled by force to enter into the bosom of the Church? Christ says in the same parable: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy rich kinsmen"; but did any one ever infer from this that we should never dine or sup with our friends or kinsmen if they happen to be worth money?

Our Saviour, after this parable of the feast, says: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, his wife and children, his brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," etc. But is there any person living so unnatural as to conclude from this that he ought to hate his father and mother and his nearest relations? And is it not evident to one of the meanest capacity that the true interpretation of these words is: hesitate not between me and your dearest affections?

The following passage in the eighth chapter of St. Matthew is also quoted: "Whosoever heareth not the word of God shall be like to an heathen, and like one who sitteth at the receipt of custom"; but certainly this is not saying that we ought to persecute all unbelievers and custom-house officers; they are frequently cursed indeed, but they are not delivered up to the arm of secular power. And so far from depriving the latter of any part of the prerogatives of citizens, they are indulged with the greatest privileges; and though their profession is the only one condemned in Scripture, it is of all others the most protected and favored by every government. Why then should we not show some indulgence to our brethren who are unbelievers, while we load with benefits our brethren the tax-gatherers?

Another passage which has been grossly abused is that in St. Matthew and St. Mark, where we are told that Jesus being hungry in the morning, and coming to a fig tree which had no leaves—for it was not the time of figs—Jesus cursed the tree and it immediately dried up.

This miracle has been explained in several different ways, but not one of them appears to authorize persecution. Though a fig tree could not be expected to bear fruit in the beginning of March, yet we find it blasted; but is that a reason why we should blast our brethren with affliction in all seasons of the year? When we meet with anything in holy writing that may occasion doubts in our vain and inquisitive minds, we should pay it all due reverence, but let us not make use of it to countenance cruelty and persecution.

The spirit of persecution which perverts everything has also strained in its own vindication the story of Christ driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and that of his sending a legion of devils out of the body of the man possessed with an evil spirit into two thousand unclean animals; but cannot any one perceive that these two instances were no other than acts of justice, which God Himself deigned to execute for a contravention of His law? It was a disrespect shown to the house of the Lord to change His dwelling into a market for buyers and sellers. And although the Sanhedrim and its priests might permit this traffic for the greater convenience of their sacrifices, yet the God to whom these sacrifices were offered might, doubtless, though under a human shape, overturn this profane practice. In the same manner might He punish those who brought into the country whole troops of those animals which were prohibited by the law of which He Himself deigned to be an observer. These two examples, then, have not the least connection with persecution for religion's sake; and the spirit of non-toleration must certainly be founded upon very false principles when it everywhere seeks such idle pretexts.

Christ, in almost every other part of His gospel, both by His words and actions, preaches mildness, forbearance and indulgence. Witness the father who receives his prodigal son, and the workman who comes at the last hour and yet is paid as much as the others; witness the charitable Samaritan, and Christ Himself, who excuses His disciples for not fasting, who pardons the woman who had sinned, and only recommends fidelity for the future to the woman caught in adultery. He even condescends to partake of the innocent mirth of those who have met at the marriage feast in Cana, and who being already warmed with wine and wanting still more, Christ is pleased to perform a miracle in their favor by changing their water into wine. He is not even incensed against Judas, whom He knew to be about to betray Him; He commands Peter never to make use of the sword, and reprimands the sons of Zebedee, who, after the example of Elias, wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume a town in which they had been refused a lodging. In a word, He Himself died a victim to malice and persecution; and, if one might dare to compare God with a mortal and sacred things with profane, His death, humanly speaking, had a great resemblance to that of Socrates. The Greek philosopher suffered for the hatred of the sophists, the priests and the heads of the people; the Christian Law-giver, by that of the Scribes, Pharisees and priests. Socrates might have avoided death, but would not; Christ offered Himself a voluntary sacrifice. The Greek philosopher not only pardoned his false accusers and iniquitous judges, he even desired them to treat his

children as they had done himself, should they, like him, one day be happy enough to deserve their hatred. The Christian Law-giver, infinitely superior to the heathen, besought His Father to forgive His enemies. If Christ seemed to fear death, and if the agonies He was in at its approach drew from Him sweat mixed with blood, which is the most violent and rare of all symptoms, it was because He condescended to submit to every weakness of the human frame, which He had taken upon Him; His body trembled, but His soul was unshaken. By His example we may learn that true fortitude and greatness consist in supporting those evils at which our nature shrinks. It is the height of courage to meet death at the same time that we fear it.

Socrates accused the sophists of ignorance and convicted them of falsehood; Jesus, in His godlike character, accused the Scribes and Pharisees of being hypocrites, blind guides and fools, and a race of vipers and serpents.

Socrates was not accused of attempting to found a new sect, nor was Christ charged with endeavoring to introduce a new one. We are told in St. Matthew that the great men and the priests and all the council sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death.

Now, if they were obliged to seek for false witnesses, they could not charge Him with having preached openly against the law; besides, it was evident that He complied in every respect with the Mosaic law from His birth to His death. He was circumcised the eighth day like other Jewish children; He was baptized in Jordan, agreeable to a ceremony held sacred among the Jews and among all the other people of the east. All impurities of the law were cleansed by baptism; it was in this manner their priests were consecrated at the solemn feast of the expiation, every one plunged himself in the water, and all new-made proselytes underwent the same ceremony.

Moreover, Jesus observed all the points of the law; He feasted every Sabbath day, and He abstained from forbidden meats; He kept all the festivals, and even before His death He celebrated that of the Passover; He was not accused of embracing any new opinion, nor of observing any strange rites. Born an Israelite, He always lived as an Israelite.

He was accused, indeed, by two witnesses of having said that He could destroy the Temple and build it up again in three days; a speech altogether unintelligible to the carnal Jews, but which did not amount to an accusation of seeking to found a new sect.

When He was examined before the high priest, this latter said to him: "I command you, in the name of the living God, to tell us if Thou art Christ, the Son of God." We are not told what the high priest meant by the Son of God. This expression was sometimes made use of to signify a just or upright man,⁶⁴ in the same manner as the

⁶⁴ It was indeed very difficult, not to say impossible, for the Jews to comprehend, without an immediate revelation, the ineyable mystery of the incarnation of God, the Son of God. In the sixth chapter of Genesis we find the sons of great men called "the sons of God." In like manner the royal

words son of Belial, to signify a wicked person. The carnal Jews had no idea of the sacred mystery of the Son of God, God Himself coming upon earth.

Jesus answered the high priest, "thou hast said; nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven."⁶⁵

This answer was looked upon by the whole assembly as a blasphemy. But the Sanhedrim having no longer the power of life and death, they falsely accused Jesus before the Roman governor of the province of being a disturber of the public peace, and one who, said they, should not pay tribute to Cæsar; and, moreover, called Himself King of the Jews. It is therefore incontestably evident that he was accused of a crime against the state.

Pilate being informed that He was a Galilean, sent Him immediately to Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee. This latter, thinking it impossible that a person of Jesus' appearance should pretend to be the head of a party, or aspire to royalty, treated Him with great contempt, and sent Him back again to Pilate, who had the infamous weakness to condemn Him to death as the only means to appease the tumult raised against himself; more especially as he had lately experienced the revolt of the Jews, as we are told by Josephus. On this occasion Pilate did not show the same generosity which the governor Festus did afterwards.

I now desire to know whether toleration or non-toleration appears to be of divine prescription? Let those who would resemble Christ be martyrs and not executioners.

