DISCOURSE ON UNIVERSAL HISTORY
Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet

DISCOURSE
ON
UNIVERSAL HISTORY

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Edited and with an Introduction by
OREST RANUM

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Series Editor’s Preface

In an age, like our own, when the pervasiveness of the scientific approach has diffused the cumulative faith that holds the whole validity of the past to be subsumed in the present, it behooves us to single out the prominent features of that past if we are to know just what it is that we are subsuming in our present. The series of *Classic European Historians* has been designed with this purpose in mind. It makes available once more those historians who have contributed to the assumptions governing the way we look at the past and those historical works that have contributed to the shapes of the past we see when we do look at it; and it reintroduces these historians and these works with commentaries by historians of our own vintage who adduce the original circumstances and purposes of the eminent authors and their classics and show us how to read them for their essential contributions.

The respective shares of a classic historian and his work in the immortality that his history has achieved are often unequal: the approach of a Carlyle or a Herder may remain memorable in works that have themselves become inconsequential, while the works of a Mommsen or a Taine may far transcend the supporting preconceptions of their authors and continue to bulk much larger in the history of their fields than the authors do in the history of history. But in the case of the present volume, the importance of the historian and the importance of his genre coincide. Bossuet’s *Discourse on Universal History*, the oldest member of our series to date, serves both to remind us of the man who, perhaps more than any other, stands for the transmission of the early Christian historical tradition into the modern period and to recall the early-modern model for what would become the distinct and independent genre of world history.
Professor Ranum's introduction provides a magisterial guide to Bossuet's idea of history; to what this idea meant in terms of the precedent and contemporary approaches to history that served as its context; to the investment of Bossuet's ideas about history in the structure and character of the Discourse; and to the circumstances and motives of the composition which, whether reinforcing or deflecting its historical purpose, must be taken into account in the interpretation of the history it conveyed. What Ranum shows us here, above all, is how the transtemporal moral and religious considerations which we claim to have detached from the historical process and acknowledge—when we acknowledge them at all—only as imposed categories relevant to historical knowledge were for Bossuet and his contemporaries integral components of historical reality itself, as perceivable for historical knowledge as any other feature of men's action in the past. What he shows us, too, is Bossuet's positive moral response to the reforming Catholicism of the seventeenth century and a dialogue with his modernist contemporaries that go far to explain the persistence of his subsequent fame and the recurrence of his revivals in more recent times.

Bossuet wrote at a time when the genre of universal history was in the midst of the secularization that was excluding sacred history from its purview, that was loosening the structure based on the biblical projection of the Four Monarchies, and that would produce the rational pattern of pragmatic universal history characteristic of the following century. Clearly he was a representative of the traditional resistance to this change. But there were two factors in his resistance that have helped to perpetuate cardinal features of the Christian universal history that he expounded and even to prepare them for incorporation into the secular kind of universal history that he would have deprecated. First, Bossuet's address of his publication to a popular audience (a culturally significant consuming public even within the limits of seventeenth-century literacy) allowed its approach to persist in the favorable environment of a Christian middle culture until the religious revival of the nineteenth century brought the work itself back into eminence. Second, Bossuet's fusion of the Christian framework he inherited from Augustine and Eusebius with the humanist motifs of classical rhetoric and civic
morals that were prevalent in his own day gave a modern cast to his providential structure of history and equipped it for its transfer into the secularized rational schema that would loom so large in the universal history of the next two centuries. The coherence which the designs of a transcendent divinity lent to human history would pass over into the world histories from which the interventions of the divinity themselves had been excluded, and, once there, this universal connectedness would become an essential feature whose tension with the ideal of covering the whole extent of the multicultural human past has constituted the basic problem of world history ever since.

Bossuet therefore is not nearly so archaic as he seems on the surface to read. If due account is taken of his position astride the turn from remote to congenial ways of thinking in the seventeenth century, we may see in him one of the mediators between the ancient and the modern approaches to history who have secured continuity for the historiographical tradition of the West and who, by the same token, have tended to limit universal history to the kind of continuity characteristic only of the West. For better and for worse, then, we have the Bossuets of our past with us still.

Leonard Krieger
Editor's Introduction

That great synthesis of faith and history which Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet gave the world in the Discourse on Universal History was, at its inception in the late 1670s, not merely a statement of Bossuet's own beliefs on the meaning of history but also a defense of the historical foundations of Christianity against those who had very recently attacked them. Like almost all of Bossuet's later works, the Discourse came forth as an œuvre de circonstance and in this case was directed at refuting the dangerous and heretical thought and scholarship of the Dutch philosopher Spinoza and the Oratorian priest and biblical antiquarian Richard Simon. And for good measure, since Louis XIV, Bossuet's royal patron, was quarreling with Pope Innocent XI, Bossuet felt it might also be beneficial to explain how the French monarchy had sustained the early Church, including the bishops of Rome, during the early time of troubles under the later Roman Empire.

Bossuet also had a less explicit purpose, one more in keeping with the venerable tradition of humanistic and preceptorial writing in French political culture. The Discourse was also written to edify and to instruct both the dauphin and his father, the Sun King, Louis XIV. In any event, Bossuet saw little contradiction between his explicit aims as controversialist and the implicit demands upon him as preceptor and writer. His aims complement one another across the bridge of reformed Catholic evangelicalism, the one overriding purpose which infuses all of Bossuet's works and acts.

1. The best introductions to the meaning of history and its function in seventeenth-century French political culture are P. Ariès, Le Temps de l'histoire (Monaco, 1954), and W. F. Church, "France," chap. 2 in National Consciousness, History, and Political Culture in Early-Modern Europe, ed. O. Ranum (Baltimore, 1974).
Always ready to enter the lists of controversy on virtually any subject where he believed Christian and royal principles were being attacked, Bossuet spent most of his mature life as a writer replying to those who he felt were tearing down the faith. Tonsured at seven and raised in reformist circles of the French Catholic Church to be their "son" and defender, 2 Bossuet never ceased to attempt to repair breaches in the intellectual walls of what he deemed the one historic faith and church and the one true and divinely sustained monarchy, that of France.

Readers of the twentieth century have difficulty in reconstructing the climate in which the Discourse was written. The mood at Versailles was exuberant, religious, sensual, and bellicose. A kind of wild religious and political enthusiasm had developed at Versailles, the epicenter of French political culture. Bossuet had done his part to create this mood through his great sermons; he could move the most cynical courtiers to tears and edify the Sun King himself. Beginning in the early 1660s and continuing just beyond 1680, this mood led men like Bossuet to the sincere belief that theirs was a great age and that they were the participants in one of the greatest historical moments of all time.

Yet, while supporting this mood and the king's policies, Bossuet always courageously attempted to modify Louis's policies and personal behavior to conform to the preceptor's ideal of the Christian prince. No matter how naive and dangerous this religious-political enthusiasm would appear to later generations of Frenchmen or how diabolical it seemed to contemporary foreigners, it provided the foundations for Bossuet's Discourse on Universal History, the first edition of which appeared in 1681. As an eloquent speech, joining history and religion, which would continue to be read right down to the death of the classicistic-Christian element in French culture during World War I, the Discourse epitomized this view of religion and Louis XIV and perpetuated it for the generations which clung to it as a life preserver in a stormy sea of secularization and republicanism.

This mood of enthusiasm also had deep religious and national significance; indeed, the possibility that the reformed French church

might go its own way and become independent of Rome seemed real during the very years in which Bossuet wrote the Discourse on Universal History. What Louis XIV himself referred to as the "immortal quarrels" over theological and ecclesiastical matters carried on between Jesuits and Jansenists, and between Ultramontanists and Gallicans, had embroiled the universities, the high courts of law, the king, and the pope in an intense conflict which threatened to end in a schism between France and the papacy. This conflict had not been of Louis's making, though he had exacerbated it early in his reign. By the 1680s, however, a Gallican movement supporting the French king's claims to temporal rights over the Church had grown so strong that a declaration of independence from Rome by the French church seemed possible. Bossuet, who never ceased to stress the need for the unity of Christendom and the authority of popes over spiritual matters, nevertheless shared the Gallican aspirations of his fellow bishops. Thus in 1682 he drafted the famous Four Articles, which were voted by the Assembly of the Clergy, accepted by the king, and sent to Rome in what was thought to be a conciliatory gesture in the conflict between Louis and the pope. The devout and stormy Pope Innocent XI could only have interpreted these articles as a challenge to his authority. Once again the special mood of enthusiasm for divine-right monarchy, conquest, and national unity at Versailles had carried Bossuet away and had led him to accept a strong Gallican position. The thought contained in the Four Articles is that of the Discourse: the eloquent synthesis of what were believed to be self-evident historical truths. Yet these "truths" were intensely Gallican and offensive to the pope. Bossuet played a leading role in the subsequent tense negotiations between Rome and Versailles, because his voice was helpful in abating the efforts being made by the more virulent Gallicans to

counsel Louis XIV to make no concessions to Rome. In Bossuet the king found temporarily the ideal prelate, whose voice could be counted upon to calm the intense doctrinal and administrative controversies within the French church. As the son of a Gallican parlementaire, pupil of the Ultramontanist Jesuits, friend of the Oratorians, supporter of the Company of the Holy Sacrament, and disciple of Saint Vincent de Paul, Bossuet bore within his character and personal experiences a capacity for leadership which would give his eloquent voice great authority among all groups within the Church.

The campaign to “encourage” conversions of Huguenots seemed to have borne fruit by the late 1670s. A notion that practically no more Huguenots remained in France sustained the hopes of Catholic reformers, royal ministers, and perhaps Louis XIV himself. Whether Bossuet believed this is difficult to discern, but he clearly wanted to contribute in any way possible to the undermining of the theological and historical underpinnings of the Protestant faith, as his Histoire des variations des églises protestantes would testify. Many courtiers and Catholic evangelists, through their failure to understand Anglicanism, believed that England might return to Catholicism at any time; and Louis XIV made no effort to disabuse them of this hope, because it still seemed possible that Charles II would honor the secret clauses of the Treaty of Dover, which required that the king personally declare himself a Catholic.

And only recently, in a long and very costly war, had not the French humbled the proud, prosperous, and Protestant Dutch Republic? The true consequences of the Dutch War (1672–79)—which would be so disastrous for France because of the imminent shifts in the European balance of power—were scarcely perceived by the court at Versailles. Indeed, from what is known about Louis himself through his Memoirs, the king, by rewriting his own history,

5. A. Rébelliau, Bossuet, historien du protestantisme (Paris, 1891), rightly stresses Bossuet’s belief, which many Catholic clergymen shared, that he might be one of the few, if not the only, churchmen who might be read by the Huguenots in the late 1680s because of his reputation as a man of faith and honesty who had opposed such Catholic zealots as Bâville and Fléchier.
attempted to transform into victories, in his mind, the stalemates and defeats by the Dutch, thereby conforming to and sustaining the victorious mood of the propagandists, poets, and preachers of Versailles and Paris. Protestantism appeared to have lost its hold on all but a few small centers of power in Europe; a certain Leibniz and other philosophers and theologians were busy working out the terms of a *modus vivendi* which would bring about the unity of Christendom. Bossuet could not doubt the sincerity, piety, and national loyalty of those who had created this euphoric mood. Whether he himself believed that the victory over Protestantism was at hand, however, is quite another matter.

More significant for attempting to locate the tenor of the *Discourse*, however, is the question of how the euphoric mood of the late 1670s provided the backdrop for Bossuet's synthesis of faith and history. The *Discourse* is written by one who senses that the past and the future are so much on his side that those whom he is refuting must be wrong. It is this total faith, converted into complete self-confidence about the historical truth of the Bible, which Bossuet owed to the euphoric mood at Versailles. No one posing could have posed so well; it is the *Discourse* of a man who knows and believes that God is firmly on his side in a great battle which will be won. And yet this mood did not completely inhibit Bossuet's critical sensibilities. Heaven and France under Louis XIV were certainly not of the same degree of spiritual and royal bliss. The sexual license in the royal bedroom and the question of whether Louis XIV had conducted wars of conquest rather than defensive wars are never discussed in the *Discourse*, but history is never employed by Bossuet to legitimate adultery and conquest. Bossuet had set out to write a synthesis in which faith and history would sustain each other, with


8. Leibniz entered into discussions with Bossuet in 1678 in the effort to work out a formula for union of the churches. Did the Catholic reformers and even Bossuet take such actions as a sign of weakness on the part of Protestants? See J. P. Spielman, *Cristobal Rojas y Spinola, Cameralist and Irenicist, 1626–1695* (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 41 ff.

history being generally the stronger element; and that is the way the work would be read by the first generations of his readers. By the nineteenth century, however, the work would be read as if faith had come to sustain history, thanks to its mood of self-confidence. It is difficult for those of us in the twentieth century who are committed to principles of toleration and to pluralistic—i.e., religious-nonreligious—political cultures to reconstruct the emotional and intellectual yearnings for unity which prevailed in the minds of Bossuet and so many of his contemporaries, Protestants as well as Catholics. This longing for unity accounts for Bossuet's quite special approach to theological and historical controversy. A refutation of a heretical work, if it were simply that and nothing more, would be viewed as unsatisfactory among both the founders and the followers of the French Counter Reformation. Indeed, the work must have an evangelical character to it as well, so that God's word might be spread among those who scarcely knew it. Thus the Discourse on Universal History was constructed from the beginning to do much more than merely refute Spinoza and Simon and give Ultramontanists a lesson in Gallicanism. As we shall see, it also served far more than its immediate purpose of providing the dauphin with additional history lessons.

The Discourse on Universal History is just that, a long speech about the subject. Bossuet may have backed his way into writing in the discursive form because he had given Part I as oral lessons to the dauphin, but there may have been other reasons as well. Use of the word "discourse" in the title freed him from the tyranny of conventions established for the genre of universal history; he could arrange the subject matter as he wished, emphasize some themes over others, and simply ignore a great deal of material which readers would have expected him to include had he entitled his work a "universal history."

Both universal history and national history in France, thanks to their links with religious faith and the ars historica, had become highly stylized genres in which the subject matter to be discussed was very precisely established. The events of universal and national histories appeared to Bossuet and his contemporaries as something
external to the workings of the historian's mind, because historical events were thought to be already established and immutable and not the result of research and analysis by the historian who wrote them down. The writer of universal history might rearrange these events a bit, but in general the sources used and the events summarized had become a kind of historical canon. The sacred-history component of universal history provided the framework for this stylization, but it was by no means the sole cause for the establishment of these canons of events. By entitling his work a discourse, Bossuet could delete from this canon or summarize a part of it in a sentence rather than supply a complete narrative, because his title signaled to his readers that the conventions of the genre were not going to be followed.

Was universal history more stylized and rigid, say, than French national history? In Bossuet’s time these two genres were composed of similar, almost immutable structures of events with probably similar religious and ideological components. The genealogies of

10. The constancy of themes and their order in the genealogies of kings is brilliantly demonstrated in Michel Tyvaert, “Les Histoires élémentaires au XVIIe siècle,” in Le XVIIe siècle et l’éducation, ed. R. Duchêne (Marseilles, 1973), pp. 71–78, and “L’Image du Roi: légitimité et moralité royales dans les histoires de France au XVIIe siècle,” Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine 21 (1974): 521-47. J. Truchet, Bossuet panégyriste (Paris, 1962) p. 120, has tentatively delineated the structure of the hierarchy of virtues in the saints’ lives which Bossuet employed in his sermons. While this structure of saintly virtues differs from the kingly virtues found in histories by Tyvaert, it is important to notice how the exemplum functions the same way in both genres and for both saints and kings. A statistical study of the changing hierarchies of virtues in saints’ lives across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries might reveal interesting differences and similarities in these structures when compared with those of kings as found in Tyvaert’s studies.

11. Perhaps the most revealing trace, in a title, of this perception of history as events already recorded and fixed for all time is the use of the word miroir in the titles of some histories. What the historian published was a reflection of some already preordained series of events; the image in the mirror was something which he neither created nor rearranged.

12. Moreover, there was also an amazing continuity in the controversial aspects of French history. Disputes over the history of French law and institutions and over the providential role of Joan of Arc scarcely changed from the Bartolist–neo-Bartolist perspectives in which they began in the sixteenth century up to their restatement by Montesquieu and Dubos in the eighteenth century. See M. Gilmore, Argument from Roman Law (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), and F. Neumann, “Introduction,” Montesquieu’s "Spirit of the Laws" (New York, 1949).
French kings, like the narrative of kings in the Old Testament, provided the obligatory thematic structure in both genres. When French writers long before Bossuet wanted to avoid these rigid canons in writing about their national history, they added to their titles phrases such as "research on" or "introduction to," as the great Pasquier had done in his *Recherches de la France*.  

With these highly stylized genres already developed, what was the historian's function? As a rhetorician it was his task to move the hearts and minds of his readers. In practice this function may have been much closer to that of the preacher than we usually think. In Bossuet's age both the preacher and the historian still almost consciously believed or operated on the assumption that they possessed a body of immutable religious and historical truths and that it was their task to communicate these truths to their listeners and readers. The tools at their disposal were those of the rhetorician. The history of the Old Testament, the life of Jesus, and the lives and works of the apostles and Church Fathers, of Clovis, Charlemagne, Saint Louis, of saintly popes and bishops, constituted an immutable whole of faith and history for the seventeenth-century Frenchman, and Bossuet merely reiterates and confirms that it was a whole. In the *Discourse* he would stress the historical elements and arguments more than in some of his other works, but in all his works he sought to communicate his belief in the existence of this coherent, sacred, and familiar body of knowledge. In this regard Bossuet reflects the beliefs and assumptions of all but a few scholars and philosophers in his age. Indeed, his very lack of originality—except perhaps a greater emphasis on history than on the truths of piety, charity, and prayer (*oraison*)—had accounted for his rise to a position of influence as a preacher without peer in his own age. That greater emphasis on history, as we shall see in the last part of this introduction, developed largely from his desire to refute those who challenged the historical truth of the Bible.

13. Note also the absence of the word *histoire* in Pasquier's title.
14. It is therefore not very constructive to separate the discussion of Bossuet's writings into the sermons and the histories, as French literary historians have almost always done. His use of history in the sermons and in his political works reveals the same general sense of the function of the past to edify his listeners and readers and to point out that it is the only true guide that accompanies God's commandments.
In other respects the *Discourse* displays more manifestly Bossuet's complete mastery of the *ars historica*, that body of rhetorical principles which guided all French men of letters in his day who wanted to create literary images of the past. Rhetoric, a veritable science of communication, pervaded every aspect of Bossuet's literary and oral culture. Along with its sister sciences, grammar and philology, it had already been responsible for transforming the French language and for providing the foundations of the literary-cultural movement known as classicism. Developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by successive generations into a rich and increasingly coherent body of principles, rhetoric provided guiding principles for the expression of almost any and every utterance. History, as one of the most noble of genres inherited from the ancient world, underwent particular scrutiny; for, in depicting the past, truly noble language might affect reason and emotion with the greatest intensity. The general agreement shown by men of letters about the style of, models for, and literary devices appropriate to historical prose had a tremendous impact on how history was written. Bossuet had learned his *humanitès* so well, and at such an early age, that Ciceronian principles had become a part of the very structure of his thought. He never seems consciously to have had to "imitate" a model historian or to have deliberately set out to incorporate rhetorical devices in his work. As a superb classicist, who could write with equal facility in Latin and in French, Bossuet was one of Cicero's greatest pupils. He knew when to take liberties with principles, and above all he knew how to be "natural" in his writing. The ultimate mastery of classical rhetoric results in fulfilling these rhetorical principles without the reader's realizing that such principles have indeed guided the author. Bossuet achieved this mastery. Indeed, by pointing out some of the more obvious devices used by Bossuet, we can see from what critical perspectives generations of French readers raised on Plutarch and Cicero would view Bossuet as a historian and why they would admire him.

Portraits of great men, examples, judgments: the humanist historian aimed chiefly at inserting these into his narrative in such a way as to avoid breaking the narrative or boring his reader. From the ancient historians and rhetoricians the humanists had borrowed this notion that reading history must be both pleasurable and instructive. History, of course, meant politics and more politics, the study of men of action in all their foibles and strengths. It also contained political and moral philosophy, but the reader ought not to realize this.

The portrait, that device so brilliantly developed by Plutarch and Tacitus, set forth the principal character traits of the great man depicted in a narrative so that they could be perceived almost visually. The balance or imbalance of strengths and weaknesses in a man's character, his temperament, his physical makeup, and such attributes as courage, jealousy, generosity, openness, and sense of inferiority were among a panoply of themes which could be constructed into a short, succinct portrait of a man. The descriptive range of human weaknesses and strengths was fairly limited (there was no subconscious), but in the imagination of a consummately skilled rhetorician these could be synthesized to counterbalance or reinforce one another to account for an individual's political success or failure. In Bossuet the Plutarchian character attributes are synthesized and frequently joined with those of the biblical and Christian traditions: piety, uprightness, faith, and charity. The greatest portraits in the Discourse are those of the biblical figures, who are held up generally to be positive examples of human conduct, whereas the great men of pagan antiquity, while given their due, are frequently disparaged and dismissed in one or two pungent sentences. The portraits of Abraham, Moses, and David are Bossuet at his best in the summing-up of character; the specific events of each individual's life are cast in a framework of moral and religious attributes which create synthetic unities to edify the reader.

Sometimes, in mid-portrait, Bossuet would place a "sentence" (sententia), a commonplace or topos, a moral principle or providen-

tial lesson, which was at once applicable to men in all times and places yet was also true of the specific individual or institution described. In the portrait of Abraham, for example, we suddenly encounter the sentence: “His piety and uprightness, which were protected by God, won him this respect” (Discourse, p. 130, below). The “sentence” contained both a temporal—that is, historical—and an atemporal—that is, moral (and religious)—significance. That piety and uprightness win respect is the atemporal moral principle or sentence; that Abraham was pious and upright and that these qualities enhanced his reputation constitute for Bossuet the historical evidence which supports the sentence and helps to confirm its truth.\(^{17}\) The rhetorician’s art consisted in placing these within a narrative so that they would be perfectly appropriate to describing simultaneously the subject at hand—in this case Abraham—and a religious, moral, or political truth which could be learned and recalled as an aphorism throughout life. In French classicistic culture right down to World War I, the devoirs of schoolboys frequently consisted of finding the “sentences” and of copying them out and memorizing them from a text such as Bossuet’s, after having translated them from Latin to French and back again.

In addition to the “sentence,” there was the whole portrait, written to facilitate the reader’s perception of an individual’s moral attributes and the guiding principle of his life. In Abraham’s portrait, a model of kingship is applied to a person who was not in fact a king. Bossuet expected his readers to draw “parallels”—that other rhetorical device which Plutarch had used so skillfully—among various historical personages by balancing the elements of one portrait against the others. On one level this paralleling could be historical; the reader might be expected mentally to parallel Abra-

\(^{17}\) In addition to evoking the relationship between God and Abraham as described in the Old Testament, the remark that Abraham’s piety and uprightness were “protected” by God is also laden with a social meaning for Bossuet’s contemporaries. To be sous la protection of someone or to have sa protection signified the social relationship or bond between individuals known as fidélités. As a contract or promise of mutual aid, the fidélité was one of the most powerful bonds influencing the conduct of seventeenth-century Frenchmen, and it is interesting to observe how Bossuet evoked it for a bond between God and man. Cf. R. Mousnier, Les Institutions de la France sous la monarchie absolue (Paris, 1974), pp. 85 ff.
ham with Moses or David. On another level the parallel could be psychological or philosophical, since the portraits are infused with Bossuet's general and atemporal definition of proper kingship. In pulling these strands together, the reader might thus "parallel" the historical image with that of a living king, even Louis XIV! Who in Versailles in 1682 could think of anyone but Louis XIV as they read:

Though his life was simple and peaceful, he knew how to make war, but only in defense of his oppressed allies. He defended them and avenged them in an important victory. He restored to them all their riches, recaptured from the enemies, keeping only the tithe, which he offered to God, and the portion that belonged to the auxiliary troops which he had led into battle. [Discourse, p. 130.]

Abraham's portrait, when paralleled with Louis XIV's recent conduct, suggests that the Sun King had been something less than ideal as a Christian king. Louis XIV had not gone to war "only" in defense of oppressed allies; nor had he restored the spoils of victory to his allies, but had rather kept them for himself. The parallel between the ideal Christian ruler and Louis leaves the latter wanting in the virtues of kingship. If the principles of classical rhetoric are being fulfilled in the portrait, personal moral behavior and the conduct of affairs of state ought to be virtually one. Likewise, the shift from time (history), or the portrait of one man, to the timeless (psychology and moral philosophy) takes place with ease. In this way Bossuet achieves the ultimate aim of the humanist historian: to instruct the reader agreeably. The model or ideal Christian prince could be evoked to edify not only readers but also Christian princes who were living and reigning. Bossuet's conviction that certain ethical beliefs were Christian was so strong that he had the courage to criticize obliquely all the rulers of his age—and his own king in particular.

When the narrative is not dealing with individuals, it treats societies and the momentous events which determine their fate. The "example" served to elevate the level of discussion on these subjects from that of mere occurrences to that of political philosophy.
Humanist historians were never content to set forth simply the causes for events which the participants themselves believed had determined their fate. Bossuet does not stay within the providential framework of the Old Testament to explain Israel’s demise, nor does he stay within the explanatory frameworks of Greek and Roman historians to account for the decline of those empires. Developing a synthesis of Augustinian and Greco-Roman historians to provide him with moral explanations which he inserts into the narrative as “examples”—that is, lessons to be learned for all time—Bossuet created a powerful and unified synthesis of explanations which readers seemed to find sufficient as long as they shared his Christian presuppositions about history. Not only did the Jews forget that God’s grace had preserved them in the past, but, as the prophets had predicted (here a “contemporary” determinant), quarreling among themselves led to their downfall. The quarrel over priestly functions counted as the “fatal moment when history shows us the first cause of the destruction of the Jews” (Discourse, p. 183) because it led to sedition and to an appeal to outsiders, the Romans, who as a result subjugated the Israelites.

Bossuet adapts a moral philosophy and psychology to a conception of politics which permits him to demonstrate how greed, ambition, corruption, and sexual license may contribute to the downfall of a state, no matter how good its laws originally were. His examples, derived largely from Plato, Xenophon, Polybius, and Livy, are infused with and synthesized by an adaptation of Augustinian notions about history. There is only one true, divinely sustained genealogy of states and holy men: that beginning with the Israelites and continuing down to Aaron’s successor, Innocent XI, and to David’s, Louis XIV (Discourse, p. 289). Livy was the most widely read and admired of all the ancient historians, even down into the Enlightenment, and it is Livy’s moralizing that Bossuet draws on the most.18 His nostalgic obsession with decadence and his definitions of virtue appealed to Bossuet, because they could be joined more successfully to the Augustinian view of corruption than, say, the examples employed by a Thucydides or a Tacitus. Indeed, Bossuet’s

willingness to go beyond the Livian framework of moralizing to include "judgments"—that is, frank statements about the good or bad results of some human action—indicates his antipathy to Tacitus and probably indicates a decline of "Tacitism" in men of his generation. The "judgments" allow Bossuet to impose an Augustinian outlook on almost anything he pleases; even the great Solon—and lawgivers are by and large immune from criticism—is castigated for permitting construction of a temple to a prostitute, even though her name was Venus (Discourse, p. 180). Such remarks meet the rhetoricians' definition of a "judgment," for Bossuet steps out of the narrative to make them. They resounded harshly on the sensitive ears of Bossuet's literary contemporaries, who had created an image of Greek and Roman antiquity which they placed above the history of the Israelites and of early Christianity. This historicalized utopia could be used to instruct their peers. But Bossuet remains primordially a Catholic Reformation Christian first and a humanist second. He was never reluctant to judge all of the past in the light of the single most important historical event of all time: the brief passage of the man-God Jesus through a life on earth (Discourse, pp. 184 ff.).

In the more human sphere of action, Bossuet believed that the principal characteristics which engendered the greatness of a people would, when carried to excess, also account for their decline. This fundamentally Aristotelian ethical explanation for the greatness and decline of the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans would occasionally be tempered by Polybian examples, but in general the

19. Tacitism, that historical outlook which scorned the inclusion of moral judgments in historical prose, had been influential in the late sixteenth century and up through the 1630s in the group of writers around Richelieu, but it subsequently declined. See W. F. Church, Richelieu and Reason of State (Princeton, 1972), pp. 58 ff.
21. Is it significant that, regardless of edition, Bossuet's history of Jesus comes almost exactly in the middle of the book? Bossuet's belief in numbers was real, as is reflected in his preoccupation with chronology, the time and number of the epochs and monarchies. Having Jesus appear exactly in the middle of his narrative may have been accidental, but in a work which, by seventeenth-century standards, is so thematic and chronologically organized, this arrangement may be significant.
"character" of a people and their rise and fall remained within a moral rather than a political, philosophical, or sociological framework. The forms of government attract Bossuet’s attention rarely, and then usually only as devices for explaining individual political behavior. Departure from the justic milieu at the level of human affairs could bring forth great achievements; the intelligence of the Egyptians and the bravery of the Romans were virtues which, when carried to excess, contributed to their possessors’ downfall. Here, if anywhere, Bossuet came closest to developing a political philosophy of history independent of his providential beliefs. While his analysis of these national character traits differs from psychology and moral philosophy, it should nevertheless be noted that these same traits are only the attributes of the individual extended and applied to an entire people, a device frequently employed by such ancient historians as Livy to account for the behavior of a people.

Conventional as he was, Bossuet therefore found little difficulty in delineating the spheres of human and divine action in the history of these empires. God had spoken directly of his favor for the Israelites; the histories of the other empires were significant only because they impinged upon that of Israel. Bossuet firmly believed that man’s knowledge, though limited, was of the same nature as God’s, permitting him to perceive providential and human causations at work together in history. Had a people which respected God’s laws ever suffered his punishment, or had a king who had been morally upright, devout, and a good ruler ever seen his realm decline? Bossuet would have had difficulty in fully perceiving the implications of this question. It is anachronistic to ask it, because for him history demonstrated that ethics and Providence were geared together. Man knows good from evil. God would certainly not generally test a king (though he could do so) who ruled by divine right in the way he had tested Job. More likely, if plague, famine, and defeat befell a kingdom, it would assuredly be the result of the monarch’s own sins or those of his people. Did not the lessons of history demonstrate these causal connections? For Bossuet the Old Testament narrative of Israel’s history provided indisputable evidence that the errant ways of a people or a king might cause God to bring his wrath down upon them. One of the purposes of history is therefore to warn readers both high and low that their sins might
cause God to punish them, their children, or—if kings—their subjects.