Psalmist calls the tall cedars "the cedars of God." Samuel says, "The fear of God fell upon the people"; that is, a violent fear seized them. A great tempest is called the wind of the Lord, and Saul's distemper, the melancholy of the Lord. Nevertheless, the Jews seemed to have clearly understood that our Saviour called Himself the Son of God in the proper sense of that word; and if they looked upon this as a blasphemous expression, it is an additional proof of their ignorance of the incarnation, and of God, the Son of God, being sent upon earth for the redemption of mankind.

⁶⁵ Matthew xxvi. 61–64.

CHAPTER 15. TESTIMONIES AGAINST PERSECUTION

It is an impious act to deprive men of liberty in matters of religion, or prevent them from making choice of a God. No God nor man would be pleased with a forced service.—*Apologetic*, chap. xxiv.

Were violence to be used in defence of the faith, the bishops would oppose it.—*St. Hilarius*, lib. i.

Religion when forced ceases to be religion; we should persuade and not compel. Religion cannot be commanded.—*Lactantius*, lib. iii.

It is detestable heresy to endeavor to bring over by violence, bodily punishments, or imprisonments, those we cannot convince by reasoning.—*St. Athanasius*, lib. i.

Nothing is more contradictory to true religion than constraint.—*St. Justin, Martyr*, lib. v.

Is it for us to persecute those whom God tolerates? said St. Augustine, before his dispute with the Donatists had soured his disposition.

Let no violence be done to the Jews.—*The 56th Canon of the 4th Council of Toledo*.

Advise but compel not.—*St. Bernard's Letters*.

We do not pretend to overcome error by violence.—*Speech of the Clergy of France to Louis XIV.*

We have always disapproved of rigorous measures.—*Assembly of the Clergy, August 11, 1560.*

We know that faith may yield to persuasion, but it never will be controlled.—*Fléchier, Bishop of Nîmes, Letter, 19.*

We ought to abstain even from reproachful speeches.—*Bishop of Belley's Pastoral Letters.*

Remember that the diseases of the soul are not to be cured by restraint and violence.—*Cardinal Camus' Pastoral Instructions for the Year 1688.*

Indulge every one with civil toleration—*Archbishop Fénelon to the Duke of Burgundy.*

Compulsion in religion proves the spirit which dictates it to be an enemy to truth.—*Dirois, a Doctor of the Sorbonne*, b. vi. chap. iv.

Compulsion may make hypocrites, but never can persuade.—*Tillemont's Hist. Eccles.* tom. vi.

We have thought it conformable to equity and right reason to walk in the paths of the ancient church which never used violence to establish or extend religion.—
Remonstrance of the Parliament of Paris to Henry II.

Experience teaches us that violence is more likely to irritate than to cure a distemper which is seated in the mind.—*De Thou's Epistle Dedicatory to Henry IV.*

Faith is not inspired by the edge of the sword.—*Cerisier, in the Reigns of Henry IV. and Louis XIII.*

It is a barbarous zeal which pretends to force any religion upon the mind, as if persuasion could be produced by constraint.—*Boulainvillier's State of France.*

It is with religion as with love; command can do nothing, constraint still less; nothing is so independent as love and belief.—*Amelot de la Houssaye on Cardinal Ossat's Letters.*

If Providence has been so kind to you as to give you a knowledge of the truth, receive it as an instance of His great goodness; but should those who enjoy the inheritance of their father hate those who do not?—*Spirit of Laws, book xxv.*

One might compose an immense volume of such passages. All our histories, discourses, sermons, moral treatises and catechisms of the present time abound with and inculcate this holy doctrine of indulgence. What fatality, what false reason, then, leads us to contradict by our practice the theory we are every day teaching? When our actions give the lie to our morals it must certainly proceed from our thinking it to our interest to practise the contrary of what we teach; but what advantage can arise from persecuting those who do not think in the same manner as we do, and thereby making ourselves hated by them? Once more, then, let me repeat it; there is the highest absurdity in persecution. It may be replied that those who found it to their interest to lay a restraint upon the consciences of others are not absurd in so doing. To such men I address the following chapter.

CHAPTER 16. A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A DYING MAN AND ONE IN GOOD HEALTH

An inhabitant of a country village lying at the point of death was visited by a person in good health, who came to insult him in his last moments, with the following speech:

“Wretch that thou art, think as I do this instant, sign this writing immediately, confess that five propositions are to be found in a book that neither thou nor I have ever read; adopt immediately the opinion of Lanfranc against Berengarius, and of St. Thomas against St. Bonaventura; join with the Council of Nice against the Council of Frankfort, and explain to me out of hand how the words ‘My Father is greater than I’ signify exactly ‘I am as great as He.’ Tell me also in what manner the Father communicates all His attributes to the Son, excepting the fatherhood, or I will have thy body thrown to the fowls of the air, thy children deprived of their inheritance, thy wife of her dowry and thy family turned out to beg their bread, which shall be refused them by those who are like myself.”

DYING MAN.—I scarcely understand what you say; your threats strike my ears confusedly, they trouble my mind and render my last moments terrifying. In the name of God have pity on me!

CRUEL MAN.—Pity! I can have none for thee, unless thou art exactly of my opinion.

DYING MAN.—Alas! you must be sensible that in these, my last moments, my senses are all impaired, the doors of my understanding are shut, my ideas are lost in confusion and I have hardly any sentiments remaining. Am I then in a condition to dispute?

CRUEL MAN.—Well, then, if thou canst not believe as I would have thee, only say that you do, and that will content me.

DYING MAN.—How! Would you have me perjure myself to please you, when I am going in an instant to appear before the judgment seat of that God who is the avenger of perjury?

CRUEL MAN.—No matter; thou wilt have the pleasure to be interred in holy ground, and thy wife and children will have wherewithal to maintain them after thy death. Die a hypocrite; hypocrisy is a very good thing; I have heard say it is the homage which vice pays to virtue. A little hypocrisy, friend, can’t cost you much.

DYING MAN.—Surely you must either not acknowledge a God, or hold Him very cheap, since you require me to tell a lie with my last breath, when you yourself must soon appear in judgment before Him and answer for that lie.

CRUEL MAN.—Insolent wretch! Dost thou say that I do not acknowledge a God?

DYING MAN.—Pardon me, brother; I rather fear you do not know Him. The God whom I adore lends me at this time an increase of strength to tell you with my dying words that if you believe in Him you ought to behave toward me with charity. He has given me my wife and children; do not you make them perish with misery. As for my body, do with it as seems good to you; I leave it at your disposal; but let me conjure you to believe in God.

CRUEL MAN.—Come, come; truce with your reasoning, and do as I bid you; I will have it so. I command you to do it.

DYING MAN.—But what advantage can you have in thus tormenting me?

CRUEL MAN.—What advantage? Why, if I can make you sign, it will be worth a good canonship to me.

DYING MAN.—Ah! brother; my last moment approaches; I am expiring, but I will pray to God to touch your heart that you may be converted.

CRUEL MAN.—The devil take the impertinent puppy; he has not signed after all! Well, I'll e'en sign for him; it is but a little forgery.

The following letter is a confirmation of the above doctrine:

CHAPTER 17. A LETTER FROM A BENEFICED PRIEST TO FATHER LETELLIER, THE JESUIT, DATED THE 6TH OF MAY, 1714

Reverend Father: The following is in obedience to the orders I received from your reverence to lay before you the most effectual means for delivering Jesus and His company from their enemies.

I believe there may be remaining at this time in the kingdom not more than five hundred thousand Huguenots; some say a million, others a million and a half; but let the number be what it will, the following is my advice, which, however, as in duty bound, I submit with all humility to your reverence's judgment.

In the first place, then, it will be very easy to seize in one day all the preachers, and to hang them all at one time and in one place, which will be not only a very edifying, but also a very entertaining exhibition to the people.

Secondly, I would have all the fathers and mothers who are heretics murdered in their beds, because the killing of them in the streets might occasion some little disturbance; besides, by that means, several of them might escape, which is above all to be prevented. This execution is a necessary corollary of our principles; for if we ought to kill a heretic, as so many of our great divines have incontestably proved, it is evident that we ought to kill them all without exception.

Thirdly, I would, the very next day, marry all the daughters to good Catholics, inasmuch as it would not be politic to depopulate the state so much after the late war; but as for the boys of fourteen and fifteen years of age, who have already imbibed bad principles, which we cannot hope to root out, 'tis my opinion that they should be all castrated to prevent the race from ever being reproduced. As for the other younger lads, they may be brought up in our colleges, where they may be whipped till they have learned by heart the works of Sanchez and Molinos.

Fourthly, I think under correction, the same method ought to be taken with all the Lutherans of Alsace, for I remember, in the year 1704, to have seen two old women of that country laugh on the day of our defeat at Blenheim.

Fifthly, What relates to the Jansenists will perhaps appear a little more difficult. I believe their numbers may amount to about six millions, a little more or less; but this ought not to give any alarm to a person of your reverence's disposition. I reckon among the Jansenists all the parliaments who have so unworthily maintained the liberties of the Gallican church. I leave it to your reverence to weigh with your usual prudence the most effectual methods for reducing these turbulent spirits. The Gunpowder Plot failed of the desired success through the weakness of one of the conspirators, who wanted to save the life of his friend; but, as your reverence has no

friend, the same inconvenience is not to be apprehended. You may very easily blow up all the parliaments in the kingdom with the composition called Pulvis Pyrius, invented by the monk Schwarz. By my calculation it will require upon an average thirty-six barrels of powder for each of the parliaments; now, if we multiply thirty-six, the number of barrels, by twelve, the number of parliaments, it will make four hundred and thirty-two barrels, which, at a hundred crowns per barrel, will amount to not quite a hundred and thirty thousand livres—a mere trifle for the reverend father-general.

The parliaments thus disposed of, you may bestow their places upon your congregationists, who are perfectly well versed in the laws of the realm.

Sixthly, It will be a very easy matter to poison the Cardinal de Noailles, who is a very simple, unsuspecting man.

Your reverence may take the same steps for conversion with several of the refractory prelates; and their bishoprics, by a brief from the pope, may be put into the hands of the Jesuits; thus all the bishops that remain, being staunch to the good cause, and they making a proper choice of curates, I, with your reverence's permission, would give the following advice:

Seventhly and lastly, As the Jansenists are said to take the sacrament one time in the year at least, which is at Easter, it would not be amiss to season the consecrated wafers with a little of that drug which was used to do justice upon the Emperor Henry VII. Some nice caviller may perhaps tell me that in this operation we may run some risk of poisoning the Molinists at the same time. There is some weight in this objection; but then it should be considered that there is no project without its inconveniences, nor any system but what threatens destruction in some part. And if we were to be stopped by these little difficulties we should never attain our end in anything; besides, as here we have in view the obtaining the greatest of all possible advantages, we should not suffer ourselves to be shocked, though it brings with it some bad consequences, especially as those consequences are of little or no consideration.

And, after all, we shall have nothing to reproach ourselves with, since it is proved that the Reformed, as they call themselves, and the Jansenists, have all of them their portion in hell; therefore, we only put them in possession of their inheritance a little sooner.

It is as evident that heaven belongs of right to the Molinists; therefore by destroying them by mistake, and without any evil intention, we hasten their happiness; and are in both cases the ministers of Providence.

As to those who may be a little shocked at the number to be thus made away with, your reverence may remark to them that from the first flourishing days of the church to the year 1707—that is to say, in about fourteen hundred years—religion has

occasioned the massacre of upwards of fifty millions of persons; whereas by my proposal not above six millions and a half will be put to death by the halter, the dagger, or poison.

But perhaps it may be objected that my calculation is not just, and that I have committed an error against the Rule of Three; inasmuch as, that if in fourteen hundred years there perished fifty millions of souls on account of some trifling disputes in divinity, that makes only thirty-five thousand seven hundred and fourteen and some little fraction in a year, and consequently that by my method an overplus of six millions sixty-four thousand two hundred and eighty-five and some fractions are put to death in the current year. But, indeed, this is a very childish quibble; nay, I'll even call it impious; for is it not plain that by my method I save the lives of all the Catholics, so long as the world shall last? But, in short, there would be no end of answering every frivolous objection.

I am, with the most profound respect, reverend father, your reverence's most humble, most devout, and most humane

R———,

Native of Angoulême,

Prefect of the Congregation.

This glorious scheme, however, could not be carried into execution, because it required considerable time to make the necessary dispositions, and that Father Letellier was banished the year following. But as it is right to examine both sides of an argument, it will be proper to inquire in what cases it may be lawful to follow in part the scheme of the reverend father's correspondent. It would seem rather too severe to execute it in all its parts; let us therefore examine in what cases we ought to break upon the wheel, to hang, or to make galley-slaves of those who differ from us in opinion. This shall be the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 18. THE ONLY CASES IN WHICH NON-TOLERATION MAKES PART OF THE HUMAN LAW

For a government not to have a right to punish men for their errors, it is necessary that those errors should not be crimes; and they are crimes only when they disturb the public tranquillity; which they do whenever they inspire enthusiasm. It is necessary therefore that men should begin by laying aside enthusiasm in order to deserve toleration.

If a number of young Jesuits, knowing that the church holds all reprobates and heretics in detestation, and that the opinion of the Jansenists having been condemned by a bull this sect is consequently reprobate, thereupon go and set fire to the house of the fathers of the oratory, because Quesnel, one of that body, was a Jansenist; it is clear that the government would be obliged to punish those Jesuits.

In like manner, if these latter have been found to teach the most reprehensible doctrines, and if their institution appears contrary to the laws of the kingdom, it becomes necessary to abolish their society, and of Jesuits to make them useful citizens; which, in fact, so far from being an oppression upon them, as has been pretended, is a real good done them; for where is the great oppression of being obliged to wear a short coat instead of a long gown, or to be free instead of being a slave? In time of peace whole regiments are broken without complaining. Why, then, should the Jesuits make such an outcry, when they are broken for the sake of peace?

Were the Franciscans in a transport of holy zeal for the Virgin Mary, to go and pull down the church of the Dominicans, who hold Mary to have been born in original sin, the government would then be obliged to treat the Franciscans much in the same manner it has done the Jesuits.

The same argument will hold good with regard to the Lutherans and Calvinists; for let them say, if they please, we follow the dictates of our consciences; it is more profitable to obey God than man; we are the only true flock, and therefore ought to cut off all the wolves. It is evident that in this case they themselves are the wolves.

One of the most astonishing examples of enthusiasm was in a little sect in Denmark, founded on one of the best principles in the world; for these people endeavored to procure the eternal happiness of all their brethren; but the consequences of this principle were very singular. As they believed that all the young children who died without baptism were damned, and that those who had the happiness to die immediately after receiving that sacrament enter into eternal happiness, they went forth and murdered all the young children of both sexes lately baptized, whom they could meet with. By this action they doubtless procured the little innocents the greatest of all felicity, by preserving them at once from sin, the miseries of this life,

and hell, and sending them certainly to heaven. But these people, in the excess of their charitable zeal, did not consider that it is forbidden to do evil that good may come thereof; that they had no right over the lives of these infants; that the greatest part of fathers and mothers are so carnal as to desire rather to keep their children about them than to see their throats cut, though it was to send them to heaven; and, lastly, that it is the duty of the magistrate to punish murder, though committed with a good intent.