Louis XIV’s sins would always preoccupy Bossuet. Humanist that he was, Bossuet believed that the king set a living example of the lessons of history. The king was not only God’s lieutenant on earth, he was a model for all his subjects. The risks of divine punishment which France and Louis XIV were running because of the king’s uncontrollable sexual appetite for Montespan were every bit as real to Bossuet as the threats coming from France’s earthly enemies, the Dutch and the Hapsburg monarchies. In fact, Louis’s sexual vices could cause God to award victory to the Dutch! Bossuet applied the lessons of history, risking his favor at court in the process, to urge Louis to abandon Montespan and all other mistresses. The theme of divine punishment for a ruler’s sexual misconduct appears frequently in the Discourse, and Bossuet seems ever ready to conclude that divine punishment was a consequence of this sin. Hence the lessons of history had an immediate purpose, as well as their long-range purpose through instructing the dauphin.

For a humanist like Bossuet, as for the Renaissance humanists also, history’s principal function was instruction. The humanists had endlessly repeated that history was the most useful body of knowledge which man could develop and that princes needed to know its lessons in order to govern wisely. For twentieth-century intellectuals, the repetition of commonplaces tends to imply that the thoughts contained are trite or mere “rhetoric” and are therefore not to be taken seriously. This very modern sensibility about truisms is an impediment to appreciating Bossuet and the historical outlook which he expounded; for Bossuet believed, as did all but a handful of his contemporaries, that the histories of different ages

23. Bossuet’s views on this question were neither original nor unique with him, and it is certain that the Sun King shared Bossuet’s fears that royal sins might bring divine punishment down upon him and his subjects. The king saw God’s hand in reverses which befell him. See J. B. Wolf, Louis XIV, esp. pp. 612-18.
25. Perhaps Bossuet’s most famous formulation of these commonplaces is “l’histoire, cette sage conseillère des princes” (Epist. de Institut. Delphini 8) quoted by Floquet, Bossuet, Précepteur du Dauphin, p. 64.
and peoples would, if joined together, teach the same lessons. The truths of history were timeless, whether they encompassed the function of historical knowledge itself (methodology) or truisms about human nature and politics which could be learned from the past. Truths repeated gained in the repetition. Instead of becoming trite, the elucidation of the same historical truth from different epochs or national experiences became all the more truthful. Therefore, rather than setting out in the Discourse to expound something “new” about the past, Bossuet strove to state already known truths more succinctly and to relate them contextually to events.

It would be dangerously anachronistic for us to ignore this insistence on the canon of commonplaces dealing with the utility of history for princes. The platonic ideal of the philosopher-king still lurked in the minds of late-seventeenth-century humanists. Constantly revised, Christianized, and mutated almost beyond recognition, this ideal nevertheless continued to define the relationships between men of thought and men of power at the court of Louis XIV.26 The belief that reform of the state would be possible through educating a prince into a clement, learned, and wise king prevailed among virtually all men of learning in late-seventeenth-century France.27 There would be satirists and skeptics of this approach to reform; but instead of viewing them as indications of a general cynicism about humanist education, we should rather see them as signs of its great influence in both the capital and the court. The Discourse is a superb example of just how vital the didactic element of humanism still was in the late seventeenth century. Louis XIV watched over his son’s education with great interest; he had personally selected Bossuet as preceptor. Occasionally the Sun King himself would jot down instructions for the dauphin, and he kept working at his own memoirs.28 Louis believed that politics could be

27. Pascal is supposed to have said about the office of preceptor: “Nul emploi, au monde, ne lui eût plus agréé que celui d’instituteur de l’héritier présomptif de la couronne de France.... Pour s’acquitter dignement d’une telle tâche, il eût volontiers sacrifié sa vie” (Floquet, Bossuet, Précepteur du Dauphin, p. 28).
learned from history, and he may have sensed that in Bossuet this belief was not only shared but was held with a deep religious commitment.

To be at the center of political power, that is, to be able to advise the king in his personal life and to tutor his heir, represented the pinnacle of spiritual and pedagogic opportunities for Bossuet. He brought intense personal devotion to his task of giving the dauphin lessons in Latin and French grammar, religion, and history. For eleven years of his busy career, his time would be primarily given over to the elementary schooling of a little boy. Every technique was used to help the dauphin remember his history, including a visit in 1677 to the royal tombs at Saint-Germain-des-Prés and Saint-Denis, where Bossuet intoned the life of each king as he and the child moved from sepulcher to sepulcher.

Yet the Discourse was not written solely with the dauphin’s education in mind. One of the canons of humanist education was that the curriculum developed for the prince’s education ought to serve as a model for all of France. During the seventeenth century this “trickle-down-from-the-prince-to-the-people” theory of education formed the humanist and royal view of public education in a very real way, at least for elite groups.29 Hence Bossuet always appears to be looking over his shoulder to a much larger public as he writes the Discourse. The summary accounts of momentous events, the chronologies, and the judgments about the fate of peoples may have been influenced by the fact that they were recited. Indeed, Part I ought still to be read as if it were the score of a baroque cantata; the form seems preordained (the “Epochs”), and the phrases and chords have little beauty or significance if separated from the whole. Bossuet meant it to be that way, for he was interested in creating an overall impression of the grandeur of history and of God’s power over human actions. Sometimes he deliberately conveys the impression that the reader ought to avoid becoming bogged down in details; the precise details of history, while important, interest him only insofar as they sustain the magisterial arguments which form the core of the Discourse. The first lesson to be learned from history is that history may provide a foundation or body of illustrative

29. See Floquet, Bossuet, Précepteur, p. 4.
proofs for religious and political truths. The other lessons which the dauphin ought to learn may have had greater immediacy. Let the exploration of one of these more immediately relevant lessons serve to illustrate Bossuet’s method of bringing the lessons of history to bear on the fundamental political decisions of his own time.

The question of a Christian king’s right to conquer had been debated for centuries. Would it be debated again in the early 1680s, that is, after the expansionist wars of the 1660s and 1670s? There had been apologists galore for the king’s conquests; since his birth he had been almost continually likened to Alexander the Great and praised to the heavens by the poets for the bellicose actions which extended French borders. The chorus of praise had grown so loud that questioning the king’s actions would have been a remarkable act of courage.

Bossuet never lost his sense of duty as a Catholic reformer, unlike so many humanists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who became obsequious toward the kings who granted them preceptorships and court pensions. He could and did serve as an apologist for royal power by contributing to the vulgarization of divine-right absolutism; but the lessons of history always demonstrated the extreme fragility of earthly institutions, even those of God’s chosen peoples, the Israelites and the French. The result is that, on the question of a Christian king’s right to conquer, the Discourse was as much an admonition of Louis XIV’s actions as a program for future reforms.30 Bossuet remains harsh in his treatment of Alexander the Great. The Greek hero’s moral corruption and his obsession with conquest, which are given as the reasons for his early death, could only be read by Bossuet’s contemporaries as a public warning to the Sun King. Yet Bossuet was by no means a pacifist. The defense of French rights was legitimate for a Christian prince. But had the Dutch War of 1672–78 been a defensive action? Certainly not.

The Alexander topoi had been worked and reworked by writers of Bossuet’s generation in order to praise Louis XIV and to legitimate

30. Bossuet’s critique of conquering kings is scattered throughout the work, but perhaps the most revealing remark is on p. 125. Note also his explicit analogy (p. 349) between the reasons the Roman armies were thought to be invincible and the reasons the French are thought to be the same under Louis XIV. What was the lesson of this analogy?
his actions in the public's eye. Bossuet, however, stresses Alexander's personal weaknesses and, more important, the ephemeral nature of his empire.31 Such lessons from Alexander's history were not aimed at Louis's policies but at the Sun King's weaknesses as a man. Here the reworking of these *topoi* seems to have been deliberate. For Bossuet, history demonstrates divine intervention in the great affairs of mankind; and while he does not deny Alexander's greatness as a conqueror, he seems almost to delight in pointing out that nothing lasting survived the hero.

In another instance the reworking of the Alexander *topoi* may have been subconscious. Bossuet describes Alexander thus: "He returned to Babylon, where he was feared and respected, not like a conqueror, *but like a god*" (*Discourse*, p. 338). Idolatry might perhaps be excused in a pagan prince who had never known God's commandments. Was Bossuet, the Catholic reformer, subconsciously developing an even more devastating critique of Louis XIV? Was he inferring that the Sun King had encouraged or permitted his subjects to worship him? Bossuet may not consciously have decided to warn of the dangers of idolatry in divine-right monarchy, but his use of the Alexander *topoi* in this instance, and his frequent insistence upon the mortality of kings and their empires, implies it. His synthesis of faith and history, buttressed by his powers as an observer of men and institutions in his own time, brought him to the point where this leap from history to prophecy occurred almost logically. Thus a fervent Catholic reformer who had grown up reading and believing the Bible and the Church Fathers could be unconsciously brought to use the Alexander *topoi* to give his writing a critical edge in an age when the more secularized French men of letters did little but write apologies for Louis by "paralleling" him with the heroic, conquering Alexander.

Perhaps the other most significant, explicitly political theme in the *Discourse* is a historical defense of Gallicanism. Bossuet's Gallicanism appears most succinctly in his discussion of the Israelites, whose society is the only true ancestor of that of Christendom. In his numerous discussions of the governance of the Israelites he stresses the "protection" of God, later embodied in the monarchy of

David and his heirs, in preserving the chosen people. Moses is the lawgiver because God chose to present his laws to him. There is no clearly delineated distinction between spiritual and temporal power. Moses' brother Aaron and his heirs serve to assure the proper maintenance of the Temple and to arrange the sacrifices and other ceremonies for the worship of God. But it is from the lineage of David, the king and real founder of the monarchy, a kingdom created by God, that the Messiah would spring, not from that of Aaron.

Moreover, in founding the Church Universal, did not Constantine, and later Clovis, protect the bishops and faithful and cause the Church to flourish through divine support? Bossuet never once denies the authority wielded by the bishops of Rome; but by defining protectors of the Church as broadly as he does, that authority is circumscribed to conform with the more extreme Gallican doctrines of the early 1680s. Indeed, the dauphin is frequently described as the direct descendant of David, Constantine, and Clovis. By depicting France's kings as continually solicitous of the welfare of the Church and as aiding the papacy, Bossuet provides a foundation for Louis XIV's "just" defense of his rights. As the conflict between France and the papacy worsened in the early 1680s, Bossuet found himself unable to reconcile his belief in the unity of the Church with his historical interpretation of the mutual aid between the popes and the French kings. This conflict provides one of the themes of Part III of the Discourse.

Instances in the Discourse where faith and history lend a prophetic resonance may tempt the reader to abandon his modern historical outlook in order to revert momentarily to the ars historica. What could be more tempting than to begin working out the parallels between Bossuet himself and the great biblical prophets and Church Fathers whom he admired? Like Simon, Bossuet believed that such men had been historians. For the sympathetic reader of the Discourse on Universal History, their lessons and his seem momentarily to overlap in content and time.

Bossuet mastered the art of embodying the refutation of heretical propositions in the wrappings of a much broader theme treated at
some length. The Discourse on Universal History became for the history of the faithful what Saint Francis of Sales’s Traité de l’amour de Dieu (1616) and Bérulle’s Grandeurs de Jésus (1623) were for establishing the habits of religious piety. Generous, inspired, and free of rancor, in the long run the evangelical element subsumed the controversial.

For, while refuting Simon, Bossuet defined certain principles which he wished to defend in new and potentially embarrassing if not damaging ways. Bossuet had probably never believed that the chronology of human history (and of God’s intervention in that history) and the question of the authorship of the first five books of the Old Testament were, or ought to be, considered foundations of the Catholic Christian faith. The historicity of that religion—that is, the narrative of events which had actually taken place in the past—had not been a cornerstone of the religious experience or the evangelical works of the French Catholic Reformation. Pietism and mysticism had generally been the sources of the reform movement, and little attempt had been made to convert the lax or the heretical through arguments based on the historicity of the Roman Catholic religion.

In the mid-seventeenth century, however, the historicity of the Bible itself, and not merely the institutions of the early Church, once again became a focus for controversy. Just as some earlier thinkers, notably Montaigne and Charron, had turned to ancient skepticism and Pyrrhonism to supply arguments challenging the underpinnings of the Protestant faith, so some theologians and antiquarians in Bossuet’s day developed an emphasis on biblical criticism which tended to undermine that sacred text as the sole source of divine

32. The possibility that these works may be perceived as part of a similar current of religious thought is suggested by reading R. de la Broise, Bossuet et la Bible (Paris, 1890), which stresses the function of the Bible in Bossuet’s own meditations and prayers. Bossuet saw the Discourse as essentially a “vrai remède de l’âme” before controversy led him to perceive of it as history, (de la Broise, pp. 242–73).
33. See L. Cognet, Post-Reformation Spirituality (Wheathampstead, 1959), chaps. 3–5.
34. Indeed, the very difficulty of doing so has been viewed by scholars as having a detrimental effect on the development and diffusion of a “historicist” outlook in the sixteenth century. See W. Bouwsma, “Three Types of Historiography in Post-Renaissance Italy,” History and Theory 4 (1965): 303–14.
truth—thus hoping to undermine the Protestant claim that the Bible alone was a divine source of religious truth. Ever since Luther’s day, Protestantism had placed major emphasis on the literal meaning of the Bible and had denied the divine inspiration of the works of Church Fathers, popes, and even ecumenical councils. It was this denial of the Tradition of the Church that Richard Simon ostensibly wished to combat.

Both strategies—the critiques skeptical of the Protestant articles of faith and the critiques by the biblical antiquarians led by Simon—would backfire and be dramatically and powerfully turned around to challenge the foundations of religious beliefs in general, both Catholic and Protestant.36 Indeed, by pointing out the “errors” which had crept into the Old Testament as a result of a long series of copyists, and by indicating that Moses was not and could not be the author of the Pentateuch, Simon had hoped to bring the Protestants around to recognizing the need for the Tradition of the Roman Catholic Church in interpreting the Bible!

When Bossuet saw Simon’s text in 1678, he immediately went to the French chancellor to request that the Crown have all copies of the work confiscated and burned.37 The fact that it was in Latin would not have prevented a rather large public of French and foreign scholars and controversialists from reading it; and a French translation would appear in Rotterdam in 1685.

A debate had begun. Protestant and Jansenist biblical scholars girded up their loins for a war with Simon and Spinoza. Then, as

36. Richard Simon, in his Histoire critique du Vieux Testament (Rotterdam, 1685), had argued that only the Roman Catholic Church, through the living, divinely inspired labors of its fathers, popes, and other sources of the Tradition, had been able to determine what is divine truth in the Bible. “Les Catholiques qui sont persuadés que leur Religion ne dépend pas seulement du Texte de l’Écriture, mais aussi de la Tradition de l’Église, ne sont point scandalisés de voir que le malheur des temps et la negligence des copistes aient rapporté des changemens aux Livres Sacrés, aussi-bien qu’aux Livres prophanes. Il n’y a que des Protestants préoccupés ou ignorans qui puissent s’en scandaliser” (p. 9).

preceptor to the dauphin and preoccupied with teaching history, Bossuet, the reformed Catholic, also felt compelled to reexamine the entire question. Owing partly to the difficulty of procuring Spinoza's works (Spinoza had died in 1677) and partly to Simon's influence and presence in Paris, Bossuet fell, perhaps almost unthinkingly, into emphasizing the refutation of Simon rather than Spinoza.\(^{38}\) The result was the *Discourse*, Part I, the “Epochs,” a reconstruction of the history of the world, beginning with the Creation. The biblical narrative was true; other sources could be used to enrich the history given in the Bible, but they did not controvert it. Herodotus, Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Porphyry, Jerome, Lucian, Eusebius, and a number of other sources from ancient history were investigated to find support for and to supplement the biblical narrative and chronology, which is the *fil conducteur* of the “Epochs.”

Bossuet admitted that lacunae existed in the biblical text, but he refused to accept the notion that the Old Testament could not be employed to reconstruct the chronology of human history beginning with the Creation. Simon had asserted:

> Since these books [of the Old Testament] are only abridgments of much longer memoirs, it is impossible to establish an exact and certain chronology from the Bible .... It would be ridiculous, for example, not to admit that there were other kings of Persia than those in the Bible, to attempt to construct a chronology on them, as most rabbis rather injudiciously have done.\(^{39}\)

To attempt to reconstruct a Persian genealogy, Bossuet recognized, would be out of the question; but like the rabbis whom Simon had politely chided, Bossuet set out to reconstruct universal history with a literal belief in the biblical text equaling any of the literal beliefs of those Protestant antiquarians who had rejected the need for Tradi-

\(^{38}\) See P. Hazard, *The European Mind (1680-1715)* (Cleveland and New York, 1963), p. 202, and D. C. Allen, *The Legend of Noah* (Urbana, 1949), who remarks: “Simon’s learning and method are the equals of Spinoza’s; in fact I am inclined to believe that Spinoza’s book stimulated his researches, although he states in his preface that his sole purpose is to confute Spinoza” (p. 63).

tion in interpreting the Bible. Bossuet came to his task of refuting Simon prepared to believe the Bible even if it were contradicted by all the secular sources of history; for it was divinely inspired, and they were not. He found no contradictions. This literalness in writing history out of the Bible led Bossuet to accept the account of the Creation given in Genesis as history occurring in "year 1 of the world," that is, "4004 years before the birth of Christ." Moses, the "first historian, the most sublime philosopher, and the wisest of legislators," recorded the history of the "First Epoch" in the Pentateuch (Discourse, p. 9). Bossuet could not believe otherwise.

In his refutation of Simon and then, subsequently, in his revision of the chronology for the third edition of the Discourse—the last published during his lifetime—Bossuet would break with the learned Roman Catholic Tradition, which had long been wary of stressing the literal historical interpretation of the Bible. Indeed, in an effort to protect himself from such critics as Bossuet, Simon had cited respected churchmen who also acknowledged the possibility that errors of transcription might have crept into the sacred texts. Augustine of Hippo had implied that the biblical account of the Creation ought to be thought of by Christians as an "imagined" or allegorical narrative of the origins of the world and not as a literal history. Simon also pointed out that Popes Sixtus V and Clement VIII in the sixteenth century had instructed scholars to "correct" the Vulgate text of the Bible to make it conform to recent advances in biblical scholarship.

40. What is all the more remarkable about Bossuet's decision is his apparent ignorance of the vast and sophisticated bodies of philosophical and linguistic scholarship concerning biblical interpretation; e.g., the long debate over inspiration. Cf. Allen, Chapters III-IV, which place biblical criticism and the various approaches for interpreting the Bible in the broader context of Renaissance thought. See also S. Zac, Spinoza et l'interprétation de l'Écriture (Paris, 1965), for an excellent introduction to this Jewish scholarly tradition; and E. Labrousse, Pierre Bayle (The Hague, 1964), II, pp. 325 ff., for a discussion of the exegetical "inspiration" theories about the Bible current in Bossuet's time.

41. Bossuet could rely upon a tradition of chronologists who had attempted to establish the precise age of the world and to infer, even to predict, meanings, relationships, and events in the "great drama" of divine and human history. Cf. A. Rébelliau, Bossuet, historien du protestantisme, p. 127.

42. Simon, Histoire critique du Vieux Testament, pp. 7 f.


Yet Bossuet would not be deterred, for he upheld the veracity of the Bible as history. It did not contain all of human history; that is to say, events had taken place which the biblical authors had not recorded. Such events, however, were by Bossuet’s standards non-events; if the biblical authors had not recorded them, they were of no significance. Indeed, the Bible as history was, implicitly, not only a necessary but a sufficient history. Moses and his successors, the prophets, had recorded all that man needed to know about the first epochs of human history. Those who—and the allusion to Simon and his scholarly ilk is obvious—want to lengthen or shorten “empty centuries” between the Creation and Abraham are doing nothing of consequence (Discourse, p. 109). Disputes among chronologists pale into insignificance, for “what can be more wonderful than beholding religion enduring upon the same foundations from the beginning of the world?” (Discourse, p. 114). Bossuet’s “event” bore within it sacred significance, linking the actions of God with those of man. Those nonevents in universal history—which did not serve to demonstrate the historicity of the faith and the order and relationship between the sacred and profane history—might as well be omitted. Had this not been the principle of selection in the first history of the world, the Bible? Divine guidance had made it so for Moses and the prophets, who had written the Bible. Bossuet seems not to have been in the least disturbed by the absence of a narrative of Chinese history in the Bible, for the Chinese had apparently done nothing to deserve mention there. There were plenty of other peoples mentioned or barely alluded to in the Old Testament, their only purpose being to

45. Simon speculated that the books of the Bible could be digests of much longer, more detailed accounts of Jewish and universal history which had originally been kept by generation upon generation of “public writers.” In his desire to defend the Tradition, had not Simon pushed its written origins back into biblical times by stressing the role of these “public writers”? Bossuet also believed that the books of the Bible had consciously been kept generation after generation as a kind of “official history” of the Jewish people. He thus approaches Simon’s view that there had never been a time when the history of the faithful had been neglected or unguarded. While disagreeing profoundly on some issues, both Simon and Bossuet wanted to establish that the interpretation of the Bible, and its compilation, had never been left to unqualified or careless writers. Their views on this question are linked directly to the more general notion of “official history” and court historiography prevalent in French humanist circles in both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See the forthcoming work by O. Ranum, Artisans of Glory: Historical Thinking and Politics in Seventeenth-Century France.
provide lessons which their relationship with the "chosen people" would elucidate.

Similarly, those scholars who had developed a theory of Creation which placed a long period of time between the creation of the elements, after which "the earth, mixed with water and assisted by the heat of the sun, ... produced plants and animals, have most grossly erred" (Discourse, p. 116). The literalism of Bossuet's interpretation of the Bible becomes apparent in these refutations. The Book of Genesis states that God had created light before the earth. It also states emphatically that on the third day—after the earth, the plants, and the animals—he created the stars, the sun, and the moon (Gen. 1). Though this passage proved for Bossuet the falsity of such theories, its chief importance was its contribution to the majesty and beauty of history. The text edified him and consolidated his faith.⁴⁶

By insisting on the historicity of the Bible, Bossuet had reaffirmed his own faith. He felt he was taking no risks at all, only stating the obvious and apparent for all to know. The result is an Olympian or, rather, Sinaitic perspective on events. Bossuet seems to have been like Moses on top of Mount Sinai, whence he perceived all of history at a glance. His faith and inspiration enabled him to describe whole civilizations in a sentence and to sum up the moral and spiritual lessons from history in a word or phrase. It is this Mosaic ability to make judgments which has appealed to readers of the Discourse. That confidence and serenity shown by a man of faith permitted him to transcend details and to eliminate ambiguities. The Bible is the history of a chosen people written in conformity with Mosaic Law; events are the record of efforts to obey the law and of God's help and punishment when the Jews failed to do so.

Everything was carefully written down; everything was set forth in chronological order; and this was what God left for the instruction of his people when he put an end to the prophecies. Such [biblical-historical] instruction worked great changes in the ways of the Israelites. [Thanks to the Mosaic Law and their history] they no longer needed either visions, manifest predictions, or those unheard-of wonders which God so often performed for their preservation. [Discourse, p. 170.]

⁴⁶ See Goyet, L'Humanisme de Bossuet, 2:293.
The historical record of divine favor, punishments, and miracles is sufficient to "hold" a people and to instruct them in proper behavior. This explanation for the shift from the more apparent interventions of God in history—Christ's life and Crucifixion being an exception—provides another clue to the more personal and spiritual significance of history for Bossuet. History had both recorded and supplanted the miracle, especially that sort of miracle which determined great political changes, such as the rise and fall of empires. History, because it had supplanted miracles, had a mighty function to perform in the minds and hearts of seventeenth-century Europeans.

These convictions help to account for the fact that the Discourse came to be so much more than a mere refutation of Simon. For a man of Bossuet's temperament, the ennobling experience of expounding the truth, divine truth, would naturally transcend the mere refutation of wrongheaded and dangerous suppositions. The humanists' belief that the positive in education must be stressed in accordance with the principles of ancient rhetoric derived from Cicero and Quintilian sustained or contributed to Bossuet's predisposition to expound the truth rather than to quibble over suppositions made by others. Wherever he can, Bossuet insists on the general, "obvious," and "irrefutable" truths of ancient history and belittles those who raise doubts on minor points. Chicanery and sophistry, or just plain oversubtlety, were dangers. For Bossuet the humanist, the scholastics and their heirs, the Catholic and heretical controversialists of the sixteenth century, had fallen into just such a trap. Though he attempted to learn Hebrew and to grasp biblical criticism on the level established by Simon and other scholars, Bossuet would never really attempt to refute Simon on his own grounds.47

Like most of his contemporaries, Bossuet believed that heresies and false doctrines begin in the minds of single individuals and then occasionally spread like flames in a forest. Therefore a refutation must be made for every question of the faith, every philosophical and intellectual speculation by some erring mind which might be used to undermine the faith. Bossuet had already written against

skeptics, Jansenists, and Protestants by the time he wrote the *Discourse*, and he would again do so in the *Histoire des variations des églises protestantes* (1688)—perhaps his greatest work. In none of these works would he appear as a controversialist attempting to refute challenges to his faith on their own grounds. Always oblique but eager to point up contradictions through a pietist and spiritualist mode of discourse, Bossuet became the master of Catholic controversialists without appearing to be one. In this instance, necessity and strategy supported each other.

As the greatest preacher of the seventeenth century, Bossuet may also temperamentally have nourished the desire to reach a large public rather than merely to quibble with a few scholars. His position as royal preceptor obliged him to serve as a kind of public spiritual guide on the key questions of the day which arose in the humanist political culture reigning supreme at Versailles. These influences, sustained and infused by his religious faith and eloquence, brought forth the *Discourse* in the form we have it.

Simon may also have desired to reach a public larger than the few dozen scholars who possessed the learning necessary to comprehend his work fully. These indications notwithstanding, Simon’s work appeared erudite and scholarly by comparison with Bossuet’s *Discourse*. The questions agitating biblical scholars in his day—that is, problems of chronology, conflicting versions of sacred texts, and errors of transcription—are never once faced in the *Discourse*. Bossuet’s perception of the significance of these matters may have remained superficial, but he clearly recognized that such questions could be dangerous in the hands of the Church’s enemies. He believed that all this erudition, even if well intentioned, was obscuring the forest by emphasizing the trees.

In the nineteenth century, biblical scholars, notably Renan, would deliberately pare down their footnotes and discussions of abstruse points of scholarship in a deliberate move to write books that would attract large reading publics. Their motives differed in this common

49. His desire to summarize previous controversies and to present a summa of the critical questions of biblical history indicates an awareness of a public larger than the handful of Protestant biblical scholars and Spinozists whom he claims to be addressing.
effort, but the devices used to appeal to the "general reader" frequently were similar and usually contained some themes or stylistic devices which were likely to arouse the readers' attention.\textsuperscript{50} Not so with Bossuet. Instead of concealing learning which in fact he did not have, it might be more accurate to imagine him writing for a large public in order to inoculate it against any possible ill effects from Simon's scholarship, as controversy caused his errors to "trickle down" to the parish level. Bossuet once wrote:

Is one not afraid that blasphemies which flatter the human senses do not come all too soon to the people's minds?... They display the innovators rather than combat them. They attract spectators favorable to them rather than adversaries.\textsuperscript{51}

From this it might be inferred that Bossuet recognized how "errant" ideas were spread by the works of scholars seeking to refute such ideas. Therefore, there may have been some reason for his omission of references to Simon in the Discourse and behind his conscious effort to employ all the eloquence at his command in writing a work of synthesis which could be read by a boy, the dauphin, and by the general reading public.

In many ways, however, the Discourse would be more of a remedy than an immunization; for through the writings of the Spinozists in France and the philosophes of the Enlightenment, led by Voltaire, the "errant" ideas enjoyed a wide and favorable reception in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{52} The disparities between literary and scholarly form in the debate over the literal meaning of the Bible would echo across the centuries. With Simon and all his learning on one side, and with Bossuet and all his eloquence on the other, scholarly elites and general publics would be reached by the different camps in different ages.

The changed mental climate after the French Revolution brought

\textsuperscript{50} Historians of the Bible have not entirely given up these devices. Morton Smith's recent research on the magical elements in early Christianity have appeared in both a more popular form and a more scholarly form, The Secret Gospel (New York, 1973), and Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark (Cambridge, Mass., 1973).

\textsuperscript{51} Défense de la Tradition des Saints Pères, Oeuvres posthumes (Amsterdam, 1753), 2:83, quoted in P. Vernière, Spinoza et la pensée française, 1:116.

\textsuperscript{52} See Vernière, Spinoza et la pensée française, passim.
Bossuet's *Discourse* into greater public favor than it had ever enjoyed during the ancien régime. The first edition (1681) sold out in a year, which was typical for a writer of Bossuet's political and literary prestige; but the second (1682) remained available for well over a decade before republication in the third and revised edition of 1700, the last during Bossuet's lifetime.\(^{53}\) Foreign editions notwithstanding, sales had lagged. As a result, the impact of the work upon the public during the late seventeenth century remained relatively slight,\(^{54}\) and certainly much less than that of his earlier *Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church on Matters of Controversy* (1671). In the eighteenth century, editions and revised editions, with additions by other authors, would appear every decade or so, indicating once again the relatively limited public interest in the work as a classic. If compared with the number of eighteenth-century editions of Fénelon's *Télémage*, a work contemporary with Bossuet's, the *Discourse* was definitely not a literary success.

Beginning soon after 1800, however, editions became more numerous, with well over half of the 177 complete editions appearing between that date and 1904. The *Discourse* would comfort a shattered world which again wanted to believe in the literal meaning of the Bible. Indeed, the pietism of the Catholic Reformation which infused Bossuet's history had continued to sustain his own generation, providing a significant element in the general picture of late-seventeenth-century religiosity. History, however, had seemed to count little or to be an unnecessary underpinning to the Catholic


54. No systematic study seems to have been made of the critical reception of the *Discourse* at the time of publication. Floquet cites only the brief remarks of praise made by Charles Perrault and Dom Mabillon. Within a week of the book's appearance, Mabillon wrote of it to his erudite friend Magliabechi, "Il n'y a rien de plus beau que ce Discours" (March 31, 1681) (cited in Floquet, *Bossuet, Precépeute du Dauphin*, p. 218). I do not think that this criticism has a double edge. While recognizing that they themselves were frequently not eloquent, the érudits of the seventeenth century did not perceive eloquence as an enemy of learning. They still shared the general humanist principles about eloquence and believed that these ought to be fulfilled whenever possible in historical writing. As a result, they rarely believed that the texts which they published belonged to the genre of history. It is interesting to note that 1681, the year in which the *Discourse* was first published, also was the year in which Mabillon's great *De re diplomatica*, a pioneering scientific study of historical sources, was first published.
faith in the age of Louis XIV. But after the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, a historical underpinning for the faith apparently seemed more necessary. Remedy to Simonism, Spinozism, and Voltaire, rather than immunization? The place of history in the French national consciousness may have expanded during the eighteenth century as an increasingly well-educated reading public gradually lost the fervor of a pietist-spiritualist mentality grounded on Francis of Sales, Bérulle, Jeanne de Chantal, Louise de Marillac, and numerous other authors inspired by their works. Faith now needed history more than it had in Bossuet’s time. Nineteenth-century schoolboys consequently read the *Discourse*. Those handsome copies awarded as prizes in French lycées testify to the veneration given this work.

Then, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, publishers began to break up the *Discourse* and publish the parts separately; editions of Part III far outnumbered those of Parts I and II. Thus Greek and Roman history for moral and political instruction, and early French history to strengthen the national belief that the French were a chosen people, would be the final contributions to French political culture which Bossuet’s *Discourse* would offer during the nineteenth century. Ending up in the hands of schoolboys would not have displeased Bossuet, for had not the *Discourse* from the beginning been conceived for teaching the lessons of faith and history to a boy, the dauphin?

Orest Ranum
Editorial Note

The first and second editions of the Discourse on Universal History are the same, with the exception of a very few stylistic changes. The differences between the second and the third edition—the last prepared by Bossuet himself—are significant, because they permit us to know where he thought the Discourse had become vulnerable as a work of historical scholarship. New passages that Bossuet added in the third edition are therefore enclosed in square brackets in the translation. When the new material represents a replacement of earlier material or a revision rather than a simple addition, the second-edition wording of the passage is presented in an editorial footnote. (Editorial interpolations in Bossuet's text are enclosed, for contrast, in angle rather than square brackets.) For questions about the number and character of editions, see H.-M. Bourseaud, Histoire et description des manuscrits et des éditions originales des ouvrages de Bossuet (2d ed., Paris, 1897), and T. Goyet, Autour du "Discours sur l'Histoire universelle," Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon (Paris, 1956). The translation is based on the Firmin Didot (Paris, 1858) printing of the third edition. Passages from the second edition (1682) have been translated by Patricia M. Ranum from the editor's personal copy.

Biblical quotations appear in italics in this translation, just as they do in the early editions of the Discourse. This manner of presenting the text in two type faces was not original with Bossuet, but it nevertheless reflects his desire to have readers recognize when they are reading from the prime sacred source of the Christian religion. These quotations have not been made to
conform to any particular English edition of the Bible. Nonbibli
clical sources were merely cited in the margins of the original
editions of the Discourse and have been omitted from this edition,
as have the citations for the biblical texts.

Bossuet employed the principal sources dealing with the ancient
world which were available in his age: the Bible, including the
apocalyptic books; the Talmud; the Church Fathers, particularly
Jerome, Augustine, Origen, Tertullian, and John Chrysostom; and
the ancient historians, Eusebius, Xenophon, Herodotus, Polybius,
Thucydides, Ammianus Marcellinus, Suetonius, Sallust, Tacitus,
and Livy. The ancient Greek and Roman writers who influenced
him most were Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, and Dionysius of Hali-
carnassus; but on more than one occasion he cites Lucian,
Lactantius, Cicero, the Historiae Augustae, Lampridius, Strabo,
Caesar, Phlegon, and Arnobius. Among the later writers cited we
find Maimonides and Gregory of Tours. Bossuet does not, how-
ever, discuss the various universal histories and chronologies
written in the seventeenth century, with which he was no doubt
familiar.

The spelling of names conforms to the eleventh edition of the
Encyclopaedia Britannica, which, despite its antiquity, has the
advantage of including some information about almost every subject
mentioned by Bossuet—something that cannot be said about any of
the more contemporary encyclopedias.

The abbreviations A.M. (for anno mundi, "in the year of the
world") and A.U.C. (for anno urbis conditae, "in the year from the
founding of the city" of Rome) reflect Bossuet's efforts to establish a
single chronology for sacred and secular histories. The dates given are
those of the third edition.

The editor would like to thank Professor Joseph Klaits of Oakland
University for his helpful criticism of the Introduction.
DISCOURSE ON UNIVERSAL HISTORY
TO MONSEIGNEUR LE DAUPHIN

to explain the history of religion
and the changes of empires
General Plan of This Work

Even if history were useless to other men, princes should be made to read it. For there is no better way to show them what is wrought by passion and interest, time and circumstance, good and bad advice. Histories deal only with the deeds that concern princes, and everything in them seems to be made for their use. If they need experience to acquire the prudence of a good ruler, nothing is more useful for their instruction than to add the examples of past centuries to the experiences they have every day. While ordinarily they learn to evaluate the dangers they encounter only at the expense of their subjects and their own glory, history will help them form their judgment on the events of the past without any risk. Seeing even the most hidden vices of princes exposed to everyone's sight, despite the spurious praise they receive during their life, they will be ashamed of the vain pleasure they take in flattery and will understand that true glory comes only with merit.

Furthermore, it would be shameful not only for a prince but for any gentleman in general to be ignorant of the human race and of the memorable changes the passage of time has wrought in the world. He who has not learned from history to distinguish different ages will represent men under the law of Nature or under written law as they are under the law of the Gospel; he will speak of the vanquished Persians under Alexander as he speaks of the victorious Persians under Cyrus; he will make the Greeks as free at the time of Philip as at the time of Themistocles or Miltiades, the Roman people as proud under Diocletian as under Constantine, and France during the upheavals of the civil wars under Charles IX and Henry III as powerful as at the time of Louis XIV, when, united under that great king, France alone triumphs over all of Europe.
It was in order to avoid these pitfalls, Monseigneur, that you have read so much ancient and modern history. Above all, it was necessary to make you read in the Scriptures the history of God's people, the foundation of religion. Nor were you left ignorant of Greek and Roman history; and, even more important for you, you were carefully taught the history of this great kingdom which you are obliged to make happy. But lest these histories, and those you will still have to learn, become confused in your mind, it is of the first importance to put before you distinctly, but in a condensed form, the entire course of the centuries.

This kind of universal history is to the history of every country and of every people what a world map is to particular maps. In a particular map you see all the details of a kingdom or a province as such. But a general map teaches you to place these parts of the world in their context; you see what Paris or the Ile-de-France is in the kingdom, what the kingdom is in Europe, and what Europe is in the world.

In the same manner, particular histories show the sequence of events that have occurred in a nation in all their detail. But in order to understand everything, we must know what connection that history might have with others; and that can be done by a condensation in which we can perceive, as in one glance, the entire sequence of time.

Such a condensation, Monseigneur, will afford you a grand view. You will see all preceding centuries developing, as it were, before your very eyes in a few hours; you will see how empires succeeded one another and how religion, in its different states, maintains its stability from the beginning of the world to our own time.

It is the progression of these two things, I mean religion and empires, that you must impress upon your memory. And since religion and political government are the two points around which human affairs revolve, to see what is said about them in a condensation and thus to discover their order and sequence is to understand in one's mind all that is great in mankind and, as it were, to hold a guiding line to all the affairs of the world.

Just as, looking at a world map, you leave your native country and the place that holds you to travel all over the habitable world, seeing
it in your mind with all its oceans and its lands; so also, looking at a chronological condensation, you leave the narrow confines of your age and extend yourself through all the centuries.

But just as, to help our memory in the knowledge of places, we must retain certain principal towns around which to place the others according to their distance, so also, in the succession of centuries, we must have certain times marked by some great event to which we can relate all the rest.

That is what we call an epoch, from a Greek word meaning to stop, because we stop there in order to consider, as from a resting place, all that has happened before or after, thus avoiding anachronisms, that is, the kind of error that confuses ages.

We must begin by firmly establishing a small number of epochs, such as they are found in the time of ancient history:

Adam, or the Creation
Noah, or the Flood
The Calling of Abraham, or the Beginning of the Covenant between God and Man
Moses, or the Written Law
The Fall of Troy
Solomon, or the Foundation of the Temple
Romulus, or the Building of Rome
Cyrus, or the Deliverance of the Chosen People from the Babylonian Captivity
Scipio, or the Fall of Carthage
The Birth of Jesus Christ
Constantine, or the Peace of the Church
Charlemagne, or the Establishment of the New Empire

I offer you the establishment of the new empire under Charlemagne as the end of ancient history, because it is here that you will see the conclusive end of the ancient Roman Empire. That is why I shall make you pause at such an important point of universal history. The sequence will be given you in a second part, which will bring you up to the century we see illuminated by the immortal actions of the
king, your father, and in which your ardor in following his great example gives rise to hopes of further luster.

Having explained the plan of this work in general, I must do three things to make it as useful as I would hope it to be.

First, I must take you through the epochs I mentioned, and, briefly explaining the principal events belonging to each of them, I must accustom your mind to putting these events in their place without paying attention to anything but the sequence of time. But since my principal aim is to show you, in this progression of time, the course of religion and of great empires, I shall first treat the facts concerning these two things in chronological order and then treat separately, with appropriate reflections, first those facts that show us the perpetual duration of religion and finally those that show us the causes of the great changes in empires.

After that, whatever part of ancient history you may read, everything will be useful to you. You will see no fact without perceiving its consequences. You will admire the continuous direction of God in matters of religion; you will also see how human affairs are bound together. Hence, you will know with how much care and foresight they have to be conducted.
PART ONE

The Epochs
First Epoch

Adam, or the Creation

First Age of the World

The first epoch begins with a grand spectacle: God creating heaven and earth through his word and making man in his image (1 A.M., 4004 B.C.). This is where Moses, the first historian, the most sublime philosopher, and the wisest of legislators, begins.

On this foundation he builds his history as well as his teaching and his laws. Then he shows us all men within one man, even his wife fashioned from him; harmony in marriage and human society built on that foundation; the perfection and power of man so long as he bears the image of God in its entirety; his domination over the animals; his innocence and also his happiness in Paradise, whose memory is preserved in the Golden Age of the poets; the divine precept given to our first parents; the malice of the tempting spirit and his appearance in the form of the serpent; the fall of Adam and Eve, so fateful to all their posterity; the first man justly punished in all his children and God's curse on the human race; the first promise of redemption and the future victory of man over the demon that was his downfall.

The earth begins to be populated, and crime increases (129 A.M., 3875 B.C.). Cain, the first child of Adam and Eve, shows the nascent world the first tragic action, and already virtue is beginning to be persecuted by vice. The contrasting ways of life of the two brothers appear: the innocence of Abel, his pastoral life, and his pleasing sacrifices; and those of Cain rejected, his rapacity, his impiety, his parricide, and his envy, the mother of murder; the punishment of that crime and the constant terror in the criminal's conscience; the building of the first town by that evildoer, who was seeking asylum.
from the hatred and horror of mankind. We see the invention of a few skills by his children; the tyranny of the passions and the prodigious depravity of the human heart, which is always ready to do evil. We also see the posterity of Seth, faithful to God despite that depravity; the pious Enoch (987 A.M., 3017 B.C.), miraculously taken from a world unworthy of him; the distinction between the children of man and those of God, meaning those that live according to the flesh and those that live according to the spirit; their mingling and the universal corruption of the world; the destruction of man decided by a just judgment of God (1536 A.M., 2468 B.C.); the announcement of his wrath to the sinners by his servant Noah; their hardhearted impenitence that was finally chastised in the Flood (1656 A.M., 2348 B.C.); Noah and his family, who were saved for the preservation of mankind.

This much happened in 1,656 years. Such is the beginning of all history, and here we discover the omnipotence, wisdom, and kindness of God; the happy innocence under his protection, his justice in punishing crime but also his patience in waiting for the conversion of sinners; the greatness and dignity of man in his first state; the nature of mankind since its corruption; man's natural bent toward envy and the secret causes of violence and war—in a word we discover all the cornerstones of religion and ethics.

Along with mankind, Noah preserved the arts—those that were basic to human existence, having been known from the beginning, as well as those that had been invented later. The arts that men learned first, apparently from their Creator, are agriculture, animal husbandry, and the art of making clothing and perhaps also that of finding shelter. That is why we see the beginning of these arts in the East, the region whence mankind spread out.

The tradition of the great deluge is found everywhere on earth. The ark in which the last of mankind took refuge has always been famous in the East, especially around the place where it came to rest after the Flood. Several other circumstances relating to this famous event can be found in the annals and traditions of ancient peoples; their chronology tallies, and everything fits together as well as can be expected for a past so remote.
Second Epoch

NOAH, OR THE FLOOD
Second Age of the World

Around the time of the Flood we find a shortening of human life (1656 A.M., 2348 B.C.); a change in diet (1657 A.M., 2347 B.C.), and the substitution of new foods for the fruits of the earth; a few precepts given to Noah, orally only; the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel (1757 A.M., 2247 B.C.), a first monument to the pride and weakness of men; the separation of Noah's three children and the first distribution of lands.

The memory of these first three founders of nations and peoples has been preserved among men. Japheth, who populated most of the East, has remained famous there under the resounding name of Iapet; Ham and his son Canaan have been just as well known among the Egyptians and the Phoenicians; and the memory of Shem has always been with the Hebrews, who issued from him.

Shortly after the first division of mankind the fierce Nimrod became the first conqueror because of his violent nature; and such is the origin of conquests. He established his kingdom at Babylon, the very place where the tower had been started and was already quite high, though not high enough to satisfy human pride. About the same time, Nineveh was built, and some other ancient kingdoms were founded. They were small in these early times, and in Egypt alone we find four dynasties or principalities, those of Thebes, Tina <Pelusium>, *Memphis, and Tanis. The last was the capital of Lower Egypt.

Into these times we can also place the beginning of the laws and institutions of Egypt, the beginning of their pyramids, which are still standing, and of the astronomical observations (1771 A.M., 2233 B.C.) made by the Egyptians as well as by the Chaldaeans. Thus we

*Angle brackets enclose editorial interpolations in Bossuet's text.
see that the observations that the Chaldaeans, without question the first to study the stars, gave to Callisthenes at Babylon—who passed them on to Aristotle—go back to that time, but no further.

Everything was beginning. All of ancient history—not only in these first times, but for a long time to come—shows manifest signs that the world was new. We see how laws are made, how manners become refined, how empires are formed. Slowly, mankind is emerging from ignorance; men learn from experience; the arts are invented or perfected. As men multiply, the earth gradually becomes populated. Mountains and deep valleys are passed, rivers and eventually the seas are crossed, and new settlements are founded. The earth, but an immense forest in the beginning, takes on a new form: clearings make room for fields, pastures, hamlets, villages, and, finally, towns. Men learn to trap some of the animals and to tame others and teach them how to work. At first they had to fight wild beasts. The first heroes distinguished themselves in such battles, and the battles themselves led to the invention of weapons, which men later turned against their fellow men. Nimrod, the first warrior and conqueror, is called a mighty hunter in the Scriptures. With the taming of animals, man also learned how to improve fruits and plants; even metals were made pliable for his use, and he gradually made all of Nature serve him.

It was natural that in time many things were invented but also that others fell into oblivion, at least for the majority of men. The first arts had been preserved by Noah and were still flourishing in those parts where mankind had settled first; but they were lost as men went further afield. They either had to be learned anew, or those who had preserved them had to pass them on to others. That is why we see that everything comes from those regions that were continually inhabited, where knowledge of the arts was preserved in its entirety; and even there many important things were learned every day. The knowledge of God and the memory of the Creation were preserved there, but they became dimmer as time went on. The ancient traditions were forgotten and obscured, and the fables which took their place retained only crude recollections of them; great numbers of false divinities came into being; and this is what led to the calling of Abraham.
Third Epoch

The Calling of Abraham, or the Beginning of God's People and the Covenant

Third Age of the World

Four hundred twenty-six years after the Flood (2083 A.M., 1921 B.C.), as all the peoples were going their separate ways, forgetful of their creator, that great God wanted to put an end to the spreading of such evil and began to single out one chosen people amid all that corruption. Abraham was chosen as stem and father of all believers. God called him into the land of Canaan, where he wanted to establish his worship and establish the children of that patriarch, having decided to make them as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea. To the promise of giving that land to Abraham's descendants God added something infinitely more precious, namely, the great benediction to be bestowed on all nations of the earth in Jesus Christ, to be born from Abraham's seed. It was Jesus Christ whom Abraham honored in the person of the high priest, Melchizedek, who represented him; it was to him that he paid the tenth share of the booty taken from the defeated kings; and it was by him that he was blessed.

For all his immense wealth and a power equal to that of kings, Abraham held fast to the traditional ways. He always led a simple and pastoral life, which nonetheless had its magnificence too, expressed above all in the patriarch's hospitality toward everyone. His guests were sent by Heaven (2148 A.M., 1856 B.C.), and angels brought him God's advice; he believed in them, and everything he did showed that he was filled with faith and piety.

During the time of Abraham, Inachus, the earliest king known to the Greeks, founded the kingdom of Argos.

After Abraham we find Isaac, his son, and Jacob, his grandson, who continued his faith and simplicity in the same pastoral life. God repeated to them also the promises made to their father and guided them in all things as he had guided Abraham. Isaac gave his blessing
to Jacob, to the detriment of Jacob’s older brother, Esau (2245 A.M., 1759 B.C.). Seemingly deceived, Isaac in fact carried out what God had decreed [and ordered the destiny of two nations. Esau also had the name of Edom, hence the name of the Idumaeans, whose father he is.]*

Jacob, whom God protected, outdid Esau in everything. An angel with whom he struggled in a most mysterious combat gave him the name Israel, whence his children are called Israelites. From him were born the twelve patriarchs, fathers of the twelve tribes of the Hebrew people. Among them were Levi, from whom were to issue the servants of religion; Judah, from whom was to issue the royal race and hence Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords; and Joseph, whom Jacob loved more than any of his other children.

Here again the secrets of Divine Providence become manifest. Above all, we see the innocence and wisdom of young Joseph, always opposed to vice and reprimanding it in his brothers; his mysterious and prophetic dreams; the jealousy of his brothers, and jealousy leading to a second parricide (2276 A.M., 1728 B.C.); the selling of the great man; his loyalty to his master and his admirable chastity (2287 A.M., 1717 B.C.); the persecutions it brings him; his imprisonment and his forbearance (2289 A.M., 1715 B.C.); his prophecies; his miraculous deliverance; the famous explanation of Pharaoh’s dreams; the recognition of the great man’s merits; his lofty and upright character and the protection of God, who makes him stand out wherever he is; his foresight; his wise decrees (2298 A.M., 1706 B.C.) and his absolute power in the kingdom of Lower Egypt and, thence, the salvation of his father Jacob and his family. Beloved by God, this family thus became established in the region of Egypt whose capital was Tanis and whose king always took the name of Pharaoh.

Jacob’s death approached, and shortly before his death he made his famous prophecy to his children (2315 A.M., 1689 B.C.). Showing them what was to become of their posterity, he revealed to Judah in particular the time of the Messiah who was to issue from his seed.

*Passages or words enclosed in square brackets indicate changes (usually additions) made by Bossuet in the third and final edition of the Discourse. See the Editorial Note at the beginning of this book.
In a short time the house of the patriarch became a numerous people. This prodigious growth excited the envy of the Egyptians. The Hebrews were unjustly hated and persecuted without mercy. Then God decreed the birth of their liberator, Moses (2433 A.M., 1571 B.C.), whom he delivered from the waters of the Nile, making him to fall into the hands of Pharaoh's daughter. She brought him up as her son and had him instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

In these times people from Egypt settled in various places in Greece. The colonists whom Cecrops brought from Egypt founded twelve cities (2448 A.M., 1556 B.C.), or rather twelve towns, which he made into the kingdom of Athens. With the laws of his country, he also established its gods there. Shortly thereafter occurred Deucalion's flood in Thessaly, which the Greeks take to be the universal flood. Hellen, the son of Deucalion, reigned in Phthia, a region of Thessaly, and gave his name to Greece. His subjects, formerly known as Greeks, have ever since adopted the name of Hellenes, although the Latins have preserved the old name for them. About the same time, Cadmus, the son of Agenor, brought a colony of Phoenicians to Greece and founded the town of Thebes in Boeotia. The gods of Syria and Phoenicia came to Greece with him.

In the meantime Moses was growing up (2473 A.M., 1531 B.C.). At the age of forty he came to scorn the splendor of the Egyptian court and, touched by the suffering of his Israelite brethren, took great risks to alleviate it. But they, far from availing themselves of his zeal and his courage, exposed him to the wrath of Pharaoh, who resolved to do away with him. Moses fled from Egypt to the land of Midian in Arabia, where his strength, always so helpful to the oppressed, enabled him to find a secure retreat. Losing hope of delivering his people, or else waiting for a better time, the great man had spent forty years watching the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro, when he saw the burning bush in the desert (2513 A.M., 1491 B.C.) and heard the voice of the God of his fathers, bidding him return to Egypt to free his brethren from bondage. Here we see the humility, the courage, and the miracles of this divine legislator; the hardheartedness of Pharaoh and the terrible punishments God sent him; Passover and, the next day, the crossing of the Red Sea; Pharaoh
and the Egyptians buried under the waters; and the complete deliverance of the Israelites.

Fourth Epoch

Moses, or the Written Law

Fourth Age of the World

Thus began the time of the written law (2513 A.M., 1491 B.C.). It was given to Moses 430 years after the calling of Abraham, 856 years after the Flood, and in the year in which the Hebrew people came out of Egypt. This date must be retained, because it is used to designate all the time that passed between Moses and Jesus Christ. All this time is called that of the written law, as distinguished from the preceding time, which is called that of natural law, when men had only their natural reason and the traditions of their ancestors to guide them.

God, then, having freed his people from the tyranny of the Egyptians in order to lead them into the land where he wishes to be worshiped, and even before settling them there, gives his people the law under which they are to live henceforth. With his own hands, on two tablets given to Moses on the summit of Mount Sinai, he writes down the fundamentals of that law, that is, the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, containing the first principles of both the worship of God and human society. To Moses also he dictates the other precepts by which he establishes the tabernacle, symbol of the future; the ark, in which God shows his presence by his oracles and where the tablets of the law are kept; the elevation of Moses' brother Aaron; the high priesthood or pontificate, a unique dignity given to him and his descendants; the ceremonies of their consecration and the form of their mysterious vestments; the functions of the priests descended from Aaron and those of the Levites, with the other religious observances; and, most beautiful of all, the moral rules,
institutions, and government of his chosen people, whose legislator he himself wishes to be. These things were established during the epoch of the written law. Later we see the continuation of the wandering in the wilderness, revolts, outbreaks of idolatry, punishment, and consolation meted out to God's people, whom the all-powerful legislator slowly molds in this manner. We see the consecration of the high priest Eleazar (2552 A.M., 1452 B.C.) and the death of his father, Aaron; the zeal of Eleazar's son Phineas; and how the priesthood is given to his posterity by a special promise.

During these times the Egyptians continued to found colonies in various places, particularly in Greece, where Danaus the Egyptian became king of Argos, disposessing the ancient kings descended from Inachus.

Toward the end of God's people's wanderings in the wilderness we see the first battles (2553 A.M., 1451 B.C.) and their happy outcome, owing to Moses' prayers. Moses dies and leaves the Israelites a record of their entire history, which he had carefully compiled from the beginning of the world up to the time of his death. Joshua and his successors ordered this history to be continued. It was later divided into several books; and the Book of Joshua, the Book of Judges, and the two Books of Kings have come down to us from that time. The book written by Moses, containing all of the law, was also divided into five books. They are called the Pentateuch and constitute the foundation of our religion.

After the death of the man of God we find the wars of Joshua, the conquest and partition of the Holy Land (2559 A.M., 1445 B.C.), and the rebellions of the people, who were chastised and reinstated at various times. Here we see the victories of Othniel, who delivered the people from the tyranny of Chusan <Chusan-rishathaim> (2599 A.M., 1405 B.C.), king of Mesopotamia, and, eighty years later, the victory of Ehud over Eglon, king of Moab (2679 A.M., 1325 B.C.).

About that time Pelops (2682 A.M., 1322 B.C.), the Phrygian, son of Tantalus, reigned in the Peloponnesus and gave his name to that famous region. Bel was king of the Chaldaeans, who worshiped him as a god.

The ungrateful Israelites again fell into bondage (2699 A.M., 1305 B.C.). Jabin, the king of Canaan, subjegated them; but Debo-
rah, the prophetess, who judged the people (2719 a.m., 1285 b.c.), and Barak, the son of Abinoam, overthrew Sisera, the general of that king's army. Forty* years later Gideon (2759 a.m., 1245 b.c.), who gained victory without doing battle, pursued and defeated the Midianites. His son Abimelech (2768 a.m., 1236 b.c.) usurped his authority by murdering his brothers, used it tyrannically, and finally lost it, as well as his life. Jephthah stained his victory with blood in a sacrifice that could be excused only if it were done in response to a secret command of God—but it did not please him to tell us anything about it.

During that century, very important things occurred among the Gentiles; for following the calculations of Herodotus, which seem to be the most exact, we must place here (2737 a.m., 1267 b.c.), in the year 514 before Rome, and at the time of Deborah, the appearance of Ninus, the son of Bel, and the foundation of the first Assyrian Empire. The seat of the Assyrian Empire was established at Nineveh, an ancient and already famous city, to which Ninus gave further beauty and renown. Those who give 1,300 years to the first Assyrians are justified by the antiquity of the city; Herodotus, who gives them only 520 years, is speaking only of the duration of the empire which they began to expand into Upper Asia under Ninus, son of Bel.

A little later, and into the reign of that conqueror, we must also place the founding (2752 a.m., 1252 b.c.), or refounding, of the ancient city of Tyre, which became so famous for its navigation and its colonies. Later, and some time after Abimelech, we find the famous combats of Hercules, son of Amphitryon, and of Theseus, king of Athens, who made a single city out of the twelve towns of Cecrops and gave a better form to the government of Athens.

At the time of Jephthah, while Semiramis, widow of Ninus and guardian of Ninyas, was expanding the Assyrian Empire by her conquests, the famous city of Troy, already taken once by the Greeks in the reign of its third king, Laomedon, was again burnt to the ground by the Greeks (2820 a.m., 1184 b.c.) in the reign of Priam, the son of Laomedon, after a siege lasting ten years.

*The second edition read "Thirty years".
Fifth Epoch: The Fall of Troy

Fifth Epoch

THE FALL OF TROY

This epoch, of the Fall of Troy (2820 A.M., 1184 B.C.), occurring about 308 years after the Exodus from Egypt and 1,164 years after the Flood, is important not only because of the greatness of the event—celebrated by the two greatest poets of Greece and Italy—but also because we can relate to it all that is remarkable in the so-called legendary or heroic times. They are called legendary because of the legends in which the histories of these times are clothed, and heroic because of those whom the poets have called children of the gods, or heroes. Their lifetime is close to that city’s fall; for at the time of Laomedon, father of Priam, we see all the heroes of the Golden Fleece—Jason, Hercules, Orpheus, Castor and Pollux, and the others whom you know—and at the time of Priam himself, during the last siege of Troy, we see Achilles, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Ulysses, Hector, Sarpedon, the son of Jupiter, Aeneas, the son of Venus, whom the Romans recognize as their founder, and so many others from whom illustrious families and entire nations have been proud to descend. This epoch, therefore, can be used to bring together all that is beautiful and certain in these legendary times.

But what we see in sacred history is more remarkable in every way: the prodigious strength of a Samson (2887 A.M., 1177 B.C.) and his amazing weakness; Eli (2888 A.M., 1176 B.C.), the high priest, venerated in his piety and unfortunate in the crime of his children; Samuel (2909 A.M., 1095 B.C.), the irreproachable judge and prophet, chosen by God to consecrate kings; Saul, the first king of the Chosen People, his victories and his presumptuousness in sacrificing without the priests, his disobedience, which he tried to excuse on religious grounds, his reprobation, and his disastrous fall.

At the same time, Codrus, the king of Athens, devoted his entire life to the good of his people and brought them victory through his death. His children, Medon and Nileus, struggled over the kingdom. On that occasion the Athenians abolished kingship and declared
Zeus the only king of the people of Athens. They created governors or perpetual presidents, who were subject, however, to giving accounts of their administration. These magistrates were called archons. Medon, the son of Codrus, was the first to hold that office, and it remained in his family for a long time. The Athenians spread their colonies to the region of Asia Minor called Ionia. The Aeolian colonies slowly came into being at the same time (2949 A.M., 1055 B.C.), and all of Asia Minor became settled with Greek cities.

After Saul appeared David, the admirable shepherd who had overcome the proud Goliath and all the enemies of the Chosen People. He was a great king, a great conqueror, a great prophet, worthy of singing the praise of the divine omnipotence; he was, in a word, a man after God’s own heart, as God himself called him; a man who, by his penitence (2970 A.M., 1034 B.C.), even turned his crime to the greater glory of his creator.

This pious warrior was succeeded by his son Solomon (2990 A.M., 1014 B.C.), a wise, just, and peaceful man, whose unsullied hands were judged worthy to build God’s Temple (2992 A.M., 1012 B.C.).