It would seem that the Jews had the greatest right of any persons to rob and murder us; for although the Old Testament abounds with examples of toleration and indulgence, yet are there several instances of the contrary, and some very severe laws. God did at times command his people to kill all idolaters, reserving only the young women fit for the nuptial state. They look upon us as idolaters; and notwithstanding that we at present tolerate them, they might certainly, had they the power in their hands, cut us all off, excepting our young women.

Moreover, they would be under an indispensable obligation to exterminate the whole Turkish race. This speaks for itself, for the Turks are at present in possession of the countries of the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, etc., all of whom were laid under a curse, and their country, which was about five and twenty leagues in extent, was given to the Jews by several successive covenants; consequently they ought to resume possession of their own, which the Turks have usurped from them for upwards of a thousand years. But if the Jews were to reason in this manner nowadays, it is pretty certain we should make them no other answer than by impaling them alive.

These are the only cases in which persecution appears reasonable.

CHAPTER 19. ACCOUNT OF A CONTROVERSIAL DISPUTE WHICH HAPPENED IN CHINA

In the beginning of the reign of the great Emperor Cam-hi, a mandarin of the city of Canton, hearing a great noise and outcry in the house adjoining that he dwelt in, sent to know if they were murdering any one; but was told that it was only a Danish almoner, a Dutch chaplain, and a Jesuit disputing together; upon which he ordered them to be brought before him, and inquired of them the occasion of their quarrel?

The Jesuit, who was the first that spoke, said that it was a very grievous thing to him, who was always in the right, to have to do with people who were always in the wrong; that he at first began to reason with them with the greatest coolness; but that, at length, he could not but own his patience had left him.

The mandarin then represented to all three, with all imaginable candor, how necessary it was to observe decorum and good manners even in disputation; he told them that no one ever gave way to heat or passion in China, and desired to be informed of the nature of their dispute.

“My lord,” said the Jesuit, “I take you for judge in this affair. These two gentlemen refuse to submit to the decisions of the Council of Trent.”

“I am surprised at that,” replied the mandarin. Then turning towards the two refractory parties: “Gentlemen,” said he, “you ought to show a deference to the opinion of a great assembly. I do not know what the Council of Trent is, but a number of persons must always have opportunities of knowing better than one single man. No one ought to imagine that he knows more than all others, and that reason dwells only with him; this is the doctrine of our great Confucius; therefore, if you would take my advice, abide by what the Council of Trent has decreed.”

The Dane then began to speak in his turn. “Your excellence,” said he, “has delivered yourself with great wisdom and prudence; we have all that respect for great assemblies that we ought; and accordingly we submit entirely to the opinions of several councils that were held at the same time with that of Trent.”

“Oh! if that is the case,” said the mandarin, “I ask your pardon; you may doubtless be in the right. So, then, it seems you and the Dutchman are of one opinion against the Jesuit.”

“Not in the least,” answered the Dutchman; “this man here,” pointing to the Dane, “entertains notions almost as extravagant as those of the Jesuit, who pretends to so much mildness before you. ‘Sblood! there is no bearing this with patience.”

"I cannot conceive what you mean," said the mandarin; "are you not all three Christians? Are you not all three come to teach the Christian religion in our empire? And ought you not consequently have all the same tenets?"

"You see how it is, my lord," said the Jesuit; "these two men here are mortal enemies of each other; and yet both of them dispute against me; this makes it clear that they are both in the wrong, and that reason is on my side."

"I do not think it is so very clear," replied the mandarin; "for it may very well happen that you are all three in the wrong. But I should be glad to hear your arguments singly."

The Jesuit then made a long discourse, while the Dutchman and the Dane at every period shrugged up their shoulders, and the mandarin could not make anything of what he heard. The Dane now took the lead in his turn, while his two adversaries looked upon him with manifest signs of contempt; and the mandarin, when he had finished, remained as wise as before. The Dutchman had the same success. At length they began to talk all three together, and broke out into the most scurrilous revilings. The honest mandarin could hardly get in a word. At length he dismissed them, saying: "If you expect to have your doctrine tolerated here, begin by showing an example of it to one another."

At leaving the house the Jesuit met with a Dominican missionary, to whom he related what had passed; and told him that he had gained his cause; "for you may be assured," added he, "that truth will always prevail." The Dominican replied: "Had I been there, friend, you would not so easily have gained your cause; for I should have proved you to be an idolater and a liar." Upon this, there arose a violent dispute between them; and the Jesuit and the friar went to fisticuffs. The mandarin being informed of this scandalous behavior ordered them both to be sent to prison. A sub-mandarin asked his excellence how long he would please to have them remain in confinement. "Till they are both agreed," said the judge. "Then, my lord," answered the sub-mandarin, "they will remain in prison all their days." "Well, then," said the mandarin, "let them stay till they forgive one another." "That they will never do," rejoined the deputy; "I know them very well." "Indeed!" said the mandarin; "then let it be till they appear so to do."

CHAPTER 20. WHETHER IT IS OF SERVICE TO INDULGE THE PEOPLE IN SUPERSTITION

Such is the weakness and perversity of the human race that it is undoubtedly more eligible for them to be subject to every possible kind of superstition, provided it is not of a bloody nature, than to live without religion. Man has always stood in need of a curb; and though it was certainly very ridiculous to sacrifice to fauns, satyrs, and naiads, yet it was more reasonable and advantageous to adore even those fantastic images of the deity than to be given up to atheism. An atheist of any capacity, and invested with power, would be as dreadful a scourge to the rest of mankind as the most bloody enthusiast.

When men have not true notions of the Deity, false ideas must supply their place, like as in troublesome and calamitous times we are obliged to trade with base money when good is not to be procured. The heathens were afraid of committing crimes, lest they should be punished by their false gods. The Malabar dreads the anger of his pagods. Wherever there is a fixed community, religion is necessary; the laws are a curb upon open crimes, and religion upon private ones.

But when once men have embraced a pure and holy religion, superstition then becomes not only needless, but very hurtful. Those whom God has been pleased to nourish with bread ought not to be fed upon acorns.

Superstition is to religion what astrology is to astronomy, the foolish daughter of a wise mother. These two daughters, however, have for a long time governed this world with uncontrollable sway.

In those dark and barbarous times amongst us, when there were hardly two feudal lords who had a New Testament in their houses, it might be pardonable to present the common people with fables; I mean those feudal lords, their ignorant wives, and brutish vassals. They were then made to believe that St. Christopher carried the child Jesus on his shoulders from one side of the river to the other; they were entertained with stories of witches and witchcraft; they readily believed that St. Genou cured the gout, and St. Claire sore eyes. The children believed in hobgoblins, and their fathers in St. Francis' girdle; and relics swarmed out of number.

The common people have continued to be infected with the rust of these superstitions, even after religion became more enlightened. It is well known that when M. de Noailles, bishop of Châlons, ordered the pretended relic of the holy navel to be taken away and thrown into the fire, the whole city of Châlons joined in a prosecution against him; but he, who had resolution equal to his piety, soon brought the people of his diocese to believe that one may adore Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth, without having his navel in a church.

Those whom we call Jansenists were not a little instrumental in rooting out by degrees, from the minds of the greatest part of the nation, the many absurd notions which were the disgrace of our holy religion. And it no longer continued to be thought sufficient to repeat the prayer of thirty days to the Blessed Virgin, to obtain whatever one should ask, and sin with impunity.