Sixth Epoch

Solomon, or the Completion of the Temple

Fifth Age of the World

It was about the year 3000 of the world (1004 B.C.) in the 488th year (3001 A.M., 1003 B.C.) after the Exodus from Egypt and, to adjust the dates of sacred history with those of secular history, 180 years after the Fall of Troy, 250 years before the founding of Rome, and 1,000 before Jesus Christ, that Solomon completed that marvelous edifice. He celebrated its dedication (3029 A.M., 975 B.C.) with extraordinary piety and magnificence. This famous act was followed by the other marvels of the reign of King Solomon, which ended in shameful weakness. He indulged in the love of women; his spirit
Sixth Epoch: Solomon and the Temple
grew base, his courage weakened, and his piety degenerated into idolatry. Justly irritated, God spared him in memory of his servant David, but he did not want to leave such ingratitude entirely unpunished and therefore divided Solomon’s kingdom after his death, under his son Rehoboam. The brutal pride of the young prince made him lose ten tribes, which Jeroboam separated from their God and their king. Lest they return to the king of Judah, he forbade them to sacrifice at the Temple of Jerusalem and set up his golden calves, calling them the “God of Israel” so that the change should seem less strange. For the same reason, he made them retain the Law of Moses, which he interpreted in his own way. Nonetheless, he made them observe almost all the civil and religious decrees, so that the Pentateuch was always venerated among the lost tribes.

Thus it came about that the kingdom of Israel was set against that of Judah. In the kingdom of Israel impiety and idolatry triumphed. Often obscured in the kingdom of Judah, religion nonetheless was preserved there.

In these times the kings of Egypt were powerful. The four kingdoms had been united under that of Thebes. It is believed that Sesostris, the famous conqueror of the Egyptians, is the same Shishak, king of Egypt, whom God used for chastising the impiety of Rehoboam (3033 A.M., 971 B.C.).

Under the reign of Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, we see how the piety of this prince brought him a resounding victory over the schismatic tribes. His son Asa (3087 A.M., 917 B.C.), whose piety is praised in the Scriptures, is yet shown there as a man who, when he was ill, “sought not to the Lord but to the physicians.” In his time Omri, the king of Israel, built Samaria (3080 A.M., 924 B.C.) and made it the capital of his kingdom.

This time is followed by the admirable reign of Jehoshaphat (3090 A.M., 914 B.C.), in which piety, justice, navigation, and military science flourished. While he was another David to the kingdom of Judah, Ahab and his wife Jezebel, who ruled in Israel, added all the impiety of the Gentiles to the idolatry of Jeroboam. Both of them perished miserably (3105 A.M., 899 B.C.). Having endured their idolatry, God resolved to avenge upon them the blood of Naboth, whom they had condemned to death because he had refused,
following the Law of Moses, to sell them his patrimony in perpetuity. God’s sentence was pronounced on them (3107 A.M., 897 B.C.) by the mouth of the prophet Elijah. Ahab was killed shortly thereafter (3112 A.M., 892 B.C.), despite the precautions he had taken for his security.

Around this time we must also place the foundation of Carthage by Dido. Coming from Tyre, Dido built the city on a site which, like Tyre, lent itself to profitable trading and aspirations for domination of the sea. It is difficult to mark the exact time when Carthage became a republic, but the mixture of people from Tyre with Africans made it into a community both warlike and commercial. The ancient historians who place its origins before the Fall of Troy justify the conjecture that Dido enlarged and fortified, rather than actually founded, Carthage.

Now things took a different turn in the kingdom of Judah (3116 A.M., 888 B.C.). Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, brought impiety into the house of Jehoshaphat. Jehoram, the son of a very God-fearing prince, preferred to follow his father-in-law’s example rather than that of his father. The hand of God was upon him (3119 A.M., 885 B.C.). His reign was short and his end terrible. In the midst of these chastisements, God performed extraordinary prodigies, even for the benefit of the Israelites, whom he wanted to bring to repentance. They witnessed, without being converted, the wonders of Elijah and Elisha, who prophesied during the reigns of Ahab and five of his successors.

In these times Homer flourished, and Hesiod flourished thirty years before him. The venerable old ways they depict for us and the vestiges of ancient simplicity they preserve with such nobility are most useful in making us understand much more remote times and the divine simplicity of the Scriptures.

Dreadful sights were seen in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel (3120 A.M., 884 B.C.). Jezebel was thrown from the summit of a tower by orders of Jehu. Her rich array was to no avail: Jehu had her trampled to death by horses. He also put to death Jehoram, king of Israel and son of Ahab. Ahab’s entire house was exterminated, and its ruin almost brought about that of the kings of Judah. King Ahaziah, son of Jehoram and Athaliah, king and queen of Judah,
was killed in Samaria, along with his brothers, as a friend and ally of Ahab's children. As soon as this news reached Jerusalem, Athaliah decided to put to death all that was left of the royal house, sparing not even her own children, and to reign by destroying all her family. Only Joash, Ahaziah's son, still a babe in arms, was rescued from his grandmother's fury. Jehosheba, sister of Ahaziah and wife of the high priest Jehoiada, hid him in the house of God, thus saving the precious remains of the house of David. Athaliah, believing him killed with all the others, lived without fear.

Lycurgus gave laws to Lacedaemon. We must criticize him for having made all of them for war, following the example of Minos, whose decrees he took as a model, and for having given too little attention to the modesty of women while providing for a very hard and invigorating life for the men, who were to be made into soldiers.

Nothing was stirring against Athaliah in Judah. She believed herself secure after a reign of six years. But the Lord was preparing her nemesis in the sacred asylum of his Temple. When Joash had reached the age of seven (3126 A.M., 878 B.C.), Jehoiada made him known to some of the most important, carefully selected captains of the royal army. Assisted by the Levites, Jehoiada consecrated the young king in the temple. All the people easily recognized the heir of David and Jehoshaphat. When Athaliah heard the commotion and came to break up the conspiracy, she was dragged outside the temple precinct, where she received the punishment her crimes deserved.

As long as Jehoiada lived, Joash made the people keep the Law of Moses; but after the death of the saintly priest, he was corrupted by the flattery of his courtiers and fell into idolatry with them. The priest Zachariah, son of Jehoiada, tried to reprimand him; but Joash, forgetting what he owed to the father, had him stoned (3164 A.M., 840 B.C.). Vengeance was swift. The very next year Joash, defeated by the Syrians and fallen into discredit, was assassinated by his own men; and his son Amaziah, a better man than he, was put on the throne (3179 A.M., 825 B.C.). The kingdom of Israel, exhausted by the victories of the Syrian kings and by civil wars, recovered its strength under Jeroboam II, a more God-fearing man than his predecessors.
Uzziah, also known as Azariah, the son of Amaziah (3194 A.M., 810 B.C.), ruled the kingdom of Judah no less gloriously. He is the famous Uzziah who was stricken with leprosy and who is so often reprimanded in the Scriptures for having dared, in his last days, to interfere in the priestly office and for having in person offered incense on the incense altar despite the prohibition of the Law. According to the Law of Moses, it was necessary to take him into custody, king though he was; but his son Jotham, who later succeeded him, governed the kingdom wisely. In the reign of Uzziah, the holy prophets, the most important of whom at that time were Hosea and Isaiah, began to circulate their prophecies in written form in separate books, depositing the originals in the Temple as a memorial for posterity. According to custom, the minor prophecies, and those that were made only orally, were also recorded in the Temple archives, along with a history of the times.

The Olympian Games, first founded by Hercules and discontinued for a long time, were reestablished (3228 A.M., 776 B.C.). This is the origin of the olympiads, by which the Greeks counted the years. This event marks the end of what Varro calls the legendary times—since up to that date secular histories were full of confusion and legend—and the beginning of historical times—in which world events were related in more faithful and precise reports. The first olympiad is marked by the victory of Coroebus. The games were held every five years, with an interval of four full years. There, before an assembly of all the Greeks—first at Pisa and later at Elis—they celebrated the famous contests, the winners of which were crowned with the most extraordinary acclaim. Thus physical exercise was held in high esteem, and Greece became stronger and more polished every day. Almost all of Italy was still savage. The Latin kings descended from Aeneas reigned in Alba.

Phul <Tiglath-Pileser> was king of Assyria. He is believed to be the father of Sardanapalus <Assurbanipal>, who in the tradition of the Orient was called Sardan-Pul, that is, Sardan, son of Phul. It is also believed that this Phul, or Pul, was the king of Nineveh who did penance with all his people following Jonah’s sermon (3233 A.M., 771 B.C.). Attracted by the internal struggles in the kingdom of Israel, this prince came to invade it. Appeased, however, by Mena-
hem, he firmly placed the latter on the throne he had usurped by violence and received a tribute of 1,000 talents in return.

In the reign of his son, Sardanapalus, and after Alcmaeon, the last of the perpetual Athenian archons, the Athenians were leaning increasingly toward a democratic state. They diminished the power of their magistrates and reduced the administration of the archons to ten years. The first archon of this kind was Charops.

**Seventh Epoch**

ROMULUS, OR THE FOUNDED OF ROME

Romulus and Remus, descended from the ancient kings of Alba through their mother Ilia, reinstated in the kingdom of Alba their grandfather Numitor, whom his brother Amulius had dispossessed. Immediately following this they founded Rome, at the time when Jotham was reigning in Judaea.

This city, which was to become the mistress of the world and later the seat of our religion, was founded (3250 A.M., 754 B.C.) toward the end of the third year of the sixth olympiad, about 430 years after the Fall of Troy, whence the Romans believed their ancestors to have come, and 753 years before Jesus Christ (1 A.U.C., 753 B.C.). Tempered by the hard life of some shepherds who brought him up and by the continual hardships of war, Romulus dedicated the city to the god of war, whom he called his father.

About the time of the birth of Rome, the indolence of Sardanapalus brought about the fall of the first Assyrian Empire (6 A.U.C., 748 B.C.). Stirred by the harangues of their governor, Arbaces or orbaces, the warlike Medes showed all the subjects of that effeminate prince <Sardanapalus> how to despise him. There was a general revolt against him, and he finally perished in his capital city, being forced to burn himself with his wives, his eunuchs, and his treasures.

Three great kingdoms emerged from the ruins of that empire. Arbaces or Orbaces, sometimes also called Pharnaces, liberated the
Medes, who, after a prolonged period of anarchy, had very powerful kings. In addition, we see the emergence of a second Assyrian Empire (7 A.U.C., 747 B.C.) immediately following Sardanapalus, the capital of which remained Nineveh, and, thirdly, a kingdom of Babylon. The last two kingdoms are not unknown to secular writers, and they are famous in sacred history. The second kingdom of Nineveh was founded by Tiglath or Teglath, son of Pileser, who therefore is called Tiglath-Pileser; he is also known under the name of Ninus the Younger. Baladan <Merodach Baladan>, whom the Greeks call Belesis, established the kingdom of Babylon and was known there as Nabonassar. Hence the era of Nabonassar, so important to Ptolemy and the ancient astronomers, who counted their years from the reign of that prince. I should mention here that the word era means a specific number of years beginning at a date that stands out because of some great event.

Ahaz, the king of Judah, an impious and evil ruler (14 A.U.C., 740 B.C.), was threatened by Rezin, the king of Syria, and by Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel. Instead of putting his trust in God, who stirred up these enemies against him in order to punish him, he called upon Tiglath-Pileser, the first king of Assyria or Nineveh, who reduced the kingdom of Israel to extremities and destroyed that of Syria altogether; but at the same time, he also ravaged the kingdom of Judah, which had implored his help. Thus the kings of Assyria learned the way to the Holy Land and resolved to conquer it (19 A.U.C., 721 B.C.). They began with the kingdom of Israel, which was completely destroyed by Shalmaneser, the son and successor of Tiglath-Pileser. Hoshea, king of Israel, had counted on the help of Shabako, also called Sua or Sous, the king of Ethiopia, who had invaded Egypt. But this powerful conqueror was unable to deliver him from the hands of Shalmaneser. The ten tribes in which the worship of God had been extinguished were taken to Nineveh; and, dispersed among the Gentiles, they were lost to the point where no trace of them can be discovered. Some of them stayed behind and mingled with the Jews, thus forming a small part of the kingdom of Judah.

In those days occurred the death of Romulus (39 A.U.C., 715 B.C.). He was always at war and always victorious; but even amid his wars he laid the foundations of religion and law. A long peace permitted
his successor, Numa (40 A.U.C., 714 B.C.), to finish the work. He gave form to religion and softened the barbarous manners of the Roman people. In his time the colonists from Corinth and some other Greek cities founded Syracuse in Sicily, Crotona, Tarentum, and perhaps some other towns in that region of Italy to which older Greek colonists already living there had given the name of Magna Graecia.

Meanwhile Hezekiah, the most pious and just of all the kings since David, was reigning in Judaea. Sennacherib, the son and successor of Shalmaneser, besieged him in Jerusalem with an immense army (44 A.U.C., 710 B.C.). That army perished in one night through the hand of an angel. Delivered in this admirable manner, Hezekiah and all his people served God more faithfully than ever. But after the death of this prince (56 A.U.C., 698 B.C.), and under his son Manasseh, the ungrateful people forgot God, and new disorders arose.

At that time, the democratic state was being formed by the Athenians (67 A.U.C., 687 B.C.), and they began to choose annual archons, the first of whom was Creon.

While impiety was growing in the kingdom of Judah, the kings of Assyria, who were destined to be its nemesis, grew more powerful under Esar-haddon, the son of Sennacherib. He united the kingdom of Babylon with that of Nineveh (73 A.U.C., 681 B.C.), and he was as powerful in Greater Asia as the first Assyrians. [During his reign the Cuthaeans, an Assyrian people who have since then been called Samaritans, were sent to settle in Samaria (77 A.U.C., 677 B.C.). They combined the worship of God with that of idols, and through Esar-haddon they were given an Israelite priest who taught them to worship the local god, that is to say, to observe the Mosaic Law. God did not want his name to be completely abolished in a land which he had given to his people, and he left his Law there as a reminder. But their priest gave them only the books of Moses, which the ten rebel tribes had kept after their schism. They detested the books of the Scripture composed since that time by the prophets, who offered sacrifices in the Temple; and this is why even today the Samaritans still accept only the Pentateuch.]*

*This passage was deleted from the third edition and was replaced by the lengthy addition on pages 45-47, dealing with the Samaritan version of the Scriptures—a problem of great concern to Bossuet.
While Esar-haddon and the Assyrians were becoming so strongly entrenched in Asia, the Medes also were beginning to make their mark. Deioces, their first king, who some think was the Arphaxad mentioned in the Book of Judith,* founded the superb city of Ecbatana and laid the foundations for a great empire. The Medes had placed him on the throne in order to reward his virtue and to put an end to the disorders of anarchy. Led by this great king, they defended themselves against their neighbors but did not make any conquests.

Rome was growing, though slowly. Under Tullus Hostilius (83 A.U.C., 671 B.C.), its third king, and in the wake of the famous struggle between the Horatii and the Curiatii, Alba was defeated and destroyed; but its citizens were made part of the victorious city, which they enlarged and fortified. Romulus had been the first to augment the city in this fashion, when he received the Sabines and other defeated peoples. They gradually forgot their defeat and became loyal subjects. As its conquests extended further, Rome established the rules for its militia; and it was under Tullus Hostilius that it began to learn that magnificent discipline which was to make it the mistress of the world.

The kingdom of Egypt, weakened by prolonged internal divisions, recovered under Psammetichus (84 A.U.C., 670 B.C.). Owing his salvation to the Ionians and the Carians, this prince settled them in Egypt, which had hitherto been closed to foreigners. This was the time when the Egyptians began to trade with the Greeks; and also from that time on, Egyptian history, hitherto interspersed with pompous fables by the artful priests, begins to show some accuracy, as we are told by Herodotus.

Meanwhile, the kings of Assyria were becoming increasingly dangerous to all the peoples of the East. Saosduchin <Samas-sum-yukin>, the son of Esar-haddon, who is believed to be the Nebuchadrezzar <Nebuchadnezzar> of the Book of Judith, defeated Arphaxad, the king of the Medes, in a pitched battle (97 A.U.C., 657 B.C.), whoever this Arphaxad may be. [If he is not Deioces himself, the original founder of Ecbatana, it may be Phraortes or

*The second edition read: "whom the Scriptures call Arphaxad."
Aphraates, his son, who raised the walls of the city.* Inflated by his victory, the haughty king of Assyria then undertook to conquer the world (98 A.U.C., 656 B.C.). With this intention, he crossed the Euphrates and ravaged everything as far as Judaea.

The Jews had angered God by falling into idolatry, following the example of Manasseh; but they had done penance with their prince, and therefore God took them under his protection. The conquests of Nebuchadrezzar and his general, Holofernes, were suddenly cut short by the hand of a woman.

Deioces, though defeated by the Assyrians, left his kingdom in a position to be augmented under his successors. While his son Phraortes, and Cyaxares, son of Phraortes, were subjugating Persia and extending their conquests in Asia Minor as far as the banks of the River Halys (111 A.U.C., 643 B.C.), Judaea lived through the detestable reign of Amon (113 A.U.C., 641 B.C.), the son of Manasseh; but Josiah, the son of Amon, who was wise from childhood on, did everything in his power to repair the damage done by the impiety of his royal predecessors.

Rome, whose king at that time was Ancus Marcius, brought more Latins under its rule and, continuing to make citizens of its enemies, settled them within its walls. Those of Veii, already weakened by Romulus, suffered new losses. Ancus pushed his conquest to the nearby sea (128 A.U.C., 626 B.C.) and built the city of Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber.

At this time, the kingdom of Babylon was invaded by Nabopolassar. This traitor, whom Kandalanu (or Sarac) had made general of his armies against Cyaxares, king of the Medes, joined forces with Astyages, the son of Cyaxares, captured Kandalanu in Nineveh, destroyed that great city, which had ruled the Orient for so long, and placed himself on his master’s throne. Under a prince of such ambition, Babylon became overly proud.

Judaea, where impiety was growing without measure, had to fear the worst. The saintly King Josiah held off the deserved punishment of his people for a short time by his profound humility (130 A.U.C., 624 B.C.), but the evil grew under his successors. Nebuchadrezzar II,

*Bosssuet added this passage in the third edition to identify Arphaxad.
more terrible even than his father Nabopolassar, succeeded him (144 A.U.C., 610 B.C.). Born and bred in pride and always occupied with war, this prince made prodigious conquests in the east and the west (147 A.U.C., 607 B.C.), and Babylon was threatening to enslave the world. This threat soon affected God’s people. Jerusalem fell prey to the haughty conqueror, who took it three times: the first time at the beginning of his reign, and in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, whence we date the beginning of the seventy years of the Babylonian Captivity, foretold by the prophet Jeremiah; the second time (155 A.U.C., 599 B.C.) under Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim; and the last time (156 A.U.C., 598 B.C.) under Zedekiah, when the city was completely devastated, the Temple burnt to the ground, and the king taken as a captive to Babylon, together with the high priest Seraiah and the better part of the people. The most illustrious of these captives were the prophets Ezekiel and Daniel. We also count among them the three young men whom Nebuchadrezzar could not force to adore his statue and who were unharmed by a consuming fire.

Greece was flourishing (160 A.U.C., 594 B.C.), and its Seven Sages were making their mark. Some time before the last devastation of Jerusalem, Solon, one of these Seven Sages, gave laws to the Athenians, founding liberty upon justice. Also, the Phocaeans of Ionia brought their first colony to Marseilles.

Tarquin the Elder, king of Rome, having subjugated a part of Tuscany and embellished the city of Rome with magnificent works, ended his reign (176 A.U.C., 578 B.C.). In his time the Gauls, led by Belovesus, occupied in Italy all the regions adjacent to the Po (188 A.U.C., 566 B.C.), while his brother Segovesus led another swarm of the nation deep into Germany. Servius Tullius, successor to Tarquin, established the census or counting of citizens according to their distribution in various classes, so that the great city was ordered like an individual family.

Nebuchadrezzar embellished Babylon, which had become rich from the spoils of Jerusalem and the East. It was not to enjoy them for long. On his deathbed (192 A.U.C., 562 B.C.) this king, who had decorated it with such magnificence, saw the coming ruin of his superb city. His son Evil-Merodach <Amil-Marduk>, who had
made himself hateful by his debauchery, was king for a short time only and was killed by his brother-in-law, Nergal-sharuzur, who then usurped the kingdom (194 A.U.C., 560 B.C.).

In Athens, Peisistratus also usurped the sovereign authority; he was able to preserve it for thirty years in the face of many vicissitudes and even to pass it on to his children.

Nergal-sharuzur could not tolerate the power of the Medes, who were becoming stronger in the East, and declared war against them. While Astyages, son of Cyaxares I, was preparing for resistance, he died, leaving the conduct of the war to his son Cyaxares II (195 A.U.C., 559 B.C.), whom Daniel calls Darius the Mede. As general of his army, he named Cyrus, the son of his sister Mandane and of Cambyses, king of Persia, whose country was subject to the Median Empire. The reputation of Cyrus, who had distinguished himself in various wars under his grandfather Astyages, united most of the kings of the East under the banners of Cyaxares. He captured Croesus, the king of Lydia, in his capital city (206 A.U.C., 548 B.C.) and enjoyed his immense wealth. Then he also subdued the other allies of the kings of Babylon (211 A.U.C., 543 B.C.) and extended his rule not only over Syria but also deep into Asia Minor. Finally, he marched on Babylon, took the city (216 A.U.C., 538 B.C.), and handed it over to his uncle, Cyaxares. Touched as much by his loyalty as by his exploits, the latter gave him in marriage his only daughter and heiress.

Under the reign of Cyaxares, Daniel, who had already been honored in the previous reigns with a number of celestial visions in which so many kings and empires passed before him in such manifest form, was given another revelation (217 A.U.C., 537 B.C.), concerning the famous seven weeks by which the times of Christ and the destiny of the Jewish people are explained. They were weeks of years, so that they contained 490 years; and such a manner of counting was familiar to the Jews, who rested in the seventh year as well as on the seventh day.

Some time after this vision, Cyaxares died (218 A.U.C., 536 B.C.), as did Cambyses, Cyrus' father. In succeeding them, this great man, Cyrus, joined the hitherto obscure kingdom of Persia to the kingdom of the Medes, which he had considerably increased by his conquests.
Thus he became the uncontested master of the East and founded the greatest empire the world had ever seen. But the most important fact for the sequence of our epochs is the decree this great conqueror handed down in the very first year of his reign, ordering the restoration of God's Temple in Jerusalem and of the Jewish people in Judaea.

We must pause for a moment at this point, which is the most involved of all ancient chronology because of the difficulty in reconciling secular and sacred history. No doubt you will already have noticed, Monseigneur, that what I tell you about Cyrus is quite different from what you have read about him in Justin, for Justin does not mention the second kingdom of the Assyrians at all, any more than the famous kings of Assyria and Babylon who are so renowned in sacred history; moreover, my account hardly tallies with what that author tells us about the first three monarchies: that of the Assyrians, ending with the person of Sardanapalus; that of the Medes, ending with the person of Astyages, the grandfather of Cyrus; and that of the Persians, beginning with Cyrus and destroyed by Alexander.

To Justin, you might add Diodorus and most of the Greek and Latin authors whose writings have come down to us, all of whom tell these histories in a manner different from the one I have chosen [as being more consistent with the Scriptures.

But those who are surprised that in some instances secular history is rather inconsistent with sacred history should also note that it is even less consistent with itself. The Greeks have written about the actions of Cyrus in several different ways. Herodotus mentions three ways in addition to the one he followed himself; and he does not say that the latter is based on older or more trustworthy sources than the others. He also remarks that the death of Cyrus is told in different ways and that he has chosen the one that seemed the most probable to him, without giving it any further authority. Xenophon, who was in Persia in the service of the younger Cyrus, the brother of Artaxerxes (also called Mnemon), was in a position to learn at closer range about the life and death of the older Cyrus from the annals of Persia and the traditions of that country. Anybody who has any knowledge of ancient history will not hesitate to prefer, with St.
Jerome, the wise philosopher and skilful captain Xenophon to Ctesias,[*] the author of legends—whom most of the Greeks have copied, just as Justin and the Latins have copied the Greeks—and even to Herodotus, however judicious he may be. What determines me in my choice is the fact that Xenophon's history, more coherent and more probable in itself, has the added advantage of being more consistent with the Scriptures, which, because of their antiquity and the relations of the affairs of the Jewish people with others in the East, would merit being preferred to all Greek histories, even if we did not know that they were dictated by the Holy Spirit.

As for the first three monarchies, what most of the Greeks have written about them has seemed doubtful to the wisest men of Greece. Plato shows in general, using the case of the Egyptian priests, that the Greeks were completely ignorant of ancient history, and Aristotle classifies those who have written Assyrian history among the legend-tellers.

The reason is that the Greeks were writing late; and, wishing to entertain the always curious Greeks with ancient stories, they based them on confused memories which they simply put into an agreeable order without giving too much consideration to truthfulness.

And certainly, the way in which the first three monarchies are usually arranged is obviously legendary. For having made the empire of the Assyrians perish under Sardanapalus, these writers bring the Medes onto the stage and then the Persians, as if the Medes had succeeded to all the power of the Assyrians and as if the Persians had established themselves by ruining the Medes. But, on the contrary, it seems certain that when Arbaces stirred up the Medes against Sardanapalus, he did no more than to liberate them; he did not make them masters over the Assyrian Empire. Herodotus distinguishes the age of their liberation from that of their first king, Deioces; and, according to the most skilful chronologists, the interval between these two ages must have been about fifty years. Furthermore, it is known from the unanimous testimony of that

*The portion in brackets was added by Bossuet in the third edition to replace the following brief passage of the second edition: "Secular authors are not in agreement about the history of Cyrus; but I thought it wiser to rely upon Xenophon and St. Jerome than upon Ctesias . . . ."
great historian and of Xenophon, not to mention the others here, that during the time attributed to the empire of the Medes, Assyria had some very powerful and widely feared kings, whose empire was destroyed when Cyrus took Babylon.

If, then, most of the Greeks, and the Latins who follow them, do not mention these Babylonian kings; if they give no consideration to this great kingdom when they talk about the sequence of the first monarchies; if, finally, their works show us almost nothing of those famous kings, Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, Nebuchadrezzar, and so many others who are renowned in the Scriptures and in eastern histories, the fact must be attributed either to the ignorance of the Greeks, who are more eloquent in their narrations than painstaking in their research, or to our loss of the most documented and exact parts of their histories.

And in fact Herodotus had promised a special history of the Assyrians, which we do not have, either because it was lost or because he did not have time to write it. But we may believe that so judicious a historian would not have forgotten the kings of the second Assyrian Empire, since even Sennacherib, who was one of them, is mentioned as king of the Assyrians and Arabs in books by that great author which we do have.

Strabo, living at the time of Augustus, reports what Megasthenes, an ancient author and near contemporary of Alexander, had left in his writings concerning Nebuchadrezzar, king of the Chaldacans: he believed him to have crossed Europe, gone into Spain, and carried his arms as far as the Pillars of Hercules. Aelian mentions Tilgamus, who is certainly the Tigrath or Teglath of sacred history, and in Ptolemy we have an enumeration of the princes who have held the great empires, among whom we find a long list of Assyrian kings who are unknown to the Greeks but whom we can easily fit into sacred history.

If I wanted to report what is told us in the annals of the Syrians, in a Berossus, an Abydenus, a Nicolaus of Damascus, my discourse would become too long. Josephus and Eusebius of Caesarea have preserved for us precious fragments from these authors and many others which existed in their entirety in their days; and their testimony confirms what we are told in the Scriptures concerning the ancient history of the East, and particularly the history of Assyria.
As for the monarchy of the Medes, which most of the secular historians count second in their enumeration of the great empires, and separately from that of the Persians, it is certain that the Scriptures always join them together. You can see, Monseigneur, that quite apart from the authority of the Holy Writ, the very order of the facts shows that we must look to it.

Before Cyrus, the Medes, though powerful and eminent, were overshadowed by the greatness of the kings of Babylon. But since Cyrus had conquered their kingdom by the united forces of the Medes and the Persians, whose master he later became through a legitimate succession—as we have noted, following Xenophon—it seems that the great empire he founded must have taken its name from both these nations. Therefore, the empire of the Medes and that of the Persians are but one and the same thing, although the glory of Cyrus gave the name of the Persians preeminence.

It is also possible to think that, since the Median kings had extended their conquests in the direction of the Greek colonies in Asia Minor before the Babylonian war, they were therefore known to the Greeks, who attributed to them the empire of greater Asia because they were the only ones known to them among all the kings of the East. Yet the kings of Babylon and Nineveh, more powerful but less known to the Greeks, have been almost forgotten in the fragments of Greek histories that have come down to us; and so the entire span of time elapsing between Sardanapalus and Cyrus has been given to the Medes alone.

Thus, it is no longer necessary to make such an effort in order to reconcile secular and sacred history on this point. For regarding the first empire of the Assyrians, the Scripture mentions it only in passing and names neither Ninus, the founder of that empire, nor, with the exception of Phul, any of his successors, because their history has nothing in common with that of God's people. As for the second Assyrians, most of the Greeks have either completely ignored them or, not knowing enough about them, have confused them with the first.

If, therefore, anybody cites as evidence those Greek authors who arrange the first three monarchies according to their fancy and make the Medes succeed to the ancient empire of Assyria without mentioning the new one which the Scriptures show as so powerful,
we have only to reply that the Greeks did not know anything about that part of history and that they are just as contrary to the most careful and learned authors of their own nation as they are to the Scriptures.

To solve the difficulty in one word, then, the sacred authors, who were closer in time and space to the kingdoms of the East and who, furthermore, were writing the history of a people whose affairs were so intimately connected with those of the great empires, could, on the basis of this advantage alone, silence the Greeks and the Latins who followed them.

If, however, we insist upon upholding this famous order of the first three monarchies and if, wishing to give to the Medes alone the second place which is traditionally assigned to them, we make them masters over the kings of Babylon, allowing, however, that the latter freed themselves after about 100 years of subjection—even then we are, in a way, still saving the sequence of sacred history, but we are hardly in agreement with the best secular historians, who are confirmed by sacred history in that it always unites the empire of the Medes with that of the Persians.

There is another reason for the obscurity of these ancient histories which I must explain to you. These oriental kings assumed several names or, if you prefer, several titles which came to be used as their proper names and which various peoples translated or pronounced in different ways, according to the various idioms of their languages. This fact necessarily makes histories of such antiquity, for which there are so few reliable sources, very obscure. No doubt the confusion of names must have caused a great deal of confusion about events and persons, and this is the reason for the difficulty of placing into Greek history the kings named Ahasuerus, a name as unknown to the Greeks as it was well known to the peoples of the East.

And who, in fact, would believe that Cyaxares was the same name as Ahasuerus, composed of the word Ky, that is, lord, and Axares, which obviously comes out to be Axuerus or Ahasuerus. Three or four princes have borne this name, although they also had others. [Thus there is no doubt that Darius the Mede could have been an Ahasuerus or Cyaxares, and everything tallies for giving him one of
these two names.] If we had not been warned that Nebuchadrezzar and Nabocolassar are only one name or the names of one and the same man, we could hardly believe it; and yet it is certain. [It is a name derived from Nabu, one of the gods that was worshiped in Babylon, which was inserted in the names of kings in various ways.] Sargon is Sennacherib; Uzziah is Azariah; Zedekiah is Mattaniah; Jehoahaz is also called Shallum; [So, or Sua, is the same as Shabako, king of Ethiopia;] Asaraddon, who is differently pronounced Esar-haddon or Asorhaddan, is called Asenaphar by the Cuthaean; [it is believed that Sardanapalus is the same whom some historians have called Sarac;] and by a whim for which we cannot account, the same king happens to be called Tonos-Concoleros by the Greeks. [We have already noted that Sardanapalus was probably Sardan, son of Phul or Pul. But who knows if this Phul or Pul, who is mentioned in sacred history, is not the same as Pileres? For one of the ways of varying these names was to shorten them, to lengthen them, or to end them with different inflections, according to the structure of the languages. Thus Tiglath-Pileres, that is, Tiglath, son of Pileres, could be one of the sons of Phul who, more vigorous than his son Sardanapalus, had preserved a part of the empire that was taken away from his family.] We could establish a long list of eastern kings, each one of whom has had several different names in different histories; but it is sufficient to be aware in general of this practice. It is not unknown to the Latins, among whom titles and adoptions have created a multiplicity of names. Thus the titles Augustus or Africanus became the proper names of Caesar Octavianus and of the Scipios; thus the Nerons became Caesars. There is no doubt about this, and a longer discussion of such an obvious fact would be useless to you.

[Those who are surprised at the infinite number of years the Egyptians give to themselves I refer to Herodotus, who precisely assures us, as we have seen, that their history shows some accuracy only since the time of Psammetichus, that is, 600 or 700 years before Jesus Christ. And if anybody is concerned about the length of time that is usually given to the first empire of the Assyrians, he only needs to remember that Herodotus has reduced it to 520 years, and that he is followed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the most learned
of historians, and by Appian. And those who, after all that, still feel too restricted by the ordinary calculation of the years to fit in all the events and all the dates of which they feel sure, can take as much room as they wish in the number of years given by the Septuagint, which the Church leaves to their judgment. Thus they can comfortably fit in all the kings that can be given to Nineveh, with all the years that are attributed to their reigns; all the dynasties of the Egyptians, in whatever way they wish to arrange them; and also the entire history of China, without waiting, if they so desire, that more be known about it.]

Henceforth, Monseigneur, I do not intend to worry you any more with difficulties of chronology, which are of very little use to you. But the one I have been treating was too important to go unexplained at this point. Having told you as much as is necessary for our purposes, I now resume the sequence of our epochs.

**Eighth Epoch**

**Cyrus, or the Reestablishment of the Jews**

*Sixth Age of the World*

As we have seen, it was 218 years after the founding of Rome, 536 years before the birth of Christ, 70 years after the Babylonian Captivity, and in the same year that Cyrus founded the empire of the Persians that this prince, chosen by God to be the liberator of his people and the restorer of his Temple, put his hand to that great work. Immediately after the publication of his decree, Zerubbabel, accompanied by Joshua, son of the high priest Jozadek, led back the captives, who rebuilt the altar (219 A.U.C., 535 B.C.) and laid the foundations for the second Temple. Jealous of their glory, the Samaritans wanted to take part in the great work; and even though they mixed his cult with that of their false gods, pretending to worship the God of Israel, they asked Zerubbabel for permission to rebuild God’s Temple with him. But the children of Judah detested
their mixed cult and rejected their advances. In their irritation, the Samaritans thwarted their plans with all kinds of tricks and violent actions.

About this time, Servius Tullius, having enlarged the city of Rome, conceived the plan of making it into a republic. While he was nurturing these thoughts, he perished (221 A.U.C., 533 B.C.) through the machinations of his daughter and upon orders from his son-in-law, Tarquinius Superbus. This tyrant invaded the kingdom, where, for a long time, he perpetrated all kinds of violence.

Meanwhile, the Persian Empire was growing. Besides the immense provinces of Greater Asia, the entire vast continent of Asia Minor was under its orders; the Syrians and the Arabs were subjugated; and Egypt, so jealously attached to its own laws, received theirs (232 A.U.C., 522 B.C.). This conquest was made by Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. A brutal ruler, he did not survive his brother Smerdis by much, after he had him murdered in secret, following an ambiguous dream. The magus Smerdis (233 A.U.C., 521 B.C.) reigned for a time under the name of Smerdis, brother of Cambyses; but his imposture was soon discovered. The seven principal lords conspired against him, and one of them was put upon the throne. This was Darius, son of Hystaspes, who in his inscriptions called himself the best and most handsome of men. A number of indications identify him as the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther, although opinion on this is divided. At the beginning of his reign, the Temple was completed, after various interruptions caused by the Samaritans. Irreconcilable hatred sprang up between the two nations, and there was no greater opposition than that between Jerusalem and Samaria.

The time of Darius marks the beginning of the liberty of Rome and Athens (241 A.U.C., 513 B.C.) and of the great glory that was Greece. The Athenians, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, delivered their country from Hipparchus, the son of Peisistratus, and were killed by his guards. Hippias, the brother of Hipparchus, tried in vain to keep in power. He was driven out, and the tyranny of the Peisistratids was completely extinguished (244 A.U.C., 510 B.C.). After their liberation, the Athenians erected statues to their liberators and reestablished the democratic state. Hippias cast his lot with Darius, finding him
ready to undertake the conquest of Greece, and placed his last hope in his protection.

At the time he was driven out, Rome also ridded itself of its tyrants. The violence of Tarquinius Superbus had made kingship hateful (245 A.U.C., 509 B.C.), and the shamelessness of his son Sextus led to its final abolition. When Lucretia was dishonored, she killed herself; and her blood and Brutus’s harangues stirred up the Romans. The kings were banished, and the consular empire was established, following the plans of Servius Tullius. But it was soon weakened by the jealousy of the people. In the very first consulate P<ublius> Valerius, a consul famous for his victories, became suspect to his fellow citizens. In order to satisfy them, it was necessary to pass a law permitting an appeal from the consuls and the senate to the people in all cases involving the punishment of a citizen. In exile, the Tarquins found defenders: the neighboring kings regarded their banishment as an insult to all kings; and Porsena, the king of the Clusians, an Etruscan people, took up arms against Rome (247 A.U.C., 507 B.C.). Reduced to extremity and almost defeated, it was saved by the valor of Horatius Cocles. The Romans performed great feats for their liberty. Scaevola, a young citizen, burnt his own hand, which had missed Porsena; and Clelia, a young maiden, astonished Porsena by her boldness. Porsena left Rome in peace, and the Tarquins were left without resources.

Hippia, who was championed by Darius (254 A.U.C., 500 B.C.), had better hopes. All of Persia was stirring in his favor, and Athens was threatened with a great war.

While Darius was making preparations (261 A.U.C., 493 B.C.), Rome, which had defended itself so well against outsiders, almost destroyed itself. New jealousy had sprung up between the patricians and the people; the consular power, though already curbed by the law of P. Valerius, still seemed excessive to a people overly solicitous of its liberty. The people retreating to the Aventine Hill. Threatening commands were useless; the people could be brought back only by the peaceful remonstrances of Menenius Agrippa. But an accommodation had to be found, and it was necessary to give the people tribunes to defend them against the consuls. The law establishing this new magistracy was called the Sacred Law; and this is the beginning of the people’s tribunes.
Darius had finally struck out against Greece. His son-in-law Mardonius, having crossed Asia, was planning to crush Greece with his numerous army. But Miltiades defeated this immense army on the plains of Marathon with 10,000 Athenians (264 A.U.C., 490 B.C.).

Rome defeated all the enemies surrounding it and seemed to have only itself to fear. Coriolanus, a zealous patrician and the greatest of its captains, driven out by the popular faction despite his services, was plotting the destruction of his country, led the Volscians against it (265 A.U.C., 489 B.C.), reduced it to extremity (266 A.U.C., 488 B.C.), and could be appeased only by his mother.

Greece was not long to enjoy the respite the Battle of Marathon had given it. In order to avenge the affront to Persia and to Darius, Xerxes, his son and successor, and also the grandson of Cyrus through his mother, Atossa, attacked the Greeks (274 A.U.C., 480 B.C.) with 1,100,000 fighting men (others say 1,700,000), not counting his naval army of 1,200 ships. Leonidas, king of Sparta, who had only 300 men, killed 20,000 of Xerxes' men at the pass of Thermopylae and perished there with his men. By the strategy of the Athenian Themistocles, the naval army of Xerxes was defeated in the same year near Salamis. Terror-stricken, this prince went back across the Hellespont; and a year later his land army, under the command of Mardonius, was cut to pieces near Plataea (275 A.U.C., 479 B.C.) by Pausanias, king of Sparta, and Aristides, called the Just, an Athenian. The battle took place in the morning, and on the evening of that famous day the Ionian Greeks, who had just shaken off the Persian yoke, killed 30,000 of their men in the Battle of Mycale, under the command of Leotychides. To encourage his soldiers, this general told them that Mardonius had just been defeated in Greece. This news turned out to be true, either because of prodigiously rapid communications or, more probably, because of a happy coincidence; and all the Greeks of Asia Minor liberated themselves. Everywhere this nation obtained great advantages; and, some time before this, the Carthaginians, who were powerful at that time, were beaten in Sicily, to which they wanted to extend their domination at the insistence of the Persians. Despite this setback, they never ceased their attempts on an island so well suited to giving their republic the domination of the sea to which it aspired. That domination was in the hands of Greece; but Greece then (277 A.U.C.,
477 B.C.) was looking only toward the East and the Persians. Pausanias had just liberated the island of Cyprus from the Persian yoke (278 A.U.C., 476 B.C.) when he conceived the plan to enslave his own country. All his projects came to naught, although Xerxes promised him everything; the traitor was betrayed by the man he loved the most (280 A.U.C., 474 B.C.), and his shameful love cost him his life. In the same year, Xerxes was killed by Artabanus, who was the captain of his guards, either because that traitor wanted to occupy the throne of his master or because he feared the reprisals of a prince whose cruel orders he had not executed promptly enough.

Artaxerxes the Long-handed, his son, began his reign, and shortly thereafter he received a letter from Themistocles (281 A.U.C., 473 B.C.), who, outlawed by his fellow citizens, offered him his services against the Greeks. Artaxerxes was duly impressed by a captain of such renown and set him up in the grand manner, despite the jealousy of his satraps.

This magnanimous king protected the Jewish people (287 A.U.C., 467 B.C.); and in his twentieth year (300 A.U.C., 454 B.C.), which subsequently was to become memorable, he permitted Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem with its walls. This decree of Artaxerxes differs from Cyrus’s decree, in that the latter concerned the Temple, while the former concerned the city.

Foreseen by Daniel and included in his prophecy, this decree marks the beginning of the 490 years of his weeks. This important date rests on solid foundations. In the Chronicle of Eusebius the date of the banishment of Themistocles is given as the last year of the 76th olympiad, meaning the year 280 of Rome. The other chronologists give a somewhat later date; but the difference is small, and the circumstances of the times assure the date of Eusebius. They are taken from Thucydides, a very exact historian; and this serious author, almost a contemporary, as well as a fellow citizen, of Themistocles, says that Themistocles wrote his letter at the beginning of Artaxerxes’ reign. Cornelius Nepos, an ancient historian who is as judicious as he is elegant, feels that this date should not be doubted, since it has the authority of Thucydides; and this reasoning is all the sounder since an even older author than Thucydides is of the same opinion. This is Charon of Lampsacus, whom Plutarch
cites; and Plutarch himself adds that the Annals, that is, those of Persia, are in agreement with these two authors. Yet he does not follow them without giving any reason; and the historians who place the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes eight or nine years later are neither contemporaries nor do they have as much authority. There seems to be no doubt, therefore, that we must place the beginning of that reign toward the end of the 76th olympiad and close to the year 280 of Rome, whence the twentieth year of that prince must occur toward the end of the 81st olympiad and about the year 300 of Rome. Furthermore, in order to reconcile their authors, those who adopt a later beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes are forced to conjecture that his father had at least associated him with his reign when Themistocles wrote his letter; so that, in any case, our date is assured. On this foundation, it is easy to make the rest of the calculation, and what follows will show it to be correct.

After the decree of Artaxerxes, the Jews set to work restoring their city and its walls, as Daniel had foreseen. Nehemiah conducted the works with much firmness and prudence in the face of the resistance of the Samaritans, the Arabs, and the Ammonites. The people made a great effort, and Eliashib, the high priest, inspired them by his example.

Meanwhile, the new magistrates that had been given to the Roman people exacerbated the divisions within that city. Having been shaped by kings, Rome lacked the laws necessary for the proper functioning of a republic. The reputation of Greece, even more famous for its government than for its victories, inspired the Romans to model their rules upon that example (302 A.U.C., 452 B.C.). They therefore sent deputies to study the laws of the Greek cities, and especially those of Athens, where conditions were similar to conditions in their own republic. Following this model, ten absolute magistrates, created the following year (303 A.U.C., 451 B.C.) and called decemvirs, wrote the Laws of the Twelve Tables, the foundation of Roman law. Delighted with the equity they brought to that task, the Roman people permitted them to encroach upon the sovereign power, which they proceeded to use tyrannically (305 A.U.C., 449 B.C.). At that time, great disturbances were created by the intemperance of Appius Claudius, one of the decemvirs, and
by the murder of Virginia, whose father preferred killing her with his own hands to abandoning her to the passion of Appius. The blood of this second Lucretia awakened the Roman people, and the decemvirs were expelled.

While the Roman laws were taking shape under the decemvirs, Ezra, a doctor of law, and Nehemiah, the governor of God's people, newly established in Judaea, reformed abuses and enforced the Mosaic Law, which they were the first to obey. One of the foremost aims of their reforms was to make all the people, and especially the priests, repudiate the foreign women they had married despite the prohibition of the law. Ezra put the sacred books in order, revising them painstakingly, and brought together the ancient memoirs of God's people in order to compose the two books of Paralipomena or Chronicles, adding to them the history of his own time, which was completed by Nehemiah. Their books complete the long history begun by Moses and continued by subsequent authors without interruption until the restoration of Jerusalem. The remainder of sacred history is not part of the same sequence.

While Ezra and Nehemiah were occupied with the last part of this great work, Herodotus, whom secular writers call the Father of History, began to write. Thus the last authors of sacred history meet with the first author of Greek history; and when it began, the history of God's people—to take it only since Abraham—already comprised fifteen centuries. Herodotus was not in a position to mention the Jews in the history he has left us; and the Greeks needed to learn only about peoples who became known to them through war, commerce, or some great exploit. Judaea was just beginning to recover from its fall and did not attract attention.

[In these unhappy times, the Hebrew language began to be mixed with Chaldaean, which was spoken in Babylon while the people were in captivity there; but Hebrew was still understood by the majority of the people at the time of Ezra, as it appears when he read them the books of the law, "before both men and women; and all the multitude gave heed unto the law ... because they understood the words wherein they were instructed." ] From that time on, Hebrew gradually ceased to be the spoken language. During the Captivity, and later through the necessary contacts with the Chaldaeans, the
Jews learned the Chaldaean language, which was rather close to their own and had almost the same structure. For this reason, they changed the ancient form of the Hebrew letters and wrote Hebrew with Chaldaean letters, which were more current among them and also easier to write. Such a change was easily made between two related languages in which the letters had the same value and differed only in form. Henceforth, among the Jews, we find the sacred Scriptures written only in Chaldaean characters.

I said that the Scriptures are found only in these characters among the Jews. But in our time a Pentateuch in ancient Hebrew characters, such as can be seen in the medals and other monuments of earlier centuries, was discovered among the Samaritans. This Pentateuch does not differ from that of the Jews, except that it is falsified in one place in favor of holding the public worship on Mount Gerizim near Samaria, where the Samaritans claimed God had established it, just as the Jews claimed it was in Jerusalem. There are some other differences, but they are slight. It is obvious that the Church Fathers, among others St. Eusebius and St. Jerome, saw this Samaritan Pentateuch and also that our Pentateuch shows all the characteristics of the one they mention.

In order to understand the ancient history of God's people perfectly, we must at this point trace the history of the Samaritans and their Pentateuch in a few words. In order to do this, we must remember that after Solomon, and as a punishment for his excesses, Jeroboam separated ten tribes from the kingdom of Judah under Solomon's son Rehoboam, forming the kingdom of Israel, the capital of which became Samaria.

Thus separated, this kingdom no longer sacrificed in the Temple of Jerusalem and rejected all the Scriptures written after David and Solomon. Neither did it heed the decrees of these two kings, one of whom had prepared the Temple, while the other had constructed and dedicated it.

Rome was founded in the year 3250 of the world, and thirty-three years later, that is, in the year 3283, the ten schismatic tribes were taken to Nineveh and dispersed among the Gentiles.

Under the Assyrian king Esar-haddon, the Cuthaeans were sent to inhabit Samaria. They were peoples from Assyria who later came to
be called Samaritans. They mixed the worship of God with that of their idols, and Esar-haddon gave them an Israelite priest who taught them the worship of the local god, that is, the observances of the Law of Moses. But their priest gave them only the books of Moses, which the apostate tribes continued to hold in veneration, not adding the other sacred books for the reasons we have just seen.

Instructed in this manner, the inhabitants of Samaria have always persisted in the hatred of the ten tribes for the Jews; and when Cyrus permitted the Jews to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem, the Samaritans did everything in their power to thwart their designs, feigning nonetheless a desire to take part in it and claiming to worship the God of Israel, even though they mixed his worship with that of their false divinities.

They continued to thwart the designs of the Jews when the latter rebuilt their city under the leadership of Nehemiah, and the enmity between the two nations persisted.

Here we see the reason why they did not change the Hebrew characters into Chaldaic characters, as the Jews did. They had no desire to imitate the Jews any more than their great doctor Ezra, since they detested them. Therefore, their Pentateuch is written in ancient Hebrew characters, as we have pointed out.

Alexander gave them permission to build the temple of Gerizim. Manasseh, the brother of Jaddua, the high priest of the Jews, who embraced the schism of the Samaritans, obtained permission to build this temple; and apparently it was under him that they began to abandon the worship of the false gods, differing from the Jews only in that they wanted to serve God on Mount Gerizim rather than at Jerusalem, as he had ordered.

Here we see the reason why, in their Pentateuch, they have falsified the passage where Mount Gerizim is mentioned, for the purpose of showing that this place rather than Jerusalem was blessed by God and consecrated to his worship.

The hatred between the two peoples never subsided, and the Samaritans always claimed that their temple should be preferred to that of Jerusalem. The dispute was argued before Ptolemy Philometor, king of Egypt. Having the succession and an unbroken tradition on their side, the Jews won their case in a solemn judgment.
The Samaritans, who, during the persecutions by Antiochus and the Syrian kings, had always joined forces with them against the Jews, were subjugated by John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon, who destroyed their temple of Gerizim but was unable to prevent them from continuing to worship on the mountain where it had stood or to bring this stubborn people to the Temple of Jerusalem for worship.

This is why, at the time of Jesus Christ, we still see Samaritans attached to the same cult and condemned by Jesus Christ.

Ever since this time, this people has continued to exist in two or three places in the East. One of our travelers has met them and has brought back with him the text of the so-called Samaritan Penta teuch. Now we can see how very old it is and can understand perfectly why it has remained in the state in which we find it.]

The Jews lived peacefully under the authority of Artaxerxes. This prince, reduced by Cimon, the son of the Athenian general Miltiades, to a shameful peace, lost all hopes of defeating the Greeks by force and endeavored to profit from their division. Great divisions did spring up between the Athenians and the Spartans. These two rival peoples shared all of Greece between them. The Athenian, Pericles, began the Peloponnesian War (323 A.U.C., 431 B.C.), in which his countrymen Theramenes, Alcibiades, and Thrasybulus distinguished themselves. The Spartans Brasidas and Mindarus died in that war, fighting for their country. The war lasted twenty-seven years and ended to the advantage of Sparta, which had obtained the support of Darius, called the Bastard, the son and successor of Artaxerxes. Lysander, the general of the Spartan naval army, took Athens and changed its government (350 A.U.C., 404 B.C.). But Persia soon realized that it had made the Spartans too powerful. They gave their support (353 A.U.C., 401 B.C.) to Cyrus the Younger, who revolted against his older brother Artaxerxes, called Mnemon because of his excellent memory, who was the son and successor of Darius. This young prince, saved from prison and death by his mother, Parysatis, sought revenge, won over the satraps by his infinite charm, crossed Asia Minor, gave battle to the king his brother in the heart of his country, wounded him with his own hand, and, too soon believing himself victorious, paid with his life for his temerity. The 10,000 Greeks in his service made that astonishing
retreat which was commanded at the end by Xenophon, the great philosopher and captain who has written its history. The Spartans continued their attacks on the Persian Empire, and their king, Agesilaus, was able to deal it some serious blows in Asia Minor (358 A.U.C., 396 B.C.). The divisions within Greece, however, recalled him to his country.

In these times the city of Veii, whose glory almost equaled that of Rome, was taken by the Romans under the command of Camillus after a siege of ten years and many vicissitudes. The generosity of Camillus gave him another conquest as well. When he besieged the Falisci, they came over to him (360 A.U.C., 394 B.C.), moved by the fact that he had sent back their children, who had been delivered into his hands by a schoolmaster. Rome did not want to win by treason or to profit from the treachery of a coward who had abused his charges' innocent obedience. Shortly thereafter the Senones from Gaul came into Italy and besieged Clusium (363 A.U.C., 391 B.C.). The Romans lost the famous Battle of Allia to them (364 A.U.C., 390 B.C.). Their city was captured and sacked. While they were defending themselves in the capitol, their position was restored by Camillus, whom they had banished. The Gauls remained masters of Rome for seven months; and when other affairs called them elsewhere, they left, charged with booty.

During the disturbances in Greece, Epaminondas of Thebes (383 A.U.C., 371 B.C.) distinguished himself as much by his equity and his moderation as by his victories. It is said that he had made it a rule never to lie, even in jest. His great actions astounded the world in the last years of Mnemon and the first of Ochus. Under this great captain the Thebans were victorious, and the power of Sparta was broken.

The power of the kings of Macedonia began with Philip (395 A.U.C., 359 B.C.), the father of Alexander the Great. Despite the opposition of the kings of Persia, Ochus and his son Arses, and despite the even greater difficulties which the eloquence of Demosthenes, that powerful defender of liberty, brought him in Athens, this prince gained victory after victory for twenty years and subjugated all of Greece, where the victory over the Athenians and their allies in the Battle of Chaeronea (416 A.U.C., 338 B.C.) gave him
absolute power. While he was routing the Athenians in that famous battle, he had the joy of seeing Alexander, at the age of eighteen, break through the Theban troops trained in the school of Epaminondas, among others the Sacred Band, called the Friends, which believed itself invincible. Thus master of Greece and supported by a son of such promise, he conceived even loftier plans and was contemplating nothing less than the ruin of the Persians, against whom he was made captain general (417 A.U.C., 337 B.C.). But it was Alexander who was destined to destroy them. Amidst the celebrations of a new marriage, Philip was assassinated by Pausanias (418 A.U.C., 336 B.C.), a young man of good family whom he had treated unjustly. In the same year, the eunuch Bagoas killed Arses, king of Persia, and in his stead crowned Darius, the son of Arsames, surnamed Codomanus. Because of his estimable qualities, we are inclined to agree with the opinion—the most likely, in any case—that he issued from the royal house.

Thus two valiant kings began their reigns at the same time: Darius, son of Arsames, and Alexander, son of Philip. They eyed each other jealously and seemed born to vie for the dominion of the world. But Alexander wanted to consolidate his position before taking on his rival. He avenged his father’s death; subdued the rebellious nations who scorned his youth (419 A.U.C., 335 B.C.); defeated the Greeks, who attempted in vain to shake off his yoke; and devastated Thebes, where he spared only the house and the descendants of Pindar, whose odes Greece admired (420 A.U.C., 334 B.C.). Powerful and victorious after so many exploits, he marched against Darius at the head of the Greeks (421 A.U.C., 333 B.C.), defeating him in three pitched battles (423 A.U.C., 331 B.C.). Then he entered Babylon and Susa in triumph (424 A.U.C., 330 B.C.), destroyed Persepolis, the ancient seat of the kings of Persia (427 A.U.C., 327 B.C.), took his conquering armies as far as India, and died at Babylon at the age of thirty-three (430 A.U.C., 324 B.C.).

In his time Manasseh, brother of the high priest Jaddua, sowed discord among the Jews. He had married (421 A.U.C., 333 B.C.) the daughter of the Samaritan Sanballat, whom Darius had made satrap of that country. Rather than repudiate this foreign woman, as
the council of Jerusalem and his brother Jaddua demanded, he embraced the schism of the Samaritans. Several Jews joined him in order to avoid similar strictures. He immediately resolved to build a temple near Samaria, on Mount Gerizim, which the Samaritans believed blessed, and to become its priest. His father-in-law, who had much influence with Darius, assured him of the protection of that prince; and later circumstances were even more favorable to him. When Alexander became powerful (442 A.U.C., 332 B.C.), Sanballat deserted his master and brought troops over to the victor at the siege of Tyre. Thus he obtained everything he wanted; the temple of Gerizim was built, and the ambition of Manasseh was satisfied. But the Jews remained loyal to the Persians and refused to give Alexander the help he demanded. Resolved to take revenge, he came to Jerusalem; but he was changed at the sight of the high priest coming toward him with the sacrificers clad in their ceremonial robes and preceded by all the people dressed in white. He was shown the prophecies predicting his victories—the prophecies of Daniel. He granted the Jews all their demands, and henceforth they were as loyal to him as they had always been to the kings of Persia.

While Alexander was making his conquests, Rome was engaged in the struggle with the Samnites, its neighbors (428–30 A.U.C., 324 B.C.), who proved extremely difficult to subdue, despite the valiant leadership of Papirius Cursor, the most illustrious of the Roman generals.

After Alexander’s death, his empire was divided (430 A.U.C., 324 B.C.). Perdiccas, Ptolemy, son of Lagus, Antigonus, Seleucus, Lysimachus, Antipater, and his son Cassander—in a word, all the captains trained in war under so great a conqueror—hoped to become its master by force. They sacrificed all of Alexander’s family to their ambition—his brother, his mother, his wives, his children, and even his sisters (430-45 A.U.C., 324-309 B.C.). There was nothing but bloodshed, battles, and dreadful revolutions.

In the midst of all this disorder, several nations of Asia Minor and surrounding regions liberated themselves, forming the kingdoms of Pontus, Bithynia, and Pergamum. The bounty of the land was to make them rich and powerful. At the same time, Armenia also shook off the Macedonian yoke and became a great kingdom. The two Mithradates, father and son, founded the kingdom of Cappadocia.
But the two most powerful monarchies to rise at that time were Egypt, founded (431 A.U.C., 323 B.C.) by Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, whence we speak of the Lagids, and that of Asia or Syria, founded (442 A.U.C., 312 B.C.) by Seleucus, whence we speak of the Seleucids. Aside from Syria, the latter realm included those vast and rich provinces of Upper Asia which had belonged to the Persian Empire. In this manner, all of the East came to know Greece and learned its language.

Greece itself was subjugated by Alexander’s captains. Macedonia, his original realm, which had given masters to all the East, fell prey to all comers. The children of Cassander drove each other out of the kingdom (458 A.U.C., 296 B.C.). Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, who had occupied part of it (460 A.U.C., 294 B.C.), was driven out by Demetrius Poliorcetes, the son of Antigonus (465 A.U.C., 289 B.C.), whom he then drove out in his turn (468 A.U.C., 286 B.C.). He himself was driven out a second time by Lysimachus (473 A.U.C., 281 B.C.), and Lysimachus by Seleucus, whom Ptolemy Ceraunus (474 A.U.C., 280 B.C.), driven out of Egypt by his father, Ptolemy I, treacherously killed, despite his many kindnesses. No sooner had this traitor invaded Macedonia than he was attacked by the Gauls and killed in a battle he gave them (475 A.U.C., 279 B.C.).

During the disturbances in the East, the Gauls came to Asia Minor, led by their king, Brennus, and settled in Gallo-Graecia, or Galatia, thus named after them. From there they assaulted Macedonia, devastated it, and frightened all of Greece. But their army perished in a sacrilegious attempt on the temple of Delphi (476 A.U.C., 278 B.C.). This nation was stirring everywhere, and everywhere there was discontent.

Some years before the affair of Delphi, the Gauls of Italy, who had become the terror of the Romans by their continuous wars and frequent victories, were incited against Rome by the Samnites, the Bruttii, and the Etruscans (471 A.U.C., 283 B.C.). At first they reaped another victory, but they sullied its glory when they put to death some ambassadors. Outraged, the Romans marched against them (472 A.U.C., 282 B.C.), defeated them, entered their territory, where they founded a colony, and defeated them twice more, subjugating one part of them and forcing the other to sue for peace.