At length the lower kind of people began to imagine that it was not St. Geneviève who gave rain or caused it to cease, but God Himself, who disposed the elements according to His good will and pleasure. The monks have been astonished to find their saints no longer perform miracles; and if the writers of the life of St. Francis Xavier were to come again into the world they would not venture to assert that their saint raised nine people from the dead; that he was at one and the same time both on the sea and on shore; or that a crab brought him his crucifix, which he had dropped out of his hand into the water.

It has happened much the same with regard to excommunications. Our French historians tell us that when King Robert was excommunicated by Pope Gregory V. for having married the Princess Bertha, who was his godmother, his domestics threw all the victuals that came from his table out of the windows, and that his queen Bertha was delivered of a goose as a punishment for this incestuous alliance. It is not likely that the pages of the presence to a king of France nowadays would throw his dinner into the streets if he should be excommunicated, nor would it be very readily believed that the queen was brought to bed of a bird.

If there are some few convulsionists yet to be met with in an obscure corner of the town it is a kind of lousy disease that infects only the dregs of the people. Reason is every day making her way into the tradesman's counting house, as well as into the palaces of our nobility. It behooves us then to cultivate the fruits of this reason, more especially as it is impossible to prevent them from sprouting forth. France, after having been enlightened by a Pascal, a Nicole, an Arnaud, a Bossuet, a Descartes, a Gassendi, a Bayle, a Fontenelle, and other bright geniuses like them, is no longer to be governed as in the times of Garasse and Menot.

If the masters of error, I mean the great masters who were so long a time prayed to and revered for brutalizing the human species, were at present to enjoin us to believe that the seed must rot in the earth before it can sprout; that this earth continues immovable on its basis without revolving about the sun; that the tides are not the natural effect of gravitation; that the rainbow is not formed by the refraction and reflection of the rays of light, etc., and were they to bring certain passages of Scripture badly understood and worse interpreted to authenticate their ordinances, how would they be looked upon by every person of common capacity? Would fools be thought too harsh a name to be imposed on them? But if they should have recourse to compulsion and persecution to establish their insolent ignorance, would not madmen and butchers be deemed a proper appellation?

The more that monkish superstition becomes contemptible, the more bishops are respected and the clergy in general esteemed. They do good in their professions, whereas the monkish superstition of foreign climates occasioned a great deal of mischief. But of all superstitions, that of hating our neighbor on account of his opinion is surely the most dangerous! And will it not be granted me that there would be more sense and reason in adoring the holy navel, the holy prepuce, and the milk and the robe of the Blessed Virgin, than to detest and persecute our brother?

CHAPTER 21. VIRTUE IS BETTER THAN LEARNING

The fewer dogmas, the fewer disputes; and the fewer disputes, the fewer calamities: if this is not true I am much mistaken.

Religion is instituted to make us happy in this life and the next. But what is required to make us happy in the life to come? To be just. And in this? To be merciful and forbearing.

It would be the height of madness to pretend to bring all mankind to think exactly in the same manner in regard to metaphysics. We might, with much greater ease, subject the whole universe by force of arms than subject the minds of all the inhabitants of one single village.

But Euclid found no difficulty in persuading every one of the truths of geometry. And why? Because there is not one of them which is not a self-evident corollary on this simple axiom: "Two and two make four." But is it not altogether the same with relation to the complicated maxims in metaphysics and divinity.

Eusebius and Socrates tell us that when Bishop Alexander and Arius the priest began first to dispute in what manner the Logos or word proceeded from the Father, the Emperor Constantine wrote to them in the following terms: "You are great fools to dispute about things you do not understand."

If the two contending parties had been wise enough to acknowledge that the emperor was in the right Christendom would not have been drenched in blood for upwards of three centuries.

And, indeed, what can be more ridiculous, or rather detestable, than to address mankind in this manner: "My friends, it is not sufficient that you are faithful subjects, dutiful children, tender parents, and upright neighbors; that you live in the continual practice of virtue; that you are grateful, benevolent, and generous, and worship the Saviour of the world in peace; it is furthermore required of you that you should know how a thing may be begotten from all eternity, without being made from all eternity; and if you cannot distinguish the homoousian in the hypostasis, we declare to you that you are damned to all eternity; and in the meantime we shall begin by cutting your throats"?

If such a decision as this had been presented to Archimedes, Posidonius, Varro, Cato, or Cicero, what answer do you think they would have given to it?

Constantine, however, did not persevere in silencing the two parties; he might easily have summoned the chiefs of the disputes before him, and have demanded of them by what authority they disturbed the peace of mankind. "Are you," he might have said, "possessed of the genealogy of the heavenly family? What is it to you whether

the Son was made or begotten, provided that you are faithful to Him; that you preach a sound doctrine, and practise that doctrine if you can? I have committed many faults in my lifetime, and so have you; I have been ambitious, so have you; it has cost me many falsehoods and cruelties to attain to the empire; I have murdered my nearest relative that stood in my way; but I now repent, and am willing to make atonement for my crime by restoring peace to the Roman Empire; do not you prevent me from doing the only good action which can possibly make my former cruel ones forgotten; but rather assist me to end my days in peace." Perhaps Constantine might not, by this speech, have prevailed over the minds of the disputants, and perhaps he might rather be pleased with presiding in a council in a long crimson robe, and his forehead glittering with jewels.

This, however, opened a passage to all those dreadful calamities which overran the West from Asia. Out of every contested verse there issued a fury armed with a quibble and a poniard, who inspired mankind at once with folly and cruelty. The Huns, the Heruli, the Goths, and Vandals, who came afterwards, did infinitely less mischief; and the greatest they did was that of afterwards engaging in the same fatal disputes.

CHAPTER 22. OF UNIVERSAL TOLERATION

It does not require any great art or studied elocution to prove that Christians ought to tolerate one another. Nay, I shall go still farther and say that we ought to look upon all men as our brethren. How! call a Turk, a Jew, and a Siamese, my brother? Yes, doubtless; for are we not all children of the same parent, and the creatures of the same Creator?

But these people hold us in contempt, and call us idolaters! Well, then, I should tell them that they were to blame. And I fancy that I could stagger the headstrong pride of an imaum, or a talapoin, were I to address them in the following manner:

“This little globe, which is no more than a point, rolls, together with many other globes, in that immensity of space in which we are all alike confounded. Man, who is an animal, about five feet high, is certainly a very inconsiderable part of the creation; but one of those hardly visible beings says to others of the same kind inhabiting another spot of the globe: Harken to me, for the God of all these worlds has enlightened me. There are about nine hundred millions of us little insects who inhabit the earth, but my ant-hill is alone cherished by God, who holds all the rest in horror and detestation; those who live with me upon my spot will alone be happy, and all the rest eternally wretched.”

They would here stop me short and ask, “What madman could have made so ridiculous a speech?” I should then be obliged to answer them, “It is yourselves.” After which I should endeavor to pacify them, but perhaps that would not be very easy.

I might next address myself to the Christians and venture to say, for example, to a Dominican, one of the judges of the inquisition: “Brother, you know that every province in Italy has a jargon of its own and that they do not speak in Venice and Bergamo as they do in Florence. The Academy della Crusca has fixed the standard of the Italian language; its dictionary is an unerring rule, and Buon Matei’s grammar is an infallible guide, from neither of which we ought to depart; but do you think that the president of the academy, or in his absence Buon Matei, could in conscience order the tongues of all the Venetians and Bergamese, who persisted in their own country dialect, to be cut out?”

The inquisitor would, perhaps, make me this reply: “There is a very wide difference; here the salvation of your soul is concerned; and it is entirely for your good that the directory of the inquisition ordains that you shall be seized, upon the deposition of a single person, though of the most infamous character; that you shall have no person to plead for you, nor even be acquainted with the name of your accuser; that the inquisitor shall promise you favor, and afterwards condemn you; that he shall make you undergo five different kinds of torture, and that at length you shall be either

whipped, sent to the galleys, or burned at the stake;⁶⁶ Father Ivonet, and the doctors, Chucalon, Zanchinus, Campegius, Royas, Telinus, Gomarus, Diabarus, and Gemelinus are exactly of this opinion, consequently this pious practice will not admit of contradiction.”

To all which I should take the liberty of making the following reply: “Dear brother, you may perhaps be in the right, and I am perfectly well convinced of the great benefit you intend me; but may I not be saved without all this?”

It is true that these horrible absurdities do not every day deform the face of the earth; but they have been very frequent, and one might easily collect instances enough to make a volume much larger than that of the Holy Gospels, which condemn such practices. It is not only very cruel to persecute in this short life those who do not think in the same manner as we do, but I very much doubt if there is not an impious boldness in pronouncing them eternally damned. In my opinion, it little befits such insects of a summer’s day as we are thus to anticipate the decrees of Providence. I am very far from opposing that maxim of the Church, that “out of her pale there is no salvation”; on the contrary, I respect that and every other part of her doctrine; but, after all, can we be supposed to be intimately acquainted with the ways of God, or to fathom the whole depth of His mercy? Is it not permitted us to hope in Him, as well as to fear Him? Is it not sufficient if we are faithful sons of the Church, without every individual presuming to wrest the power out of the hand of God, and determine, before Him, the future destiny of our fellow creatures?

When we wear mourning for a king of England, Denmark, Sweden, or Prussia, do we say that we are in mourning for a damned soul that is burning in hell? There are about forty millions of inhabitants in Europe who are not members of the Church of Rome; should we say to every one of them, “Sir, as I look upon you to be infallibly damned, I shall neither eat, drink, converse, nor have any connections with you?”

Is there an ambassador of France who, when he is presented to the grand seignior for an audience, will seriously say to himself, his sublime highness will infallibly burn to all eternity for having submitted to be circumcised? If he really thought that the grand seignior was a mortal enemy to God, and the object of divine vengeance, could he converse with such a person; nay, indeed, ought he to be sent to him? But how could we carry on any commerce, or perform any of the civil duties of society, if we were convinced that we were conversing with persons destined to eternal damnation?

O ye different worshippers of a God of mercy! if ye have cruel hearts, if, while you adore that Deity who has placed the whole of His law in these few words, “Love God and your neighbor,” you have loaded that pure and holy law with sophistical and unintelligible disputes, if you have lighted the flames of discord sometimes for a new word, and at others for a single letter only; if you have annexed eternal punishment

⁶⁶ See that excellent book, entitled, “The Manual of the Inquisition.”

to the omission of some few words, or of certain ceremonies which other people cannot comprehend, I must say to you with tears of compassion for mankind: "Transport yourselves with me to that great instant in which all men are to receive judgment from the hand of God, who will then do unto every one according to their works, and with me behold all the dead of past ages appearing in His presence. Are you very sure that our heavenly Father and Creator will say to the wise and virtuous Confucius, to the great legislator Solon, to Pythagoras, Zaleucus, Socrates, Plato, the divine Antoninus, the good Trajan, to Titus, the delight of human kind, and to many others who have been the models of human kind: 'Depart from me, wretches! into torments that know neither alleviation nor end; but are, like Himself, everlasting. But you, my well-beloved servants, John Châtel, Ravailac, Cartouche, Damiens, etc., who have died according to the rules prescribed by the Church, enter into the joy of your Lord, and sit forever at my right hand in majesty and glory.'"

Methinks I see you start with horror at these words; however, as they have escaped me, let them pass; I shall say nothing more to you.

CHAPTER 23. AN ADDRESS TO THE DEITY

No longer then do I address myself to men, but to Thee, God of all beings, of all worlds, and of all ages; if it may be permitted weak creatures lost in immensity and imperceptible to the rest of the universe, to presume to petition Thee for aught, who hast given plenty of all things, and whose decrees are immutable as eternal. Deign to look with an eye of pity on the errors annexed to our natures! let not these errors prove the sources of misery to us! Thou hast not given us hearts to hate, nor hands to kill one another; grant then that we may mutually aid and assist each other to support the burden of this painful and transitory life! May the trifling differences in the garments that cover our frail bodies, in the mode of expressing our insignificant thoughts, in our ridiculous customs and our imperfect laws, in our idle opinions, and in our several conditions and situations, that appear so disproportionate in our eyes, and all are equal in Thine; in a word, may the slight variations that are found amongst the atoms called men not be made use of by us as signals of mutual hatred and persecution! May those who worship Thee by the light of tapers at noonday bear charitably with those who content themselves with the light of that glorious planet Thou hast placed in the midst of the heavens! May those who dress themselves in a robe of white linen to teach their hearers that Thou art to be loved and feared, not detest or revile those who teach the same doctrine in long cloaks of black wool! May it be accounted the same to adore Thee in a dialect formed from an ancient or a modern language! May those who, clothed in vestments of crimson or violet color, rule over a little parcel of that heap of dirt called the world, and are possessed of a few round fragments of a certain metal, enjoy without pride or insolence what they call grandeur and riches, and may others look on them without envy; for Thou knowest, O God, that there is nothing in all these vanities proper to inspire envy or pride.

May all men remember that they are brethren! May they alike abhor that tyranny which seeks to subject the freedom of the will, as they do the rapine which tears from the arms of industry the fruits of its peaceful labors! And if the scourge of war is not to be avoided, let us not mutually hate and destroy each other in the midst of peace; but rather make use of the few moments of our existence to join in praising, in a thousand different languages, from one extremity of the world to the other, Thy goodness, O all-merciful Creator, to whom we are indebted for that existence!

CHAPTER 24. POSTSCRIPT

While I was employed in writing this treatise, purely with a desire to make mankind more benevolent and charitable, another author was using his pen to the very contrary purpose; for every one has his particular way of thinking. This writer has published a small code of persecution under the title of "The Harmony of Religion and Humanity"; but this last word seems to be an error of the press, and should be read "Inhumanity."

The author of this holy libel takes St. Augustine for his example and authority, who, after having preached charity and forbearance, afterwards taught the doctrine of persecution, because he then had the upper hand and was naturally of a changeable disposition. He also quotes M. Bossuet, the bishop of Meaux, who persecuted the famous Fénelon, archbishop of Cambrai, whom he accused of having said in print that God was well worthy to be loved for His own sake.

I will readily grant that Bossuet was a very eloquent writer, and it must also be confessed that the bishop of Hippo⁶⁷ is frequently inconsistent, and in general more dry and barren than the rest of the African writers; and I must take the liberty of addressing them both in the words of Armande, in Molière's "Learned Ladies": "If we should imitate any person, it certainly should be in the most pleasing part of their character." I should say to the bishop of Hippo: "My lord, as you have had two opinions, your lordship will be kind enough to suffer me to abide by your first, since I really think it the best."

To the bishop of Meaux I shall say: "My lord, you are certainly a very great man, and, in my opinion, have to the full as much learning as St. Augustine, and are far superior to him in eloquence; but then, my lord, why did you so distress your brother prelate, who had as much eloquence as yourself, though in another kind, and whose disposition was more amiable than yours."

The author of this "Treatise on Inhumanity"—for so I shall call it—is neither a Bossuet nor an Augustine, but seems admirably well qualified for an inquisitor; I wish he were at the head of that noble tribunal in Goa. Besides, he is a politician, and parades it in his book with several great maxims of state. "If you have to deal with any considerable number of heretics," says he, "it will be necessary to use gentle methods, and try to bring them over by persuasion; but if they are only a few in number, then make free use of the gibbet and the galleys; you will find the advantage of it." This is the good prelate's own advice in the 89th and 90th pages of his work.