After the Gauls of the East had been driven out of Greece
Antigonus Gonatas, son of Demetrius Poliorcetes, who had been reigning in Greece for twelve years under rather trying circumstances, invaded Macedonia without difficulty. Pyrrhus was occupied elsewhere. Driven out of his kingdom (474 a.u.c., 280 B.C.), he hoped to satisfy his ambition by the conquest of Italy, whither he was called by the Tarentines. The defeat the Romans had inflicted on them and the Samnites left them no other choice. The victories Pyrrhus won over the Romans (475 a.u.c., 279 B.C.) ruined him. His elephants astounded them, but the consul, Fabricius, soon showed the Romans that Pyrrhus could be defeated. King and consul seemed to vie for the glory of generosity even more than for that of arms: Pyrrhus released all the prisoners to the consul without demanding a ransom, saying that war had to be fought with iron, not with silver (476 a.u.c., 278 B.C.); and Fabricius sent back to the king his perfidious physician, who had come to him, offering to poison his master.

In these times, the Jewish religion and the Jewish people came to be known among the Greeks. This people was well treated by the kings of Syria and lived peacefully according to its laws. Antiochus, surnamed Theos, the grandson of Seleucus, settled them in Asia Minor, whence they spread into Greece, everywhere enjoying the same rights and the same liberties as other citizens. Ptolemy, son of Lagus, had already settled them in Egypt. Under his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus, their Scriptures were translated into Greek (477 a.u.c., 277 B.C.), and it was at this time that the famous version called the Septuagint came into being. It was called this because it was the work of seventy learned old men whom Eleazar, the high priest, sent at the king's request. Some writers assert that they translated only the five books of the Law. It is possible that the other sacred books were turned into Greek later for the use of the Jews living in Egypt and Greece, where they not only forgot their ancient language, Hebrew, but even the Chaldaean language which the Captivity had taught them. They created a Greek interspersed with Hebraicisms, called the Hellenistic language; and the Septuagint, as well as all the New Testament, is written in that language. During this dispersion of the Jews, their Temple became famous throughout the world, and all the kings of the East presented their offerings there.
The West followed the war between the Romans and Pyrrhus with great interest. Finally the king was defeated by the consul Curius (479 A.U.C., 275 B.C.) and returned to Epirus. He did not remain there for long and wanted to compensate himself in Macedonia for his unfortunate Italian campaign. Antigonus Gonatas was confined to Thessalonica (480 A.U.C., 274 B.C.) and forced to abandon all the rest of the kingdom to Pyrrhus, but he gathered new courage while Pyrrhus, insecure and ambitious, was at war with the Spartans and the Argives (482 A.U.C., 272 B.C.). The two hostile kings were brought to Argos at the same time by two conflicting intrigues and by two different gates. A great combat took place in the town; and a mother who saw Pyrrhus pursuing her son, who had wounded him, struck this prince down with a stone. Now that this powerful adversary was eliminated, Antigonus returned to Macedonia, which, after some vicissitudes, remained the peaceful possession of his family. The Achaean League prevented him from becoming more powerful. This was the last rampart of Greek liberty and produced its last heroes in Aratus and Philopoemen.

The Tarentines, whom Pyrrhus had fed with promises, appealed to the Carthaginians after his death. Their assistance was of no use to them: they and their allies, the Bruttii and the Samnites, were defeated. After seventy-two years of continuous warfare, the latter were brought under Roman rule. Tarentum soon met with the same fate, nor could the neighboring nations hold out. Thus all the ancient peoples of Italy were subjugated. After so many defeats, the Gauls did not dare move.

After 480 years of war, the Romans found themselves masters of Italy and began to look beyond their frontiers. They began to feel uneasy about the Carthaginians, who had become too powerful in their sphere after their conquests in Sicily, whence they made attempts on Rome and on Italy in order to help the Tarentines.

The republic of Carthage held both coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. Possessing almost all of the African coast, it had reached the Spanish side by way of the Straits. Mistress of the sea and of commerce, it had invaded the islands of Corsica and Sardinia. Sicily was hard put to defend itself, and Italy was threatened too closely not to be afraid. Hence the Punic Wars (490 A.U.C., 264 B.C.), despite treaties to which neither side paid much attention.
The first of these wars (494 A.U.C., 260 B.C.) taught the Romans naval warfare. From the outset they mastered an art unknown to them, and the consul Duilius, who fought the first naval battle (495 A.U.C., 259 B.C.), won it. Regulus upheld this glory and landed in Africa (498 A.U.C., 256 B.C.), where he had to employ his entire army in combating this prodigious serpent. Everything gave way, and in this extreme peril, Carthage was able to save itself only through the help of the Spartan, Xanthippus. The Roman general was defeated and taken prisoner (499 A.U.C., 255 B.C.); but his capture gave him greater glory than his victories. Released on parole to arrange the exchange of prisoners, he went to the senate to speak in favor of the law that extinguished all hope for anyone who permitted himself to be captured, and returned to a certain death. Two dreadful shipwrecks forced the Romans to give the domination of the seas back to the Carthaginians. For a long time victory hung in the balance between the two nations, and the Romans almost had to yield. Yet they repaired their fleet. A single battle brought the decision (513 A.U.C., 241 B.C.), and the consul Lutatius <Lutatius Catulus> ended the war. Carthage was forced to pay tribute and to leave not only Sicily but all the islands between Sicily and Italy. The Romans won all of that island, except the parts held by Hiero, the king of Syracuse, their ally.

After the end of the war, an uprising of their army brought the Carthaginians to the brink of ruin. According to their custom, they were using foreign troops, who revolted for their pay. The Carthaginians' harsh rule caused almost all the cities of their empire to join these mutinous troops, and Carthage, under a close siege, would have been lost without Hamilcar, surnamed Barca. He alone had borne the burden of the last war (516 A.U.C., 238 B.C.). Now his fellow citizens also owed him their victory over the rebels. Still, that victory cost them Sardinia, which the revolt of their garrison opened to the Romans. Fearful of becoming embroiled in another quarrel with Rome, Carthage unwillingly ceded this important island and augmented its tribute. Badly shaken by the revolt, Carthage was planning to reestablish its empire in Spain. Hamilcar went to that province with his son Hannibal (524 A.U.C., 230 B.C.), aged nine, and eventually died there in a battle. During the nine years that he
fought there, with as much cunning as valor, his son was being formed by this great captain and at the same time was conceiving an unrelenting hatred for the Romans. His ally Hasdrubal was made successor to his father. He governed his province with much prudence and built New Carthage there, which held Spain in subjection.

The Romans were occupied in a war with Teuta, queen of Illyria, who practiced piracy all along the coast with impunity. Gorged with the booty she took from the Greeks and the inhabitants of Epirus (525 A.U.C., 229 B.C.), she had no respect for the Romans and killed their ambassador. She was soon brought low. The Romans left her only a small part of Illyria (526 A.U.C., 228 B.C.) and gained the island of Corfu, which she had usurped. Then they made themselves respected in Greece with a solemn embassy, and it was the first time that their power became known in these parts. The great progress of Hasdrubal made them uneasy; but the Gauls of Italy prevented them from dealing with the affairs of Spain. The Gauls had remained quiet for forty-five years. The youths who had grown up during this time no longer remembered past losses and began to threaten Rome. In order to attack such turbulent neighbors safely, the Romans assured themselves of the Carthaginians. A treaty was concluded with Hasdrubal, who promised not to go beyond the Ebro.

The war between the Romans and the Gauls was fought with passion on both sides (530 A.U.C., 224 B.C.). The Transalpines joined the Cisalpines, but all of them were defeated. Concolitanus, one of the Gallic kings, was captured in battle, and Aneroestus, another king, killed himself. The victorious Romans crossed the Po for the first time, firmly resolved to deprive the Gauls of the region around this river, which they had held for so many centuries. Victory followed them wherever they went; Milan was taken, and almost all of the country was subjugated.

In these times, Hasdrubal died (534 A.U.C., 220 B.C.), and Hannibal, even though only twenty-five years old, was put in his place. From that moment on, war was inevitable. The new governor openly undertook to subjugate Spain, without any respect for treaties (505 A.U.C., 219 B.C.). The complaints of Saguntum, its
ally, were brought before Rome. Roman ambassadors went to Car-
thage. Now that they had recovered, the Carthaginians no longer
felt inclined to yield. The fact that Sicily had been wrested from
their hands, that Sardinia had unjustly been taken from them, and
that the tribute had been increased was rankling them. Therefore,
the faction that wanted to disown Hannibal was weak.

This general thought of everything. Secret envoys had assured him
of the Gauls of Italy, who, no longer in a position to undertake
anything on their own strength, seized this opportunity to recover
their position. Hannibal crossed the Ebro, the Pyrenees, all of
transalpine Gaul, the Alps, and fell upon Italy in the twinkling of an
eye, as it were. The Gauls did not fail to strengthen his army and
made a supreme effort to obtain their liberty (536 A.U.C., 218 B.C.).
After four lost battles, it seemed that Rome would fall (537 A.U.C.,
217 B.C.). Sicily took the side of the victor. Hieronymus, king of
Syracuse, came out against the Romans (538 A.U.C., 216 B.C.), and
almost all of Italy forsook them (539 A.U.C., 215 B.C.). The last hope
of the republic seemed to perish in Spain with the two Scipios
(542 A.U.C., 212 B.C.).

In such extreme peril, Rome owed its salvation to three great men.
The steadfastness of Fabius Maximus, who, rising above popular
criticism, conducted the war while retreating, was a shield to his
fatherland. Marcellus, who raised the siege of Nola (543 A.U.C.,
214 B.C.) and took Syracuse (542 A.U.C., 212 B.C.), inspired the
troops by his actions. But Rome, though admiring these two great
men, felt that there was something even greater in the younger
Scipio. The marvelous success of his strategy confirmed the popular
opinion that he was of divine descent and conversed with the gods.
At the age of twenty-four (543 A.U.C., 211 B.C.) he undertook to
march into Spain, where his father and his uncle had just perished.
He attacked New Carthage as if acting by inspiration, and his
soldiers were victorious from the outset. All those who saw him were
won over to the Roman people. The Carthaginians handed Spain
over to him (548 A.U.C., 206 B.C.); and when he landed in Africa, the
kings surrendered to him. Now it was the turn of Carthage to
tremble and to see its armies defeated (551 A.U.C., 203 B.C.).
Hannibal, undefeated for sixteen years, was called back in vain and
could not defend his fatherland. Scipio imposed his rule (552 A.U.C., 202 B.C.) and was rewarded with the name Africanus. The Roman people, having overwhelmed the Gauls and the Africans, no longer had anything to fear and henceforth conducted their wars without danger.

In the midst of the First Punic War, Diodotus, the governor of Bactria (504 A.U.C., 250 B.C.) took a thousand towns from Antiochus, called Theos, the son of Antiochus Soter, king of Syria. Almost all of the Orient met the same fate. The Parthians revolted under the leadership of Arsaces, the head of the Arsacid family and the founder of an empire that gradually extended into all of Upper Asia.

The kings of Syria and Egypt were engaged in a bitter struggle and thought only of ruining each other, either by force or by cunning. Damascus and its territory, which was called Coele-Syria and had common frontiers with both kingdoms, was the object of their wars; and the affairs of Asia were completely separate from those of Europe.

All during this time, philosophy was flourishing in Greece. The schools of Italian and Ionian philosophy brought forth great men, many of whom were flamboyant; but this did not keep the inquisitive Greeks from calling them philosophers. At the time of Cyrus and Cambyses, Pythagoras began the Italic school in Magna Graecia, as the region of Naples was called. About the same time, Thales of Miletus founded the Ionian school. From it came the great philosophers Heraclitus, Democritus, Empedocles, and Parmenides; Anaxagoras, who, shortly before the Peloponnesian War, showed the world constructed by an eternal spirit; Socrates, who, shortly thereafter, brought philosophy back to the study of proper living and became the father of moral philosophy; Plato, his disciple, the head of the Academy; Aristotle, the disciple of Plato and preceptor of Alexander, the head of the Peripatetics; under the successors of Alexander, Zeno of Citium (called thus after his birthplace on the island of Cyprus), the head of the Stoics; and Epicurus of Athens, the head of the philosophers who bear his name—if, that is, we can call philosophers those who openly denied the existence of Providence and who, not knowing what duty is, defined virtue by pleasure. Among the greatest philosophers we can count Hippoc-
rates, the Father of Medicine, who made his mark with the others in these fortunate times for Greece. At the same time, the Romans had another kind of philosophy, which had nothing to do with disputations or discourses but consisted of frugality, poverty, and the hardships of rustic life and war. They found their glory in that of their fatherland and of the Roman name, and this finally made them masters over Italy and Carthage.

**Ninth Epoch**

**Scipio, or the Fall of Carthage**

In the year 552 after the founding of Rome, about 250 years after the founding of the Persian monarchy and 202 years before Jesus Christ, Carthage was subjugated by the Romans. This did not prevent Hannibal from surreptitiously stirring up enemies against them wherever he could; but these actions served only to involve all his old and new friends in the ruin of his country and himself. By the victories of the consul Flaminius, Philip, king of Macedonia, an ally of the Carthaginians, was struck down (556 A.U.C., 198 B.C.), the power of the kings of Macedonia was severely curtailed, and Greece was freed from their yoke (558 A.U.C., 196 B.C.). The Romans decided to put Hannibal to death, still finding him dangerous, even after his defeat. Reduced to fleeing his country, this great captain stirred up the East against them and drew their armies into Asia (559 A.U.C., 195 B.C.). His powerful reasoning made the king of Syria, Antiochus, surnamed the Great, jealous of their power, so that he declared war against them (561 A.U.C., 193 B.C.). But during that war, he did not follow the strategy of Hannibal, who had brought him into it. Defeated on land and sea, he received the law imposed by the consul Lucius Scipio, brother of Scipio Africanus, and was confined to the Taurus Mountains. Hannibal, having sought refuge with Prusias, king of Bithynia, escaped the Romans by poison (572 A.U.C., 182 B.C.). The Romans were feared through-
out the world and no longer wanted to tolerate any power but their own. Kings were obliged to give them their children as hostages for their loyalty. Antiochus, later called the Illustrious or Epiphanes, second son of Antiochus the Great, king of Syria, spent a long time in Rome in these circumstances, but toward the end of the reign of his older brother, Seleucus Philopator, he was released (578 A.U.C., 176 B.C.). In his place the Romans demanded Demetrius Soter, the king’s son, who was ten years old at the time. In this difficult situation, Seleucus died (579 A.U.C., 175 B.C.), and Antiochus usurped the kingdom from his nephew. The Romans became involved with the affairs of Macedonia, where Perseus alarmed his neighbors and no longer wanted to abide by the conditions imposed on his father, King Philip.

It was at this time that the persecutions of God’s people began (581 A.U.C., 173 B.C.). Antiochus the Illustrious ruled like a maniac: he turned all his fury against the Jews and aimed at destroying the Temple, the Law of Moses, and the entire nation. The authority of the Romans prevented him from becoming master of Egypt (583 A.U.C., 171 B.C.). They went to war against Perseus, who, quicker to undertake something than to see it through, lost his allies through his avarice and his armies through his cowardice. Defeated by the consul Paulus Aemilius (586 A.U.C., 168 B.C.), he was forced to surrender to him. King Gentius of Illyria, his ally, had been defeated in thirty days by the praetor Anicius and had just met with a similar fate. The kingdom of Macedonia, which had lasted for 700 years, and for almost 200 years had given masters not only to Greece but to all the East, was reduced to the status of a Roman province. Antiochus’ fury against God’s people was mounting. Here we see the emergence of the resistance of Mattathias, a sacrificer descended from Phineas, whose zeal he imitated; the orders for the preservation of his people he gave before he died (587 A.U.C., 167 B.C.); the victories of his son, Judas Maccabaeus (588 A.U.C., 166 B.C.), over his numerous enemies; the rise of the Hasmonaean or Maccabee family (589 A.U.C., 165 B.C.); the new dedication of the Temple, which had been desecrated by the pagans; the rule of Judas and the renewed splendor of the priesthood (590 A.U.C., 164 B.C.); the death of Antiochus, which was worthy of his impiety and
arrogance; his false conversion during his last illness, and God's unrelenting wrath directed against this haughty king. His son Antiochus Eupator, as yet a minor, succeeded him under the tutelage of his preceptor, Lysias. During his minority, Demetrius Soter, who was in Rome as a hostage, felt that he might be able to reestablish himself. But he could not persuade the senate to send him back to his country: Roman policies were served better by a child-king.

Under Antiochus Eupator, the persecutions of God's people (591 A.U.C., 163 B.C.) and the victories of Judas Maccabaeus (592 A.U.C., 162 B.C.) continued. Divisiveness arose in the kingdom of Syria. Demetrius escaped from Rome; the people recognized him, and young Antiochus was killed, along with his tutor, Lysias. But the Jews fared no better under Demetrius than under his predecessors. He soon met the same fate: his generals were defeated by Judas Maccabaeus, and the hand of the arrogant Nicanor, which had so often threatened the Temple, was nailed to its walls. But, shortly thereafter, Judas was overcome by a great multitude and died while fighting with astounding valor (593 A.U.C., 161 B.C.). His brother Jonathan succeeded to his position and upheld his reputation. Faced with extreme danger, he did not lose his courage. The Romans, delighted with the opportunity to humiliate the kings of Syria, granted the Jews their protection. The alliance which Judas had demanded was concluded, yet no help was forthcoming. Still, the glory of the Roman name was a strong support for the afflicted people.

The disorders in Syria were becoming more severe every day. Alexander Balas, who boasted of being a son of Antiochus the Illustrious, was put on the throne by the people of Antioch (600 A.U.C., 154 B.C.). The kings of Egypt, perpetual enemies of Syria, took sides in these struggles in order to profit from them. Ptolemy Philometor supported Balas. The ensuing war was most violent. Demetrius Soter was killed (604 A.U.C., 150 B.C.) and left only two princes, still in their minority, to avenge his death. Their names were Demetrius Nicator and Antiochus Sidetes. Thus the usurper was undisturbed, and the king of Egypt gave him his daughter Cleopatra in marriage. Balas, who believed himself to be
above everything, plunged into debauchery and thus made all his subjects despise him.

At this time, Philometor judged the famous law case which the Samaritans brought against the Jews (604 A.U.C., 150 B.C.). This schismatic people was still opposed to God’s people and did not fail to join their enemies; and in order to please their persecutor, Antiochus the Illustrious, they had consecrated their temple of Gerizim to Zeus Xenios, god of hospitality (587 A.U.C., 167 B.C.). Despite this profanation, these impious people still claimed, some time later, before Ptolemy Philometor in Alexandria, that their temple should be preferred to that of Jerusalem. The two parties contested before the king, and both pledged their lives to substantiate their claims in terms of the Law of Moses. The Jews won their case, and the Samaritans were given a death sentence, as had been agreed. The same king gave permission to Onias, a member of the priestly family, to build the temple of Heliopolis in Egypt, modeled after that of Jerusalem. But this undertaking was condemned by the entire council of the Jews as being contrary to the law.

Meanwhile, there was unrest in Carthage, which was chafing under the rule imposed by Scipio Africanus. The Romans resolved on the complete destruction of Carthage, and the Third Punic War was begun.

Young Demetrius Nicator, now past his childhood, hoped to regain the throne of his ancestors (606 A.U.C., 148 B.C.), and the usurper’s decadence gave him every hope of success. As he was drawing near, Balas became disturbed (608 A.U.C., 146 B.C.). His father-in-law came out against him because Balas did not permit him to take over his kingdom. The ambitious Cleopatra, his wife, left him in order to marry his enemy, and he finally perished by the hand of his own men after he had lost one battle. Philometor died a few days later from the wounds he had received, and Syria was delivered from two enemies.

This time also witnessed the fall of two great cities. Carthage was taken and burnt to the ground by Scipio Aemilianus, who, by that victory, confirmed the name of Africanus for his family and showed himself a worthy heir of the great Scipio, his grandfather. The city of Corinth met with the same fate, and the republic or league of the
Achaeans perished with it. The consul Mummius utterly devastated that city, the most voluptuous and beautiful of all Greek cities. He brought its incomparable statues to Rome without knowing their value. The Romans knew nothing about the arts of Greece, being satisfied with their knowledge of war, politics, and agriculture.

During the disturbances in Syria, the Jews strengthened their position. Jonathan was sought after by both parties, and the victorious Nicator treated him as a brother. For this he was soon rewarded. When there was a revolt (610 A.U.C., 144 B.C.), the Jews came to his aid and freed him from the hands of the rebels. Jonathan was overwhelmed with honors; but when the king felt himself secure, he reverted to the ways of his ancestors, and the Jews were tormented as before.

New disturbances arose in Syria. Diodotus, surnamed Tryphon, brought up a son of Balas, whom he named Antiochus Theos and served as his guardian during his minority. The arrogance of Demetrius led to a popular uprising. When all of Syria was aflame, Jonathan knew how to profit from the situation and renewed the alliance with the Romans (611 A.U.C., 143 B.C.). Everything was going well for him when Tryphon, breaking his word, had him and his children killed. His brother Simon, the most prudent and fortunate of the Maccabees, succeeded him, and the Romans favored him, as they had favored his predecessors. Tryphon was just as faithless with his ward Antiochus as he had been with Jonathan. He did away with this child by means of the physicians, under the pretext of removing a stone which was not there, and then made himself master over part of the kingdom. Simon sided with Demetrius Nicator, the legitimate king. Having obtained his country's liberty from him, he defended that liberty with armed force against the rebel Tryphon. The Syrians were driven from the citadel they held in Jerusalem (612 A.U.C., 142 B.C.) and eventually from all their strongholds in Judaea. Thus freed from the yoke of the heathen by Simon's valor, the Jews granted him and his family royal prerogatives; and Demetrius Nicator gave his consent. This is the beginning of the new kingdom of God's people and of the Hasmonaean dynasty, which remained united with the high priesthood.

In these times the empire of the Parthians extended over Bactria and India following the victories of Mithradates (613 A.U.C.,
141 B.C.), the most valiant of the Arsacidae. While he was advancing toward the Euphrates, Demetrius Nicator, called in by the inhabitants of that region, who had just been subjugated by Mithradates, hoped to force the obedience of the Parthians, whom the Syrians still considered rebels. He gained a number of victories; but when he was ready to return to Syria, where he planned to crush Tryphon, he fell into the ambush which one of Mithradates’ generals had prepared for him. Thus he remained a prisoner of the Parthians. Tryphon, who had believed himself strengthened by the misfortune of that prince, suddenly found himself deserted by his men (614 A.U.C., 140 B.C.). They could no longer tolerate his arrogance. While Demetrius, their legitimate king, was in captivity, they gave their allegiance to his wife, Cleopatra, and to her children. But a defender had to be found for these princes, since they were still minors. This task naturally fell to Antiochus Sidetes, the brother of Demetrius; and Cleopatra had him recognized throughout the kingdom. She did even more: Phraates, the brother and successor to Mithradates, treated Nicator as the king and gave him his daughter Rhodogune in marriage. Out of hatred for this rival, who robbed her of her crown and her husband, Cleopatra married Antiochus Sidetes and resolved to rule by all manner of crime. The new king attacked Tryphon, and Simon joined forces with him in this undertaking (615 A.U.C., 139 B.C.); and the tyrant, defeated in all his strongholds, met the end he deserved. Once master of the kingdom (619 A.U.C., 135 B.C.), Antiochus soon forgot the services Simon had rendered him in this war and put him to death. While Antiochus was gathering all the forces of Syria against the Jews, John Hyrcanus, Simon’s son, succeeded to his father’s priesthood, and all the people submitted to him. He sustained the siege of Jerusalem with much bravery; and when Antiochus was contemplating a war against the Parthians in order to deliver his captive brother, he decided to grant the Jews tolerable conditions.

While this peace was being concluded, the Romans, who were becoming too wealthy, found a formidable enemy in the tremendous number of their slaves. Eunus, himself a slave, incited them to revolt in Sicily (621 A.U.C., 133 B.C.), and it took all of the power of Rome to put them down.

A little later, the succession of Attalus, king of Pergamum, who
had designated the Roman people as his heir in his testament, brought
dissension to the city. The disorders of the Gracchi began. The
seditionous tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus, one of the leading
Romans, put him to death: the entire senate killed him through the
hand of Scipio Nasica, since it saw no other way to put a stop to the
dangerous practice of distributing money, with which the eloquent
tribune wooed the people. Scipio Aemilianus restored military
discipline, and this great man, who had destroyed Carthage, also
ruined Numantia in Spain, the other terror of Rome.

The Parthians were too weak to resist Sidetes. His troops, though
corrupted by prodigious luxury, were surprisingly successful
(622 A.U.C., 132 B.C.). John Hyrcanus, who fought alongside Sidetes
in this war, together with his Jews, distinguished himself by his
gallantry and commanded respect for the Jewish religion when the
army paused to give him leisure to celebrate a religious holiday.
Everything gave way, and Phraates saw his empire reduced to its
former limits; but, far from giving up hope, he believed that he
could use his prisoner to restore his position and to invade Syria.
Under these circumstances, a bizarre fate befell Demetrius. He was
often released, and as many times retained as prisoner, depending
on whether hope or fear had the upper hand in his father-in-law's
mind. Finally, in a fortunate moment, when Phraates saw in him his
only hope of diverting Syria, he was definitively set free (624 A.U.C.,
130 B.C.). This was the turning point. Sidetes, who could sustain his
tremendous expenses only by intolerable depredations, was suddenly
struck by a general uprising of the people and perished with his
army—an army that had been almost undefeated in the past. In vain
Phraates tried to catch up with Demetrius, but it was too late; he
had already reached his kingdom. His wife, Cleopatra, whose only
aim was to rule, soon went back to him, and Rhodogune was
forgotten.

Hyrcanus took advantage of the times. He took Shechem from the
Samaritans and completely devastated the temple of Gerizim, 200
years after it had been built by Sanballat. Its ruin did not prevent
the Samaritans from worshiping on that mountain, and the two
nations remained irreconcilable. In the next year (625 A.U.C.,
129 B.C.) all of Idumaea, united to the kingdom of Judah by the
victory of Hyrcanus, received the Law of Moses and began to practice circumcision. The Romans continued to give protection to Hyrcanus and ordered the restoration of the towns taken from him by the Syrians.

The arrogance and violence of Demetrius Nicator (626 A.U.C., 128 B.C.) did not permit Syria to remain quiet for long. The people revolted (629 A.U.C., 125 B.C.). To fan their revolt, hostile Egypt gave them a king, namely, Alexander Zabinas, son of Balas. Demetrius was defeated, and Cleopatra, his wife, who believed that she could rule more absolutely under her children than under her husband, had him killed. Nor did she treat her oldest son, Seleucus, any better when he wanted to rule against her will. Her second son, Antiochus, surnamed Grypus, had put down the rebels (630 A.U.C., 124 B.C.); and when he returned, victorious, Cleopatra ceremoniously offered him a poisoned cup, which he, warned of her deadly intentions, made her drink instead (633 A.U.C., 121 B.C.). When she died, she left an eternal seed of dissension among the children she had had by the two brothers, Demetrius Nicator and Antiochus Sidetes. In the throes of such agitation, Syria was no longer in a position to interfere with the Jews. John Hyrcanus took Samaria but was unable to convert the Samaritans. Five years later he died, and Judaea remained the peaceful possession of his two sons, Aristobulus (650 A.U.C., 104 B.C.) and Alexander Jannaeus (651 A.U.C., 103 B.C.), who reigned one after the other without being disturbed by the kings of Syria.

The Romans left this wealthy kingdom to consume itself and turned westward. During the wars of Demetrius Nicator and Zabinas (629 A.U.C., 125 B.C.), they began to move across the Alps (630 A.U.C., 124 B.C.). Sextius, having defeated the Salian Gauls, established in the town of Aix <en-Provence> a colony which still bears his name. The Gauls did not defend themselves well. Fabius subjugated the Allobroges and all the neighboring peoples (631 A.U.C., 123 B.C.), and in the same year in which Grypus made his mother drink the poison she had prepared for him (633 A.U.C., 121 B.C.), Gallia Narbonensis, reduced to the size of a province, was made a Roman province. Thus the Roman Empire was growing, and gradually came to occupy all the lands and all the oceans of the
known world. But though the aspect of the republic was made resplendent on the outside by these conquests, it was marred by the unbridled ambition of its citizens and its internal struggles. The most illustrious of the Romans became the most pernicious to the common weal. The two Gracchi, who fawned upon the people, created divisions which ended only with the end of the republic. Gaius, Tiberius’ brother, could not tolerate the thought that this great man had been killed in such a tragic way. Incited to vengeance by impulses that were believed to be inspired by the ghost of Tiberius, he armed all the citizens against one another; but, on the eve of destroying everything, he died a death similar to the one he had wanted to avenge. Money could buy anything in Rome. Jugurtha, king of Numidia (635–41 A.U.C., 119–113 B.C.), tainted with the murder of his brothers, who had been under the protection of the Roman people, defended himself for a longer time by his liberalities than by armed force; and Marius, who finally defeated him, could gain command only by inciting the people against the nobility (648 A.U.C., 106 B.C.).

There was a second uprising of the slaves in Sicily (651 A.U.C., 103 B.C.), and their second revolt cost the Romans as much blood as the first. Marius defeated the Teutoni (652 A.U.C., 102 B.C.), the Cimbri, and the other peoples of the north, who were invading Gaul, Spain, and Italy. His victories over them (654 A.U.C., 100 B.C.) once again furnished the occasion to propose distributions of land. Metellus, who was opposed to this, was forced to yield to the times (660 A.U.C., 94 B.C.), and it took the blood of the people’s tribune Saturninus to end the divisions.

While Rome protected Cappadocia (666 A.U.C., 88 B.C.) against Mithradates, king of Pontus, and while this powerful enemy capitulated before the Roman forces (668 A.U.C., 86 B.C.), as did Greece, which had taken his side, Italy, well trained by all the wars it had fought either against or for the Romans (663 A.U.C., 91 B.C.), threatened their empire by a universal revolt. At the same time, Rome was torn by the furious struggle between Marius and Sulla (666 A.U.C. et seq., 88–87 B.C.), one of whom had terrified the south and the north, while the other was the victor over Greece and Asia. Sulla (672 A.U.C., 82 B.C.), who was called the Fortunate, was too
fortunate against his country, which he enslaved by his tyrannical dictatorship (675 A.U.C., 79 B.C.). Even though he did relinquish the sovereign power voluntarily, a bad precedent was established. Everyone wanted to rule.