⁶⁷ Now Bona, a town of Constantine in Africa. St. Augustine was bishop of this see above forty years. It now belongs to Algiers.

Heaven be praised, I am an orthodox Catholic, and therefore am in no danger of what the Huguenots call martyrdom; but if ever this bishop should come to be prime minister, as he seems to flatter himself in his libels, I give him my promise that I will set out for England the very day his commission is signed.

In the meantime, we ought to be thankful to Providence that those of his principles are always wretched reasoners. This writer has not scrupled to quote Bayle among the advocates for non-toleration, which is being equally sensible and honest; for, because Bayle agrees that it is necessary to punish incendiaries and rogues, our bishop directly concludes that we ought to persecute with fire and sword every honest and peaceable person. See page 98.

Almost the whole of his book is no other than a copy of the apology for St. Bartholomew's day. It is the apologist himself or his echo. But be this matter as it will, it is devoutly to be wished that neither the master nor the pupil may ever be at the head of an administration.

But if ever such a thing should come to pass, let me beg leave to present them beforehand with the following hint in regard to a passage in the ninety-third page of the bishop's holy libel:

"Is the welfare of the whole nation to be sacrificed to the ease of only the twentieth part?"

Let us suppose then for once that there are twenty Roman Catholics in France to one Huguenot, I am by no means for the Huguenots eating these twenty Catholics; but, at the same time, is there any reason why the twenty Catholics should eat the Huguenot? Besides, why should we hinder this latter from marrying? Are there not many bishops, abbots and monks that have estates in Dauphiny, Gevaudan, Agde and Carcassonne? And have not most of these farmers to manage those estates who do not believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation? Is it not the interest of these bishops and others that the farmers should have numerous families? And should one be permitted to have children that takes the sacrament in both kinds? Surely there is neither justice nor common honesty in this!

"The revocation of the Edict of Nantes," says my author, "has not been productive of so great inconveniences as has been generally alleged."

I must own if any have added to the number of bad effects that act produced, they must have greatly exaggerated; but then it is the common fault of all historians to exaggerate, as it is of all controversial writers to disguise the greatest part of those evils with which they are reproachable. But for once let us pin our faith neither upon the doctors of the Sorbonne nor the preachers of Amsterdam. Let us take for judges in this matter those who have had the best opportunities of being acquainted with what they wrote about; and in the first place I shall cite the Count d'Avaux,

ambassador from France to the States-General during the years 1685, 1686, 1687, and 1688.

In the hundred and eighty-first page of the fifth volume of his works he says that one man only offered to discover upwards of twenty millions of livres that the persecuted Huguenots had found means to send out of France. Louis XIV., in answer to this, writes to M. d'Avaux: "The accounts which I daily receive of the prodigious numbers of those who are converted convince me that in a short time the most obstinate will follow the example of the others."

This letter of the king's plainly shows that he was firmly persuaded of the greatness of his power. He was accustomed to hear said to him every morning: "Sire, you are the greatest monarch upon earth; you have but to declare your opinion and the whole world will be proud to follow it." Pelisson, who had accumulated a prodigious fortune in the place of head clerk of the treasury, who had been three years confined in the Bastille as an accomplice with Fouquet, who, changing his religion, was from a Calvinist made a Roman, a deacon and a beneficed priest, who composed hymns for the mass and verses to Chloe, and who had got the post of comptroller and converter in chief of the heretics; this very Pelisson, I say, used to produce every morning a long list of pretended abjurations purchased at the rate of seven or eight crowns apiece, and made his prince believe that he could, whenever he pleased, convert the whole Mahometan empire at the same price. In short, every one was in league to impose upon him; how then was it possible for him to avoid being deceived?

This very M. d'Avaux also acquaints the court that one Vincent kept upwards of five hundred workmen employed in the neighborhood of Angoulême, and that it would be of great prejudice to the nation should they quit the kingdom. Vol. v., page 194.

The count likewise mentions two regiments at that time actually being raised by French refugee officers for the service of the prince of Orange; he observes that the entire crews of three French ships of war had deserted and entered into the same service, and that besides the two regiments above mentioned, the prince was forming a company of cadet refugees, who were to be commanded by two refugee captains. Page 240. The same ambassador in another letter to M. de Seignelay, dated the 9th of May, 1686, says that he can no longer conceal the uneasiness it gives him to see the manufactures of France transported into Holland, where they will be established, never more to return.

Add to these incontestable evidences the testimonies of the several intendants of the kingdom in 1698, and then let any one judge whether the revocation of the Edict of Nantes has not done more harm than good, notwithstanding the opinion of the worthy author of the "Harmony of Religion and Inhumanity."

A Marshal of France well known for his superior abilities some years ago made use of the following expression: "I know not whether the practice of dragooning may ever have been necessary, but I am sure it is very necessary to lay it aside."

And here I must confess that I was apprehensive. I had gone rather too far in publishing the letter from a priest to Father Letellier, in which the use of gunpowder is so humanely proposed. I said to myself, people will not believe me; they will certainly think this letter is a forged piece; but luckily my scruples were entirely eased when in perusing the "Harmony of Religion and Inhumanity," I came to the following Christian and charitable passage:

"The entire extirpation of the Protestants in France would not weaken that kingdom more than a plentiful bleeding would a patient of a sound constitution." Page 149.

Here this pious minister of Christ, who, but a few pages before, says that the Protestants make about a twentieth part of the nation, is for shedding the blood of that twentieth part, and advises the operation with as much unconcern as he would the taking away two or three ounces from the arm of a plethoric person! Heaven preserve us and him from the other three-twentieths!

Now, if this worthy prelate is for destroying the twentieth part of the nation at one stroke, might not Father Letellier's friend and correspondent as well have proposed the blowing up, stabbing or poisoning the one-third? Hence then it appears very probable that such a letter was really written to Letellier.

Our pious author concludes upon the whole that persecution is an excellent thing; "for," says he, "we do not find it absolutely condemned by our Saviour." Neither has our Saviour expressly condemned those who may set fire to the four corners of Paris; but is that a reason for canonizing all incendiaries?

In this manner, while the gentle voice of Nature is everywhere pleading the cause of charity and benevolence, Enthusiasm, her avowed enemy, is continually howling against it; and while Peace opens her calm bosom to all mankind, Persecution is busied in forging weapons for their destruction. Let it be your care, then, O ye princely arbiters, who have restored peace to the world, to pass sentence between the spirit of mutual love and harmony and that of discord and bloodshed.

CHAPTER 25. SEQUEL AND CONCLUSION

On the 7th of March, 1763, a council of state being held at Versailles, at which all the great ministers assisted and the chancellor sat as president, M. de Crosne, one of the masters of requests, made a report of the affair of the Calas family with all the impartiality of a judge, and the precision of one perfectly well acquainted with the case, and with the plain truth and inspired eloquence of an orator and a statesman, which is alone suitable to such an assembly. The gallery was filled with a prodigious number of persons of all ranks, who impatiently waited the decision of the council. In a short time a deputation was sent to the king to acquaint him that the council had come to a unanimous resolution: that the parliament of Toulouse should transmit to them the whole account of its proceedings, together with the reasons on which it had framed the sentence condemning John Calas to be broken on the wheel; when his majesty was pleased to concur in the decree of the council.

Justice and humanity then still continue to reside amongst mankind! and principally in the council of a king beloved, and deserving so to be; who, with his ministers, his chancellor and all the members of his council, have not disdained to employ their time in weighing all the circumstances relating to the sufferings of a private family with as much attention as if it had been the most interesting affair of war or peace; whilst the judges have shown themselves inspired by a love of equity and a tender regard to the interests of their fellow-subjects. All praise be given therefore to that Merciful Being, the only giver of integrity and every other virtue.

And here we take occasion to declare that we never had the least acquaintance with the unfortunate man who was condemned on the most frivolous evidence by the court of justice of Toulouse, in direct contradiction to the ordinances of our king and the laws of all nations, nor with his son, Mark Antony, the extraordinary manner of whose death led the judges into the error they committed; nor with the mother, whose sufferings call aloud for compassion, nor yet with her innocent daughter, who, together with her, travelled upwards of six hundred miles to lay their virtue and distresses at the foot of the throne.

The God in whose presence we declare this knows that we have been actuated solely by the love of justice, mercy, and truth, in delivering our thoughts in the manner we have done on toleration, in regard to John Calas, who fell a victim to non-toleration and persecution.

We had not the least intent to offend the eight judges of Toulouse in saying that they were mistaken, as the council of state itself supposes them to have been; on the contrary, we have opened a way for them to vindicate themselves to all Europe by acknowledging that equivocal circumstances, and the clamor of a headstrong and enraged populace, had biassed their judgment; and by asking pardon of the widow and repairing as much as in them lies the ruin they have brought upon an innocent

family, by adding to the number of those who succor them in their affliction. They have put the father to death unjustly; let them then be as fathers to his children, provided those children are willing to accept of this poor token of repentance from them. It would be infinitely to the honor of the judges to make such an offer, and to that of the injured family to refuse it.

But it principally behoves the Sieur David, capitol of Toulouse, to set the example of remorse and penitence, who was the first to raise this persecution against innocence, and who insulted the hapless father of a family when expiring on the scaffold. This was indeed an unparalleled act of cruelty; but as God is willing to show mercy and forgiveness it is the duty of mortals to pardon in like manner those who make atonement for their offences.

I have received a letter from a friend in Languedoc, dated the 20th of February, 1763, of which the following is an extract:

“Your treatise on toleration appears to be full of humanity and truth; but I am afraid it will rather hurt than serve the Calas family. It may gall the eight judges who were for the sentence, and they may apply to the parliament to have your book burnt; besides, the bigots, of whom you are sensible there is always a considerable number, will oppose the voice of reason with the clamors of prejudice,” etc.

My answer was as follows:

“The eight judges of Toulouse may, if they please, have my book burnt. It will cost them very little trouble, since the “Provincial Letters,” which had infinitely superior merit to anything of mine, were condemned to the same fate. Every one, you know, is at liberty to burn in his own house such books as he does not like.

“My treatise cannot possibly do either hurt or good to the Calas family, with whom I have not the least acquaintance. The king’s council is no less resolute than impartial; it judges according to law and equity of those things which fall properly under its cognizance; but it will not interfere with a common pamphlet, written upon a subject altogether foreign from the affair under consideration.

“If a hundred volumes in folio should be written in condemnation or vindication of the judges of Toulouse, or of toleration, neither the council nor any other court of justice would look upon these as law matters.

“I readily agree with you that there are numbers of enthusiasts who will set up the cry against me, but at the same time I do insist that I shall have as many sensible readers who will make use of their reason.

“I hear that the Parliament of Toulouse and some other courts of justice have a method of proceeding peculiar to themselves. They admit fourths, thirds, and sixths of a proof; so that with six hearsays on one side, three on the other, and four-fourths of a presumption, they frame three complete proofs; and in consequence of this

curious demonstration will condemn you a man to be broken upon the wheel without mercy. Now, the least acquaintance with the art of logic or reasoning would point out a different method of proceeding to them. What we call a half proof can never amount to more than a suspicion; but there is no such thing in reality as a half proof; for a thing must either be proved or not proved; there is no medium.

“A million of suspicions put together can no more frame a regular proof than a million of ciphers can compose an arithmetical number.

“There are fourths of tones or sounds in music, and these are to be expressed; but there are no fourths in truths, nor in reasoning.

“Two witnesses agreeing in the same deposition, are esteemed to make a proof; but this is not enough; these two witnesses should be clear of all passion and prejudice, and, above all, their testimony should be in every part consonant with reason.

“Suppose four persons of the most respectable appearance were to come and swear in a court of justice that they saw an infirm old man take a vigorous young fellow by the collar and toss him out of a window, to the distance of six or seven feet; certainly such deponents ought to be sent to a madhouse.

“But the eight judges of Toulouse condemned John Calas upon a much more improbable accusation; for there was no one appeared to swear that he had actually seen this feeble old man of seventy seize a stout young fellow of twenty-eight, and hang him up. Indeed, certain enthusiastic wretches said that they had been told by other enthusiasts like themselves that they had been told by some of their own sect that they had heard that John Calas had by a supernatural strength overcome his son and hanged him. And thus was the most absurd of all sentences passed upon the most absurd of all evidence.

“In fine, there is no remedy against such kind of proceedings but that those who purchase their seats in a court of justice should, for the future, be obliged to study a little better.”

This treatise on toleration is a petition which humanity with all submission presents to power and prudence. I have sowed a grain that may perhaps produce a rich harvest. We may hope everything from time, from the goodness of the heart of our gracious monarch, the wisdom of his ministers, and the spirit of sound reason, which begins to diffuse its salutary influence over all minds.

Nature addresses herself thus to mankind: “I have formed you all weak and ignorant, to vegetate a few moments on that earth which you are afterwards to fatten with your carcasses. Let your weakness then teach you to succor each other, and as you are ignorant, bear with and endeavor mutually to instruct each other. Even if ye were all of the same way of thinking, which certainly will never come to pass, and there should be one single person only found amongst you who differed from you in belief, you ought to forgive him, for it is I who make him think in the manner he does. I have

given you hands to cultivate the earth, and a faint glimmering of reason to conduct yourselves by, and I have planted in your hearts a spirit of compassion, that you may assist each other under the burden of life. Do not smother that spark, nor suffer it to be corrupted, for know it is of divine origin; neither substitute the wretched debates of the schools in the place of the voice of nature.

“It is I alone who unite you all, in despite of yourselves, by your mutual wants, even in the midst of those bloody wars that you undertake for the slightest causes, and that afford a continual scene of error, chances, and misfortunes. It is I alone who, in a nation, prevent the fatal effects of the inextinguishable differences that subsist between the sword and the law, between those two professions and the clergy, and between even the citizen and the husbandman. Though ignorant of the limits of their own prerogatives, they are in spite of themselves obliged to listen to my voice, which speaks to their hearts. It is I alone who maintain equity in the courts of judicature, where otherwise everything would be determined by error and caprice, in the midst of a confused heap of laws, framed too often at a venture and to supply an immediate call, differing from each other in every province and town, and almost always contradictory in the same place. I alone can inspire the love and knowledge of justice, while the laws inspire only chicanery and subterfuge. He who listens to me seldom forms a wrong judgment, while he who seeks only to reconcile contradictory opinions loses himself in the fruitless labor.

“There is an immense edifice whose foundation I laid with my own hands. It was at once solid and simple; all mankind might have entered into it with safety, but they, in seeking to ornament, overloaded it with useless and fantastic decorations. The building is continually falling to decay, and they gather up the stones to throw at one another; while I am incessantly calling out to them, ‘Hold, madmen! clear away the ruins with which you are surrounded, and which you yourselves have made; come and live with me in uninterrupted tranquillity within my mansion, that is not to be shaken.’”

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