Sertorius, a zealous partisan of Marius, entrenched himself in Spain (680 A.U.C., 74 B.C.) and formed an alliance with Mithradates. Force was useless against this great captain, and Pompey found that the only way to bring this party to heel was to sow dissension within it (681 A.U.C., 73 B.C.). Even a man like the gladiator Spartacus believed that he could aspire to the command. This slave caused the praetors and consuls as much difficulty (683 A.U.C., 71 B.C.) as Mithradates caused Lucullus. The war of the gladiators became dangerous to the Roman power. Crassus had difficulty in bringing it to an end, and it was necessary to dispatch the great Pompey against them.

Lucullus now had the upper hand in the East. The Romans crossed the Euphrates (686 A.U.C., 68 B.C.); but their general, though invincible to the enemy, was unable to hold his own soldiers to their duty. Mithradates, often defeated without ever losing courage, recovered, and it seemed that the good fortune of Pompey was needed to end this war. When he was sent against Mithradates, he had just rid the oceans of the pirates (687 A.U.C., 67 B.C.) who infested them from Syria to the Pillars of Hercules. His glory seemed to be at its pinnacle. He was indeed able to subjugate that valiant king (689 A.U.C., 65 B.C.) and to conquer Armenia, where he had taken refuge; Iberia and Albania, which supported him; Syria, which was torn by factions (691 A.U.C., 63 B.C.); Judaea, where the division among the Hasmonaens left Hyrcanus II, son of Alexander Jannaeus, only a shadow of power; in short, all of the East. Yet, it would have been impossible for him to triumph over all these enemies without the consul Cicero, who saved the city from the incendiary actions planned by Cataline and his followers, all members of the most illustrious nobility of Rome. This dangerous party was put down by the eloquence of Cicero rather than by the armed strength of his fellow senator, G <aius> Antonius.

But for all that, the liberty of the Roman people was not more secure. Pompey reigned in the senate, and his great name made him
the absolute master in all debates. When Julius Caesar subjugated Gaul (696 A.U.C. et seq., 58 B.C. et seq.), he gave his country the most useful conquest it had ever made. A service of such importance enabled him to establish his supremacy in his own country. It was his desire first to equal, and then to surpass, Pompey.

The immense wealth of Crassus led him to believe that he could share the glory of these two great men, as he shared their authority. He boldly undertook the war against the Parthians (700 A.U.C., 54 B.C.), which was disastrous for him and for his country. The victorious Arsacidae (701 A.U.C., 53 B.C.) insulted the ambition of the Romans and the insatiable greed of their general with cruel jests.

But shame upon the Roman name was not the worst consequence of Crassus' defeat. His power had counterbalanced that of Pompey and Caesar, whom he had thus kept united against their will. His death (705 A.U.C., 49 B.C.) broke the dike that held them back. The two rivals, who held in their hands all the power of the republic, decided their quarrel at Pharsalus in one savage battle (706 A.U.C., 48 B.C.). Caesar won that battle, and in a moment he appeared everywhere in the world: in Egypt, in Asia (707 A.U.C., 47 B.C.), in Mauretania (708 A.U.C., 46 B.C.), and in Spain (709 A.U.C., 45 B.C.). Victorious on all fronts, he was recognized as master in Rome (710 A.U.C., 44 B.C.) and throughout the empire. Brutus and Cassius felt they were liberating their fellow citizens when they killed him as a tyrant (711 A.U.C., 43 B.C.), despite his leniency.

Rome now fell (712 A.U.C., 42 B.C.) into the hands of Mark Antony <Marcus Antonius>, Lepidus, and young Caesar Octavianus, great-nephew of Julius Caesar and his adopted son, three intolerable tyrants whose triumvirate and proscriptions still make us shudder when we read about them. But they were too violent to last long. These three men divided up the empire. Caesar <Octavianus> retained Italy and, immediately changing his erstwhile cruelty into kindness, pretended that he had been swept along against his will by his colleagues (718 A.U.C., 36 B.C.). The remainder of the republic perished with Brutus and Cassius. Having eliminated Lepidus (722 A.U.C., 32 B.C.), Caesar and Antony turned against each other. All the power of Rome clashed on the sea.

Caesar won the Battle of Actium (723 A.U.C., 31 B.C.). The forces of Egypt and the East, which Antony had on his side, were
dispersed. He was forsaken by all his friends, even his Cleopatra, for whom he had ruined himself. Herod <the Great>, the Idumaean, who owed him everything, was forced to surrender to the victor (724 A.U.C., 30 B.C.) and was thereby able to hold on to the kingdom of Judah, which had been entirely lost to the Hasmonaeans by the weakness of old Hyrcanus. Everything gave way before Caesar's good luck. Alexandria opened its gates to him, and Egypt became a Roman province. Cleopatra, losing all hope of being able to keep it, killed herself after Antony's suicide. Rome received Caesar with open arms (727 A.U.C., 27 B.C.), and, under the name of Augustus and the title of emperor, he established himself permanently as the sole master of the whole empire. In the Pyrenean region, he subjugated the rebellious Cantabri and Astures (730 A.U.C., 24 B.C.); Ethiopia sued for peace (732 A.U.C., 22 B.C.); terrified, the Parthians sent back to him the standards that had been taken from Crassus, as well as all the Roman prisoners (734 A.U.C., 20 B.C.); India sought an alliance with him (739 A.U.C., 15 B.C.); his strength was felt by the Rhaetians or Grisons, whose mountains were no longer a defense (742 A.U.C., 12 B.C.); Pannonia recognized him, Germany feared him (747 A.U.C., 7 B.C.), and the Turk received his laws. Victorious on land and sea, he closed the Temple of Janus (753 A.U.C., 1 B.C.). The universe lived in peace under his power, and Jesus Christ came into the world (754 A.U.C.).

Tenth Epoch

The Birth of Jesus Christ

Seventh and Last Age of the World

Thus, we have finally come to the age so ardently desired by our forefathers, that of the coming of the Messiah (A.D. 1). This name signifies the Christ, or the Anointed of the Lord, and it is due Jesus Christ as priest, king, and prophet.

There are differences of opinion as to the precise year in which he came into the world, and it is generally agreed that in reality his
birth falls some years before our traditional era. Yet, for greater convenience, we shall go along with everyone else. Without entering any further into the discussion as to the precise year of the birth of Our Lord, it is sufficient to know that it occurred about the year 4000 from the beginning of the world. Some place it a little earlier, some a little later, and others into precisely that year. This discrepancy is as much the result of uncertainty concerning the years of the world as concerning the birth of Our Lord. Be that as it may, it was about that time, 1000 years after the consecration of the Temple, and the year 754 of Rome, that Jesus Christ, the son of God in eternity and the son of Abraham and David in time, was born of a virgin. This epoch is the most noteworthy of all, not only because of the importance of this great event, but also because Christians began several centuries ago to count their years from that date. It should also be noted that it roughly coincides with the time Rome returned to the monarchical state under the peaceful rule of Augustus. All the arts flourished in his day, and Latin poetry was brought to its supreme perfection by Virgil and Horace, whom this prince inspired, not only by his liberality, but also by giving them free access to his person.

The birth of Jesus Christ was followed closely by the death of Herod (A.D. 8). His kingdom was divided among his children, and the largest share soon fell into the hands of the Romans. Augustus' reign ended in great glory.

Tiberius, whom he had adopted, succeeded him unopposed, and the empire was recognized as hereditary in the family of the Caesars. Rome suffered greatly under the cruel rule of Tiberius, but the rest of the empire was rather quiet. Tiberius' nephew, Germanicus, appeased the rebellious army, refused to become emperor, defeated the indomitable Arminius (A.D. 14), and took his conquering army as far as the Elbe (A.D. 16). Since the affection of all these peoples had brought him the jealousy of his uncle, this barbarian caused him to die (A.D. 17), either from sorrow or from poison.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, St. John the Baptist appeared (A.D. 19). Jesus Christ was baptized by this divine precursor, and the eternal Father recognized his beloved Son in a voice coming from on high. The Holy Spirit descended upon the Savior in
the peaceful figure of a dove: thus the whole Trinity became manifest. Here was the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel and of the preaching of Jesus Christ. This last week was the most important and the most explicit. Daniel had set it apart from the others as the week in which the Covenant was to be confirmed and in which the ancient sacrifices were to lose their effectiveness. We may call it the week of mysteries. In it, Jesus Christ established his mission and his doctrine by innumerable miracles and, in the end, by his death. The latter occurred in the fourth year of his ministry (A.D. 30), which was also the fourth year of the last week of Daniel; so that this great week is exactly cut in half by that death.

Thus, a reckoning of the weeks is easy to make or, rather, has already been made for us. We have only to add to the 453 years (from the year 300 of Rome and the twentieth year of Artaxerxes until the beginning of our traditional era) the 30 years of that era which end with the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius and the baptism of Our Lord, and the two sums will add up to 483 years. Of the 7 years lacking to make 490, the fourth, which occupies the middle, is that in which Jesus Christ died, so that all of Daniel's prophecies are visibly enclosed in the space of time he had allotted. It would not even be necessary that everything should fit in so neatly, and there is no reason to accept the middle indicated by Daniel with such extreme rigidity. The most careful scholars would be content to find that point anywhere between the two extremes. I say this so that those who would like to place the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes or the death of Our Lord somewhat earlier or somewhat later should not feel hampered in their calculations and so that those who would try to obfuscate a clear thing by quibbles over chronology will desist from their useless subtleties.

[This much one must know if one is not to be confused by secular authors and if one is to understand as much of Hebrew history as one needs. Further discussions of chronology are of very little use here. Whether the birth of Our Lord must be placed a little earlier or a little later, and whether his later life must be made a little longer or a little shorter is a diversity of opinion that arises as much from our uncertainty as to the years of the world as to those of Jesus Christ. And however that may be, an attentive reader will already be in a
position to know that this has no influence on either the continuity or the accomplishment of God's decrees. We must avoid those anachronisms which confuse the order of events and leave the others to be debated by the scholars.

As for those who insist upon finding in secular history the miracles of Jesus Christ and his disciples, which the world did not want to believe in but, on the contrary, opposed with all its might as something which condemned its ways, we shall speak of their error elsewhere. We shall also see that there are more truths favorable to Christianity in secular authors than one would believe. The only example I shall mention here is the eclipse that occurred at the Crucifixion of Our Lord.]

The darkness covering all the face of the earth at high noon and at the moment when Jesus Christ was crucified, was taken for an ordinary eclipse by the pagan authors who recorded this memorable event. But the first Christians, who spoke about it to the Romans as of a miracle mentioned not ony by their authors but also in their public records, have proven that neither at the time of the full moon, when Jesus Christ died, nor in the entire year when that eclipse was observed could an eclipse have occurred without supernatural causes. We have the exact words of Phlegon, a freedman of Hadrian, which were quoted at a time when his book was very widely read; and we also have the Syrian history by Thallus, who followed him. The fourth year of the 202nd olympiad, singled out in the annals of Phlegon, is unquestionably the year of the death of Our Lord.

In a crowning mystery, Jesus Christ leaves the tomb on the third day; appears to his disciples; rises to heaven in their presence; sends them the Holy Spirit; the Church is founded; persecution begins; St. Stephen is stoned; and St. Paul is converted.

Shortly thereafter, Tiberius dies (A.D. 37). Caligula, his great-nephew, adopted son, and successor, astounds the world with his cruel and brutal madness: he has himself worshiped as a god and orders his statue to be placed in the Temple of Jerusalem (A.D. 40). Chaerea delivers the world from this monster. Next, Claudius reigns, despite his stupidity (A.D. 41). He is dishonored by his wife, Messalina (A.D. 41), whom he wanted to have back after having had
her killed. His next wife was Agrippina, Germanicus' daughter (A.D. 49).

The apostles hold the Council of Jerusalem (A.D. 50), where St. Peter is the first to speak, as always and everywhere. In this council, converted Gentiles are exempted from the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law. This judgment is pronounced in the name of the Holy Spirit and of the Church. St. Paul and St. Barnabas take the council's decree to the churches and instruct the faithful to submit to it. Such was the form of the first council.

In his stupidity, the emperor disinherited his son Britannicus and adopted Nero, Agrippina's son (A.D. 54). She rewarded this overly complaisant husband by poisoning him. But her son's rule was as disastrous for her as for the rest of the republic. What honor there was in this reign went to Corbulo for his victories over the Parthians and the Armenians (A.D. 58).

At this time Nero began the war against the Jews (A.D. 66) and the persecution of the Christians. He was the first emperor to persecute the Church. In Rome he put to death St. Peter and St. Paul (A.D. 67). But since at the same time he was persecuting the entire human race, there was rebellion against him on all sides (A.D. 68). When he learned that the senate had condemned him, he killed himself (A.D. 69). Now every army set up its own emperor. The conflict was decided near Rome, and within Rome itself, in a series of dreadful battles. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius perished in these battles.

The afflicted empire found rest under Vespasian (A.D. 70). But the Jews were in dire straits, and Jerusalem was taken and burned to the ground. Titus, the son and successor of Vespasian, gave the world a short-lived happiness (A.D. 79). His days, which he counted as wasted unless they were marked by some good deed, were ended too soon. Another Nero appeared in the person of Domitian.

There was a new persecution. St. John, unharmed by immersion in boiling oil (A.D. 93), was relegated to the island of Patmos, where he wrote his Gospel (A.D. 95), thus adding the title of evangelist to that of apostle and prophet.

From this time on, the Christians were constantly persecuted, under good as well as bad emperors. Sometimes these persecutions
took place on orders from the emperor or because of a specific grudge of the magistrates, sometimes because of a popular uprising, and sometimes following a decree duly handed down by the senate upon instructions from the prince or in his presence. In these instances the persecution was the most widespread and the most bloodthirsty. Thus the hatred of the unbelievers, though always bent on destroying the Church, periodically worked itself up to a new pitch of fury. Church historians count these periodic outbreaks of violence as ten persecutions under ten emperors. Such prolonged suffering never led the Christians to revolt in any way. Of all the faithful, the bishops were always under the most severe attacks. Of all the churches, the Church of Rome was persecuted with the greatest violence, and the popes often confirmed with their blood the Gospel they preached to the whole world.

Domitian was killed (A.D. 96), and the empire began to breathe under Nerva. His advanced age did not permit him to restore the empire; but in order to ensure lasting public tranquillity, he chose Trajan as his successor (A.D. 97). Quiet at home and triumphant abroad (A.D. 98), the empire never ceased to admire this excellent prince. This was because it was his maxim that his citizens should find him such as he should wish to find the emperor if he were a simple citizen. He subjugated the Dacians and their king Decebalus (A.D. 102), extended his conquests in the East (A.D. 106), and gave a king to the Parthians (A.D. 115) and made them fear the power of Rome (A.D. 116). How fortunate that drunkenness and his disgraceful love affairs, deplorable vices in a great prince, did not lead him to pervert justice!

These fortunate times for the republic (A.D. 117) were followed by those of Hadrian, which contained both good and bad (A.D. 120-26). This prince maintained military discipline and himself lived a military life of great frugality. He eased the lot of the provinces and supported the arts, as well as Greece, their mother. The barbarians were kept in check by his military power and his authority (A.D. 130). He rebuilt Jerusalem and gave it his name, whence it came to be called Aelia. But he banished the Jews from Jerusalem, who were perpetually rebellious to the empire (A.D. 135). This obdurate people found a pitiless avenger in his person. He dishonored his brilliant
reign by his cruelty and his unnatural love life (A.D. 131). His infamous Antinous, whom he made into a god, casts shame upon his entire life. The emperor seemed to mend his ways and to restore his tarnished glory when he adopted Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138), who, in turn, adopted Marcus Aurelius, the sage and philosopher.

In these two princes we see two fine persons. The father, always at peace (A.D. 139), is always ready to go to war if the need arises. The son, always at war (A.D. 161), is always ready to grant peace to his adversaries and to the empire. His father, Antoninus, had taught him that it was better to save a single citizen than to defeat a thousand enemies (A.D. 162). The measure of Marcus Aurelius was felt by the Parthians and the Marcomanni (A.D. 169), the latter being a Germanic tribe whom the emperor brought to submission just before his death (A.D. 180). The worth of the two Antoninuses made that name the delight of the Romans.

The glory of that great name was effaced neither by the effeminacy of Lucius Verus, brother of Marcus Aurelius and his co-emperor, nor by the brutality of Commodus, his son and successor. The latter, unworthy of such a father, forgot his teachings and his example. The senate and the people detested him; and finally his most assiduous courtiers and his mistress conspired to kill him. His successor, Pertinax (A.D. 192), a vigorous defender of military discipline, was sacrificed to the fury of the licentious soldiery (A.D. 193), which, shortly before, had elevated him to the supreme power against his will.

The empire, which the army put up for sale to the highest bidder, found a buyer. The jurisconsult Didius Julianus took his chance in these brazen dealings (A.D. 194 etc.); it cost him his life. Severus, born in Africa, put him to death, avenged Pertinax’s death, and, passing from East to West, triumphed in Syria, Gaul, and Great Britain. A swift conqueror (A.D. 207), he equaled Caesar in his victories but did not imitate his leniency. He was unable to make peace among his children. Immediately after his death (A.D. 211), Bassianus or Caracalla, his eldest son and a would-be Alexander, killed his brother and co-emperor Geta (A.D. 212) in the arms of Julia, their common mother. He passed his life in cruelty and carnage and brought a tragic death upon himself. Severus had won
him the hearts of the soldiers and the people by calling him Antoninus, but he could not sustain the glory of that name. The Syrian Heliogabalus, or rather Elagabalus his son (A.D. 218) (or so he was reputed to be, although the name Antoninus would have given him first the hearts of the soldierly and then a victory over Macrinus), very soon became the horror of mankind through his shameful actions, and brought destruction upon himself. His relative and successor, Alexander Severus (A.D. 222), Mamaea's son, did not live long enough for the good of the world. He complained that it was more difficult for him to control his soldiers than to defeat his enemies. His mother, who directed him, was the cause of his downfall as she had been the cause of his glory (A.D. 233). Under his reign, Artaxerxes of Persia killed Artabanus (A.D. 235), the last king of the Parthians, and restored the empire of the Persians in the East.

In these times, the nascent Church spread out over all the earth, and not only in the East, where its origins were—that is, in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, and Greece—but also in the West beyond Italy, in the various regions of Gaul, all the provinces of Spain, Africa, Germany, and places in Great Britain that were impene- trable to the Roman armies. It also spread outside the empire, in Armenia, Persia, India, and among the most barbaric peoples, such as the Sarmatae, the Dacians, the Scythians, the Moors, the Getae, and even to completely unknown islands. The blood of its martyrs made the Church fruitful (A.D. 107). Under Trajan, St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was thrown to the wild beasts. Marcus Aurelius, unfortunately convinced by the calumnies leveled at the Christians (A.D. 163), put to death St. Justin, the philosopher and apologist of Christianity. St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of St. John, was condemned to the stake at the age of eighty under the same prince (A.D. 167). The holy martyrs of Lyons and Vienne suffered unspeakable torments (A.D. 177), following the example of their bishop, Pothinus, who was ninety years old. The Gallican church <i.e., the Church in Gaul> filled the whole world with its glory. St. Irenaeus, a disciple of St. Polycarp and the successor of St. Pothinus, followed in his predecessor's footsteps and died a martyr under Severus, together with a great number of the faithful of his church (A.D. 202).
At times the persecution abated somewhat (A.D. 174). When Marcus Aurelius suffered an extreme shortage of water in Germany, a Christian legion obtained a rain capable of quenching the army's thirst, accompanied by thunderclaps that spread terror among the enemy. This miracle gave the legion the name of Lightning Bolt, or confirmed it. The emperor was moved by this and wrote to the senate in favor of the Christians. In the end, his soothsayers persuaded him to attribute to his gods and to his prayers a miracle which the pagans did not even think of desiring.

Other causes as well sometimes temporarily stayed or mitigated the persecution. But superstition, a vice which even Marcus Aurelius could not eschew, popular hatred, and the calumnies leveled at the Christians soon won out. The pagans' anger was rekindled and the entire empire was drenched with martyrs' blood. Doctrine went hand in hand with suffering.

Under Severus (A.D. 215) and for a short time after him, Tertullian, a Carthaginian priest, enlightened the Church with his writings, defended it in his admirable Apologeticus, and finally left it, blinded by his uncompromising pride and led astray by the visions of the false prophet Montanus. About the same time the saintly priest Clement of Alexandria unearthed the antiquities of paganism in order to refute it. Origen, son of the holy martyr Leonidas, became famous in the entire Church at a very young age and taught great truths, interspersed with many errors. The philosopher Ammonius made Platonic philosophy subservient to religion and commanded the respect of even the pagans.

Meanwhile, the Valentinians, the Gnostics, and other impious sects opposed false traditions to the Gospel. Against them, St. Irenaeus upheld the tradition and the authority of the apostolic churches, especially that of Rome, which was founded by St. Peter and St. Paul and is the foremost of them all. This was also done by Tertullian. The Church stood firm, despite heresies, schisms, and the fall of its most illustrious doctors. The purity of its ways was so striking that it was praised even by its enemies.

The affairs of the empire were becoming embroiled in the most dreadful way. After Alexander's death (A.D. 235), the tyrant Maximinus, who had killed him, seized power, although he was of
Gothic descent. The senate opposed him with four emperors, all of whom perished in less than two years (A.D. 236–38). Among them were the two Gordians, father and son, beloved by the Roman people. Although the young Gordian, their son, showed consummate wisdom at a very young age (A.D. 242), he had the greatest difficulty in defending the empire, weakened as it was by all these divisions, against the Persians. He had regained many important places from them. But Philip the Arab <Marcus Julius Philippus> killed this excellent prince. He, fearful of being overcome by two emperors (A.D. 244), whom the senate had successively elected, concluded an ignominious peace with Shapur (A.D. 245), king of Persia. He was the first Roman to give up any territory of the empire by treaty. He is said to have embraced the Christian religion at a time when he suddenly seemed an improved person, and it is true that he did favor the Christians (A.D. 249). Out of hatred for this emperor, Decius, who killed him, instigated a new persecution, which was more violent than all the others.

The Church was spreading everywhere, particularly in Gaul; and the empire soon lost Decius, who defended it vigorously (A.D. 251). The reigns of Gallus and Volusenus were over very soon (A.D. 254), and Aemilianus was no more than a passing figure. Finally, the sovereign power was given to Valerianus, and this venerable old man ascended to it by way of all the offices (A.D. 257). He was cruel only to the Christians. Under him Pope St. Stephen and St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (A.D. 258), despite all of their disputes, which had not broken the Christian community, both received the same crown. The error of St. Cyprian (A.D. 259), who rejected baptism administered by heretics, harmed neither him nor the Church. The tradition of the Holy See prevailed by its own strength against the specious arguments and the authority of this great man, even though other great men also defended his doctrine. Another dispute was more harmful (A.D. 257): Sabellius merged the three persons of the Trinity and saw God as only one person under three names. This new interpretation astounded the Church, and St. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria (A.D. 259), informed Pope St. Sixtus II of the errors of that heresiarch. This saintly pope suffered his martyrdom soon after his predecessor, St. Stephen. His head was severed; and he left his deacon, St. Lawrence, to endure even greater suffering.
At this time we see the beginning of the influx of barbarians. The Burgundians and other Germanic tribes (A.D. 258-60), the Goths (formerly called Getae), and other peoples living around the Black Sea and beyond the Danube came into Europe. The East also was invaded by the Asiatic Scythians and the Persians. The latter defeated Valerianus and later captured him by treason. Having permitted him to live out his life in painful bondage, they skinned him and used his torn skin as a monument to their victory (A.D. 261). Gallienus, his son and coemperor, precipitated the final and complete ruin of the empire by his effeminacy. The empire was divided among thirty tyrants.

The most illustrious among them was Odaenathus, king of Palmyra (A.D. 264), the ancient city founded by Solomon. He saved the eastern provinces from the hands of the barbarians and was recognized there. His wife, Zenobia, marched with him at the head of the armies, which she commanded alone after his death. She became famous throughout the world for having added chastity to beauty and knowledge to valor (A.D. 268). Claudius II, and Aurelianus after him, restored the affairs of the empire. While they gained resounding victories over the Goths as well as the Germans (A.D. 270), Zenobia preserved for her children their father's conquests. This princess was leaning toward Judaism. In order to win her over, Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, a vain and insecure man, expounded his Judaic opinion on the person of Jesus Christ, whom he considered to be purely a man. Having long dissimulated this novel doctrine, he was eventually convicted and condemned at the Council of Antioch (A.D. 273). Queen Zenobia continued the war against Aurelianus (A.D. 274), who was not above triumphing over so famous a woman. Constantly embattled, he knew how to preserve the Roman discipline among the soldiery and showed that, by adhering to the traditional rules and the traditional frugality, it was possible to move great armies inside and outside the country without burdening the empire.

Now the Franks were beginning to make themselves feared. They were a league of Germanic tribes living along the Rhine. Their name indicates that they were united by their love of liberty. Aurelianus had defeated them when he was a simple general, and he kept them in fear when he was emperor. Such a prince made himself hated by
his bloodthirsty actions. His wrath was so terrible that it caused his
death (A.D. 275). Those who believed themselves in danger wished to
forestall him; and his secretary, who was threatened, became the
head of a conspiracy. The army saw him perish following the
conspiracy of so many chiefs. It refused to elect an emperor lest one
of Aurelianus' assassins be put on the throne, and the senate,
reinstated in its ancient rights, elected Tacitus. This new prince was
venerable by virtue of his age and his valor; but the violence of one
of his relatives, to whom he gave the command of the army, made
him hateful; and he perished with him in a revolt in the sixth month
of his reign (A.D. 276). Thus, his elevation only hastened the course
of his life. His brother Florianus claimed the empire by right of
succession, as the closest heir. This right was not recognized, and
Florianus was killed. Probus was forced by the soldiers to accept the
title of emperor, even though he threatened to impose order.

Everything gave way before this great captain (A.D. 277). The
Germans and the Franks, who wanted to enter Gaul, were repulsed
(A.D. 278); and in the East as well as in the West all the barbarians
respected the power of Rome (A.D. 280). This redoubtable warrior
aspired to peace, and he gave the empire hopes of no longer needing
the soldiery. The army took vengeance for this word and for the
severe rules its emperor imposed on it. A moment later, terrifried by
the violence it had perpetrated upon this great prince, the army
honored his memory and named as his successor Carus, who was as
strict a disciplinarian as he had been (A.D. 283). This valiant prince
avenged his predecessor and repulsed the barbarians, to whom the
death of Probus had given new courage. He marched to the East
with his second son, Numerianus, in order to combat the Persians;
and to his enemies to the north he opposed his eldest son, Carinus,
whom he named Caesar. This was the second dignity, and the closest
step before reaching the dignity of emperor. All of the East was
terrified by Carus. Mesopotamia submitted, and the Persians, being
divided, were unable to resist him. While everything was giving way
before him, the heavens halted his course with a bolt of lightning.
Numerianus wept so much that he almost lost his eyes. But what will
not lust for power do to a human heart! Far from pitying his
suffering, his father-in-law, Aper, killed him. But Diocletian
avenged this death (A.D. 284) and finally attained the dignity of emperor which he had sought with such ardor. Carinus awakened, despite his effeminacy, and defeated Diocletian (A.D. 285). But while he was pursuing the fleeing soldiers, he was killed by one of his own men whose wife he had corrupted. Thus the empire was rid of the most violent and debauched of men.

Diocletian governed with vigor but with intolerable vanity. In order to resist the many enemies who rose up on all sides at home and abroad, he named Maximianus coemperor (A.D. 286), but he was able to preempt the principal authority. Each of the emperors created a caesar. Constantius Chlorus and Galerius were elevated to that high rank (A.D. 291). The four princes found the numerous wars a very heavy burden. Diocletian fled Rome, finding it too liberal, and established himself at Nicomedia, where he had himself worshiped after the manner of the people of the East. Meanwhile the Persians were defeated by Galerius (A.D. 297) and ceded great provinces and entire kingdoms to the Romans. After these successful exploits, Galerius rebelled and scorned the name of caesar. He began by intimidating Maximianus. A long illness had broken Diocletian's spirit, and Galerius, though his son-in-law, forced him to give up the emperorship. Maximianus was made to follow his example.

Thus the empire fell into the hands of Constantius Chlorus and Galerius (A.D. 304), and two new caesars, Severus and Maximinus, were created in their stead by the outgoing emperors. Gaul, Spain, and Great Britain were happy, though for too short a time, under Constantius Chlorus. Opposed to levies, and therefore accused of ruining the public finances, he proved that he had immense treasures in the goodwill of his subjects. The rest of the empire suffered greatly under so many emperors and so many caesars. The number of officeholders increased with that of princes, and there were infinite expenses and levies.

Young Constantine, the son of Constantius Chlorus, distinguished himself, but he was still in the power of Galerius. Jealous of his glory, that emperor exposed him to new dangers every day. He was made to fight wild beasts in a kind of game, but Galerius was to be feared as much as they. When Constantine escaped from his power,
he found his father at the point of death. At this time (A.D. 306) Maxentius, son of Maximianus and son-in-law of Galerius, crowned himself emperor in Rome against the will of his father-in-law, and internal division was added to the other ills of the state. When the image of Constantine, who had just succeeded his father, was brought to Rome, as was the custom, it was denied entry by orders of Maxentius. The reception of their images was the usual form of recognizing new princes. War was prepared on both sides. When Galerius dispatched the caesar Severus against him in Rome, Maxentius trembled in fear (A.D. 307). In order to alleviate his anxiety, he recalled his father Maximianus. The ambitious old man left his retreat, which he had only grudgingly taken up, and tried in vain to make Diocletian, his coemperor, leave the garden he was cultivating at Salona. Hearing that Maximianus had become emperor for the second time, Severus' soldiers deserted him. The old emperor had him put to death; and at the same time, in order to strengthen himself against Galerius, he gave Constantine his daughter Fausta. Galerius also needed support after Severus' death, and that is the reason why he named Licinius emperor. But this choice angered Maximinus, who, with his title of caesar, believed himself closer to the supreme honor. Nothing could persuade him to submit to Licinius, and he set up his own empire in the East. Galerius was left with almost nothing but Illyricum, where he had retired after he was expelled from Italy.

The rest of the East was obedient to Maximianus, his son Maxentius, and his son-in-law Constantine. But Maximianus did not want to share his emperorship with his children any more than with strangers. He tried to expel his son Maxentius from Rome but was expelled himself instead. Constantine, who received him in Gaul, found him equally perfidious. After a number of attempts, Maximianus instigated a final conspiracy, in which he thought he had involved his daughter Fausta against her husband. She was deceiving him; and Maximianus, who thought he had killed Constantine when he killed the eunuch who had been placed in his bed, was forced to kill himself. A new war flared up, and Maxentius used the pretext of avenging his father to declare himself against Constantine (A.D. 312), who was marching on Rome with his troops. At the same time, he caused the statues of Maximianus to be
overthrown; and those of Diocletian, which stood with them, suffered the same fate. The tranquillity of Diocletian was disturbed by such scorn, and he died shortly thereafter, from sorrow as much as from old age.

In these times, Rome, still hostile to Christianity, made a last effort to smother it but, in the end, established it definitively. Two years before he forced Diocletian to abdicate (A.D. 302), Galerius, considered by historians to be the author of the last persecution, obliged him to hand down that bloodthirsty edict which ordered the Romans to persecute the Christians with more violence than ever. Maximianus, who hated them and had never ceased to torment them, spurred the magistrates and executioners into action. But his violence, extreme as it was, was in no way equal to that of Maximianus and Galerius. New tortures were invented every day. The modesty of Christian virgins was attacked as much as their faith. The sacred books were searched out with the most extraordinary care, in order to extinguish the very memory of them, and Christians did not dare have them in their houses and almost dared not read them. Thus, after 300 years of persecution, the hatred of the persecutors became even more ruthless. The Christians exasperated them by their patience. Other nations, impressed by their saintly way of life, converted in great numbers. Galerius lost all hope of vanquishing them. Stricken by a very unusual illness, he revoked his edicts (A.D. 311) and died the death of Antiochus, doing penance in the same insincere manner. Maximinus continued the persecution. But Constantine the Great, a wise and victorious prince, publicly converted to Christianity (A.D. 312).

Eleventh Epoch

Constantine, or The Peace of the Church

This famous declaration of Constantine was made in the year of Our Lord 312. While he was besieging Maxentius in Rome, a cross of light appeared to him in the air in the presence of all the people with
an inscription promising him victory; and the same thing was confirmed to him in a dream. On the next day he won that famous battle which rid Rome of a tyrant and the Church of a persecutor (A.D. 313). The Cross was exhibited as the defense of Rome and of all the empire. Shortly thereafter, Maximinus was defeated by Licinius, who was of one mind with Constantine; and his end was similar to that of Galerius. Peace was given to the Church. Constantine overwhelmed it with honors. Victory followed him wherever he went, and the barbarians were repulsed by him as well as by his children. Meanwhile, Licinius fell out with him (A.D. 315) and renewed the persecution. Defeated on land and sea (A.D. 324), he was constrained to leave the empire and finally to lose his life.

In this time Constantine assembled in the Bithynian city of Nicaea the first ecumenical council (A.D. 325), in which 318 bishops, representing all the Church, condemned the priest Arius, who denied the divinity of the Son of God, and created the symbol establishing the consubstancy of the Father and the Son. The priests of the Roman church, dispatched by Pope St. Sylvester, took precedence over all the bishops in that assembly, and an ancient Greek author includes among the envoys of the Holy See the famous Hosius, bishop of Cordoba, who presided over the council. Constantine attended the session and accepted its decisions as an oracle from Heaven. The Arians concealed their heretical ways and regained his favor by dissimulation.

While his valor was maintaining the empire in sovereign tranquility, the peace within his family was disturbed by the wiles of his wife, Fausta (A.D. 326). Crispus, Constantine’s son by a previous marriage, found his father inexorable when he was accused by his stepmother of trying to corrupt her. His death was soon avenged: Fausta, convicted of her crime, was smothered in her bath. Constantine, though dishonored by the evildoing of his wife, at the same time derived great honor from the piety of his mother. She discovered, in the ruins of old Jerusalem, the True Cross, which is rich in miracles. The Holy Sepulcher was also found. The new city of Jerusalem, built by Hadrian, the grotto in which the Savior of the world was born, and all the holy places were adorned with superb temples by Helena and Constantine. Four years later (A.D. 330) the
emperor rebuilt Byzantium, calling it Constantinople and making it the second capital of the empire.

The Church, peaceful under Constantine, was cruelly afflicted in Persia (A.D. 336). An infinite number of martyrs testified to their faith. In vain the emperor tried to appease Shapur and to win him over to Christianity. The emperor's protection could offer the persecuted Christians nothing more than a secure retreat. This prince, blessed by all the Church, died full of joy and hope (A.D. 337), having divided the empire among his three sons, Constantine, Constans, and Constantius. Their harmony was soon broken. Constantine perished (A.D. 340) in a war with his brother Constantius over the limits of their empire. Nor were Constans and Constantius more united. Constans upheld the Nicene Creed, which Constantius opposed. At that time the Church admired the long suffering of St. Athanasius, patriarch of Alexandria and a defender of the Council of Nicaea. Deposed by Constantius (A.D. 341), he was canonically reinstated by Pope St. Julius I, whose decree was backed by Constans. This good prince did not last long. The tyrant Magnentius killed him through treason (A.D. 350); but shortly thereafter Magnentius was defeated by Constantius and killed himself (A.D. 351).

In the battle which ruined him (A.D. 353), Valens, an Arian bishop who had secretly received word from his friends, assured Constantius that the tyrant's army was routed and told the weak emperor that he knew this by revelation. On the basis of that false revelation, Constantius went over to the Arians. The orthodox bishops were deposed, and all the Church suffered confusion and discord. The steadfastness of Pope Liberius broke down under the tedium of exile (A.D. 357–59), and the old Hosius, formerly a pillar of the Church, succumbed under torture. The Council of Rimini, so firm in the beginning, finally bent to subterfuge and violence. Nothing was done in the proper form, and the emperor's authority was the only law; but the Arians, who achieved everything by such means, were unable to agree among themselves and changed their symbol every day. Thus the Nicene Creed remained in vigor, and its principal defenders, St. Athanasius and St. Hilarius, bishop of Poitiers, became famous throughout the world.
While Emperor Constantius, occupied as he was with matters relating to Arianism, neglected the affairs of the empire, the Persians made great inroads. The Germans and the Franks tried to enter Gaul from all sides. Julian, a relative of the emperor, halted and defeated them. The emperor himself defeated the Sarmatae and marched against the Persians (A.D. 360). Here we see Julian's revolt against the emperor, his apostasy (A.D. 361), the death of Constantius, the reign of Julian, his just rule, and the new kind of persecution to which he subjected the Church. He fanned the discord within the Church and excluded Christians not only from public office but also from study. Imitating the saintly discipline of the Church, he hoped to defeat it with its own weapons. Punishment was used sparingly and was meted out under different pretexts than religion. The Christians remained faithful to their emperor; but his excessive thirst for glory brought his downfall (A.D. 363). He was killed in Persia, where he had rashly engaged himself. Jovian, his successor, a zealous Christian, found the situation desperate and lived only long enough to conclude an ignominious peace.

After him, Valentinian conducted the war in the manner of a great captain (A.D. 364). He took his son Gratian on his expeditions from his earliest youth on (A.D. 366 et seq.), maintained military discipline, defeated the barbarians, fortified the frontiers of the empire, and protected the Nicene Creed in the West. His brother Valens, whom he had made coemperor, persecuted it in the East; but, unable to win over or crush St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nazianzus, he gave up all hope of overcoming it. Some of the Arians added new errors to the old dogmas of the sect. Aetius, an Arian priest, is known in the writings of the Church Fathers as the author of a new heresy, for having held that priests and bishops are of equal rank and for having judged useless the prayers and oblations the Church offered for the dead. A third error of this heresiarch was to count among the obligations of the <Mosaic> Law certain prescribed fasts and to postulate that fasting be always voluntary. He was still living when St. Epiphanius became famous for his history of the heresies <the Panarion>, in which he is refuted along with all the others. St. Martin became bishop of Tours (A.D. 375), and the reports of his saintliness and his miracles filled the world during his
life and after his death. Valentinian died after making a violent
harangue to the enemies of the empire; the impetuous temper for
which he was feared by others was fatal to himself. His successor,
Gratian, saw without envy the elevation of his young brother
Valentinian II, who was made emperor even though he was only nine
years old. His mother, Justina, who protected the Arians, was regent
during his minority.

Astonishing events take place in the space of a few years. The
Goths rebel against Valens (A.D. 377), and this prince turns his
efforts from the Persians to putting down the rebels (A.D. 378).
Gratian, who has just won a distinguished victory over the Germans,
comes to his aid. But Valens, who wants to be the only victor,
precipitates the battle in which he is killed near Adrianople: the
victorious Goths burn him in a village to which he had retreated.
Gratian, overwhelmed by administrative duties, makes the great
Theodosius coemperor and leaves the East to him (A.D. 379). The
Goths are defeated, and all the barbarians are kept in fear; and,
equally important to Theodosius, the Macedonian heretics, who had
denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, are condemned at the Council
of Constantinople (A.D. 381). Only the Greek church was present at
this council, but since it had the consent of all the West and of Pope
St. Damasus, it was called the second ecumenical council.

While Theodosius ruled with such firmness and success, Gratian,
no less forceful or pious than he, was deserted by his troops, all of
which were made up of foreigners, and was sacrificed to the tyrant
Maximus (A.D. 383). The Church and the empire mourned this
good prince. The tyrant reigned in Gaul (A.D. 386) and seemed
content with his share. In her son’s name Empress Justina published
edicts favoring Arianism. St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, had
nothing with which to oppose her but right doctrine, prayer, and
patience; and with these weapons he was able, not only to preserve
for the Church the basilicas which the heretics wanted to occupy,
but also to win over the young emperor. Meanwhile, Maximus was
becoming restive, and Justina found out that no one served her more
faithfully than the holy bishop whom she treated as a rebel. She sent
him to the tyrant, who was unmoved by his words. Young Valen-
tinian had to flee with his mother. Maximus made himself master of
Rome, where he reestablished the sacrifices to the false gods in order to humor the senate, which was still almost entirely pagan. After Maximus had occupied all of the West (A.D. 388), and at a time when he believed himself the most secure, Theodosius, with the help of the Franks, defeated him in Pannonia, besieged him in Aquileia, and left him to be killed by his soldiers.

Unopposed master of the two empires, Theodosius gave the Western part back to Valentinian, who did not keep it for long (A.D. 392). This young prince overly elevated and demeaned Arbogast, a Frankish captain, who was brave and disinterested but in a position to maintain the power he had acquired over the army by all manner of crime. He elevated the tyrant Eugenius, who knew only how to talk, and killed Valentinian, who no longer wanted to have the haughty Frank as his master. This detestable coup was perpetrated in Gaul, near Vienne. St. Ambrose, for whom the young emperor had sent, in order to be baptized by him, deplored his loss and hoped for his salvation. His death did not remain unpunished. A visible miracle gave Theodosius victory over Eugenius and over the false gods whose worship that tyrant had reestablished. Eugenius was captured (A.D. 394), and it was necessary to sacrifice him to public vengeance and to quell the rebellion by his death. The proud Arbogast preferred killing himself to asking for the clemency of the victor, which all the other rebels had received.

Theodosius, ruling without a coemperor, was the joy and the admiration of the whole world. He was a support for religion, silenced the heretics, and abolished the impure sacrifices of the pagans. He also corrected indolence and did away with superfluous expenditures (A.D. 390). He humbly acknowledged his failings and did penance for them. He listened to St. Ambrose, the famous doctor of the Church, who reprimanded him for his temper, the only vice of this great prince. Always victorious, he went to war only when it was absolutely necessary. He gave his subjects happiness; and when he died, he was more illustrious for his piety than for his victories.

In his time, the priest St. Jerome, in his retreat at the sacred grotto of Bethlehem (A.D. 386), undertook mighty labors to explain the Scriptures (A.D. 387). He read all of its exegetes, unearthed all
the sacred and secular histories apt to illuminate it, and, on the basis of the Hebrew original, composed the version of the Bible which all of the Church has accepted under the name of the Vulgate. The empire, seemingly invincible under Theodosius, suddenly changed under his two sons. Arcadius received the East, and Honorius the West. Both of them, directed by their ministers, made their power serve personal interests. Ruffinus and Eutropius, the successive favorites of Arcadius (A.D. 395), who were both equally evil, soon perished (A.D. 399); but for all that, things went no better under a weak prince. His wife Eudoxia induced him to persecute St. John Chrysostom (A.D. 403, 404), the patriarch of Constantinople and luminary of the East. Pope St. Innocent and all of the West supported this great bishop against Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria, who ministered to the violence of the empress.

The West was shaken by the inundation of barbarians. Radagaisus, a pagan Goth, ravaged Italy. The Vandals, a Gothic and Arian tribe, occupied a part of Gaul and spread into Spain. Alaric, king of the Visigoths, who were also Arians, forced Honorius to cede him the great provinces already occupied by the Vandals. Stilicho, who was greatly disturbed by all these barbarians, defeated them, treated them leniently, came to an understanding with them, broke with them, sacrificed everything to his own interest, and yet preserved the empire he was planning to usurp.

Meanwhile, Arcadius died (A.D. 408); he had felt that the East was so lacking in loyal subjects that he put his eight-year-old son, Theodosius, under the tutelage of Yazdegerd, king of Persia. As it turned out, the young emperor’s sister, Pulcheria, was able to conduct the affairs of state. The empire of Theodosius was carried on by the prudence and piety of that princess.

That of Honorius seemed close to ruin. He put Stilicho to death but was unable to replace such an able minister. The revolt of Constantine, the complete loss of Gaul and Spain (A.D. 409), the occupation and sack of Rome by the armies of Alaric and the Visigoths (A.D. 410), all were the consequence of Stilicho’s death. Ataulphus, even more enraged than Alaric, sacked Rome once more, and his only thought was to abolish the very memory of Rome. It was the good fortune of the empire that he captured <Galla>
Placidia, the emperor's sister. This captive princess, whom he married, calmed him down. The Goths made a treaty with the Romans (A.D. 413) and established themselves in Spain (A.D. 414), reserving for themselves the provinces of Gaul adjacent to the Pyrenees (A.D. 415). Their king, Wallia, laid these great plans wisely. Spain showed its constancy; and its faith was not altered under the domination of these Arians.

Meanwhile, the Burgundians, who were Germanic tribes, occupied the region around the Rhine, whence they gradually reached the country that still bears their name. Nor were the Franks to be forgotten: firmly resolved to make a new effort to open up Gaul, they made Pharamund, the son of Marcomeres, their king; and the monarchy of France, the most ancient and most noble of all the monarchies in the world, began under him (A.D. 420).

The unfortunate Honorius died childless (A.D. 423) and without making plans for the empire. Theodosius named as emperor his cousin Valentinian III (A.D. 424), the son of Placidia and her second husband Constantius, placing him, during his minority, under the tutelage of his mother, on whom he conferred the title of empress.

In these times, Caelestius and Pelagius denied original sin (A.D. 411) and the grace through which we are Christians (A.D. 413). Despite their dissimulations, the councils of Africa condemned them (A.D. 416). The Popes St. Innocent and St. Zosimus (A.D. 417), later followed by Pope St. Celestine, authorized this condemnation and made it known all over the world. St. Augustine confounded these dangerous heretics and enlightened the Church by his admirable writings. The same Church Father, seconded by his disciple St. Prosper, also silenced the semi-Pelagians, who attributed the beginning of justification and faith to the power of free will alone.

A century that was so unfortunate for the empire, and in which so many heresies sprang up, was nevertheless a fortunate one for Christianity. No discord was able to shake it, no heresy to corrupt it. The Church, rich in great men, confounded all doctrinal errors. After the persecutions, it pleased God to show the glory of his martyrs for all the world to see: all the histories and all the writings of the time are full of the miracles that took place when their help was sought and their tombs were honored. Vigilantius (A.D. 406),
who opposed such widespread beliefs, was refuted by St. Jerome and found no following. The Christian faith became more and more secure and was spreading daily.

But the Western empire was at the end of its strength. Under attack by many enemies, it was further weakened by rivalries among its generals. The guile of Aetius (A.D. 427) made Bonifacius, governor of Africa, suspect to Placidia. Unjustly treated in this manner, the governor called Gaiseric and the Vandals from Spain, which they had lost to the Goths; and when he was sorry for his act, it was too late. Africa was taken from the empire.

The violence of these Arians subjected the Church to infinite suffering, and great numbers received the crown of martyrdom (A.D. 429). Two raging heresies originated at this time: Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, divided the person of Jesus Christ, and twenty years later, Eutyches, an archimandrite, merged his two natures. St. Cyrillus, patriarch of Alexandria, opposed Nestorius (A.D. 430), who was condemned by Pope St. Celestine. Executing this sentence, the third ecumenical council, held at Ephesus (A.D. 431), deposed Nestorius and confirmed the decree of St. Celestine, whom the assembled bishops by vote called their father. The Holy Virgin was recognized as the Mother of God, and St. Cyrillus' doctrine was accepted the world over. After some initial difficulties, Theodosius submitted to the council and banished Nestorius. Eutyches (A.D. 448), who was unable to combat one heresy without falling into another excess, was just as firmly rejected. Pope St. Leo the Great condemned him, simultaneously refuting him in a letter that was held in veneration everywhere. The fourth ecumenical council, held at Chalcedon (A.D. 451), where this great pope occupied the first place for his doctrine as much as for the authority of his office, anathematized Eutyches and his protector Dioscorus, patriarch of Alexandria. The letter sent by the council to St. Leo shows that the pope presided over it through his legates, as the head over its limbs. Emperor Marcianus attended this great assembly in person, following Constantine's example, and he accepted his decisions with the same respectfulness. Shortly before this Pulcheria had raised him to the position of emperor by marrying him. She had been recognized as empress after the death of her brother, who did not leave a son.
But the empire needed a master, and the valor of Marcianus brought him that honor. At the time of these two councils, Theodore, bishop of Cyrillus, became famous; and his teachings would be unimpeachable if the violent tracts he published against Cyrillus had not been so obscure. He explained them in good faith and was counted among the orthodox bishops.

The Gauls were beginning to accept the Franks. Aetius had defended them against Pharamund and Clodio the Hairy; but Meroveus was more fortunate and established himself more solidly in Gaul about the same time that the Angles, who were Saxon tribes, occupied Great Britain. They gave it their name and founded a number of kingdoms.

Meanwhile the Huns, a people from the Meotide Marshes <Sea of Azov>, devastated the whole world with an immense army, led by their king, Attila, the most dreadful of men. Aetius, who had defeated him in Gaul (A.D. 452), was unable to prevent him from ravaging Italy. The islands of the Adriatic Sea afforded a retreat to some. Venice rose out of the waters. Pope St. Leo, more powerful than Aetius and the Roman armies, commanded the respect of the barbarian and pagan king and saved Rome from pillage; but the city was subjected to it very soon thereafter because of the debauchery of its emperor, Valentinian. Maximus (A.D. 454), whose wife he had raped, found a way to ruin him by hiding his feelings and making a merit out of his complacency (A.D. 455). Upon his treacherous advice the blinded emperor put to death Aetius, the empire's only shield. Thereupon, Maximus, the author of that murder, incited Aetius' friends to seek vengeance and had the emperor killed. Having ascended to the throne by these steps, he forced Empress Eudoxia, daughter of Theodosius the Younger, to marry him. In order to free herself from him, she was not afraid to deliver herself to Gaiseric. Rome fell prey to the barbarian, and only St. Leo was able to prevent him from putting it to fire and sword. Finally the people tore Maximus limb from limb, this sad consolation being the only recompense for their suffering.

The situation in the West was becoming more and more embroiled. Several emperors arose and fell almost at the same time. Majorian (A.D. 456) was the most illustrious among them. Avitus (A.D. 457) was hard put to sustain his reputation and saved himself
by becoming a bishop. Gaul could no longer be defended against Meroveus or his son, Childeric, though the latter almost ruined himself by his debauchery. His subjects drove him out (A.D. 458), but one remaining faithful friend caused him to be recalled (A.D. 465). His bravery made him feared by his enemies, and his conquests extended far into Gaul. The Eastern empire was peaceful under Leo of Thrace (A.D. 474), successor to Marcianus, and under Zeno (A.D. 475), son-in-law and successor to Leo. The revolt of Basiliscus (A.D. 476) was soon put down and caused that emperor only a passing concern. But the Western empire was irretrievably lost. Augustus, son of Orestes, who was called Augustulus, was the last emperor to be recognized in Rome; and immediately after that, he was deposed by Odoacer, king of the Heruli. They were a people from the Black Sea, and their domination did not last long.

In the East, Emperor Zeno was determined to distinguish himself in a completely novel way. He was the first of the emperors to become involved in determining matters of faith. While the semi-Eutychians were opposing the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 482), he published his Henotikon against the council. This was a decree for union which was unacceptable to the Catholics and condemned by Pope Felix III (A.D. 482). The Heruli were soon driven from Rome by Theodoric (A.D. 490), king of the Ostrogoths—that is, East Goths—who founded the kingdom of Italy (A.D. 491) and who, although of Arian faith himself, permitted the Catholic religion to be observed with relative freedom. Emperor Anastasius, however, interfered with it in the East. He followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, Zeno (A.D. 492), and supported the heretics. In this manner he alienated his subjects (A.D. 493) and could never win them over, even by abolishing burdensome taxes. Italy had yielded to Theodoric. Odoacer, hard pressed in Ravenna, tried to save himself by a treaty which Theodoric did not observe; and the Heruli were forced to give up altogether. Theodoric held not only Italy but also Provence. In his time, St. Benedict (A.D. 494), withdrawing to a wilderness in Italy, began to practice, from his earliest youth on, the saintly maxims which later became the basis of that wonderful rule accepted by all the monks of the West with the same respect the monks of the East show for the rule of St. Basil.

The Romans lost what was left of Gaul through the victories of
Clovis, son of Childeric (A.D. 495). He also won a victory over the Germans at Tolbiac because he made the vow to embrace the Christian religion which his wife, Clothilde, constantly urged him to make. She was a member of the royal house of Burgundy and a zealous Catholic, even though her family and her people were Arians. Clovis was catechized by St. Vedast and was baptized at Rheims, with his Frenchmen, by St. Remigius, the bishop of that ancient see. Of all the princes of the world, he alone upheld the Catholic faith and won the title Most Christian (A.D. 506) for his successors. Following the battle in which he killed Alaric (A.D. 507), king of the Visigoths, with his own hand, Toulouse and Aquitaine were added to his kingdom. But the victory of the Ostrogoths prevented him from taking everything as far as the Pyrenees, and the end of his reign (A.D. 508) tarnished the glory of its beginning. His four children divided the kingdom among themselves (A.D. 510) and continually tried to encroach upon one another. Anastasius was killed by a stroke of lightning.

Justin, a man of low birth, but able and most Catholic, was made emperor by the senate (A.D. 518). He submitted with all his people to the decrees of Pope St. Hormisdas and put an end to the disturbances in the Eastern Church. In his time, Boetius (A.D. 526), a man famous for his learning as well as for his birth, and his father-in-law, Symmachus, both of whom were holding very high positions, were sacrificed to the jealousy of Theodoric, who suspected them without cause of conspiring against the state. The king, upset by his crime, imagined seeing the head of Symmachus in a dish that was served to him and died shortly thereafter. Amalasuntha, his daughter, and the mother of Athalaric, who became king upon his grandfather's death, was prevented by the Goths from giving her son the education to which his birth entitled him; and, constrained to abandon him to young men of his own age, she watched him going to his ruin, unable to do anything about it.

The following year (A.D. 527), Justin died, having made his nephew Justinian co-emperor. The latter's long reign was distinguished by the work of Tribonian, the compiler of Roman law, and by the exploits of Belisarius and the eunuch Narses. These two famous captains repulsed the Persians, defeated the Ostrogoths and
the Vandals, and restored Africa, Italy, and Rome to their master (A.D. 529–53). But the emperor, jealous of their glory but unwilling to share their efforts, was always more of a hindrance than a help to them.

The kingdom of France was growing apace (A.D. 532). After a long war, Childerich and Clotaire, sons of Clovis, conquered the kingdom of Burgundy and, at the same time, sacrificed to their ambition the minor children of their brother Chlodomer, whose kingdom they divided between themselves. Not long thereafter, and while Belisarius was so vigorously attacking the Ostrogoths, their possessions in Gaul were given over to the French. At that time France extended a long way beyond the Rhine, but inheritances created as many kingdoms as there were princes, so that France was never united under one rule. Its principal parts were Neustria, that is, western France, and Austrasia, that is, eastern France.

In the same year that Narses reconquered Rome (A.D. 553), Justinian convoked the fifth ecumenical council in Constantinople, which confirmed the preceding ones and condemned certain works favorable to Nestorius. These were called the Three Chapters, after the three long-dead authors who were under discussion at that time. The council condemned the memory and the writings of Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia, one letter by Ibas, bishop of Edessa, and, among the writings of Theodore, those which were directed against St. Cyrilus. The books of Origen, which had agitated the East for a century, were also rejected. This council, though begun with bad intentions, came to a fortunate conclusion and was accepted by the Holy See, which had originally opposed it.

Two years after the council (A.D. 555), Narses, who had taken Italy from the Goths, defended it against the French and gained a resounding victory over Buccelin, the general of the Austrasian troops. Despite these advantages, Italy did not remain in the possession of the emperors for long. Under Justin II, nephew of Justinian, and after the death of Narses, the kingdom of Lombardy was founded by Alboin (A.D. 568). He took Milan and Pavia (A.D. 570), while Rome and Ravenna only just escaped from his power (A.D. 571); and the Lombards inflicted the greatest suffering on the Romans. Rome did not receive much help from its emperors
(A.D. 574), who were tormented on all sides in the East—by the Avars, a Scythian tribe, by the Saracens of Arabia, and, above all, by the Persians. Justin, who believed only in himself and his own passions, was repeatedly defeated by the Persians and their king, Chosroes. So many losses disturbed him to the point of madness. His wife, Sophia, carried on the affairs of the empire. When the unfortunate prince came to his senses, it was too late (A.D. 579); and when he was about to die, he realized the maliciousness of those who had flattered him. After him, Tiberius II, whom he had named emperor, repulsed the enemies, eased the lot of the people (A.D. 580), and gained spiritual riches through alms-giving. The victories of Maurice of Cappadocia (A.D. 581), the general of his armies, caused the haughty Chosroes to die of vexation. Maurice was rewarded for these victories with the empire (A.D. 583), which Tiberius gave him when he died, along with his daughter Constantina.

At this time, the ambitious Fredegond, wife of King Chilperic I, caused a general conflagration in France and constantly incited the French kings to cruel wars among themselves.

Amidst the misfortunes of Italy, and while Rome was being ravaged by a dreadful pestilence, St. Gregory the Great was elevated, against his will, to St. Peter's chair (A.D. 590). This great pope appeased the plague by his prayers; he taught the emperors but also enforced the obedience due to them; he comforted and strengthened Africa; in Spain he confirmed the Visigoths, recently converted from Arianism, and Reccared the Catholic, who had just returned to the bosom of the Church; he converted England and reformed the religious discipline in France, whose always orthodox kings he exalted above all the kings of the world; he broke the power of the Lombards; saved Rome and Italy, whom the emperors could not help; chastised the nascent arrogance of the patriarchs of Constantinople; enlightened the whole Church with his learning; and governed the East and the West with as much vigor as humility, thus giving the world a perfect model of ecclesiastic government.

There is nothing more beautiful in the history of the Church than the arrival of the holy monk Augustine and forty of his companions in the kingdom of Kent (A.D. 597), when, preceded by the Cross and the image of that great king, Our Lord Jesus Christ, they made a
solemn vow for the conversion of England. St. Gregory, who had sent them, instructed them by truly apostolic letters and taught St. Augustine to stand in awe before the continuous miracles God was performing through his ministry. Bertha, a Frankish princess, won over her husband, King Aethelberht, to Christianity. The kings of France and Queen Brunhilda protected the new mission. The bishops of France also took part in this good work; and they anointed St. Augustine bishop upon orders from the pope (A.D. 601). The help which St. Gregory sent the new bishop proved fruitful (A.D. 604), and the English church took form. Emperor Maurice, having experienced the loyalty of the saintly pontiff, mended his ways, following his advice, and was given the praise truly worthy of a Christian prince when the pope told him that the voice of the heretics did not dare speak in his time. Yet this pious prince committed one serious offense: an infinite number of Romans perished at the hands of the barbarians, since he had failed to redeem them at the price of one silver coin per head (A.D. 601). Immediately thereafter, we see the remorse of the good emperor and his prayers to God, asking for punishment in this world rather than the next. Then we see the revolt of Phocas (A.D. 602), who slaughtered all of his family before his very eyes; we see how Maurice, the last to be killed, says nothing in his suffering but the versicle of the Psalmist: Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. Elevated to the position of emperor by this detestable act, Phocas endeavored to win over his subjects by honoring the Holy See, whose privileges he confirmed. But his sentence was already pronounced (A.D. 606). Heraclius, proclaimed emperor by the army of Africa, marched against him (A.D. 610). Now Phocas came to know that debauchery is often more harmful to princes than cruelty; Photius, whose wife he had corrupted, handed him over to Heraclius, who had him put to death.

Shortly thereafter, France witnessed a much stranger tragedy. Queen Brunhilda had fallen into the hands of Clotaire II (A.D. 614) and was sacrificed to this prince's ambition. Her memory was defamed; and her virtue, so highly praised by St. Gregory, is contested to this very day.

Meanwhile, the empire was utterly devastated. Under the pretext
of avenging Maurice, Chosroes II, king of Persia, had undertaken to make an end of Phocas. His armies advanced after Heraclius had succeeded Phocas. Heraclius was defeated, and the True Cross was taken by the infidels. Then, in a remarkable reversal, Heraclius won five battles; Persia was invaded by the Romans; Chosroes was killed by his son; and the True Cross was recaptured.

While the power of the Persians was being broken in this manner, a greater evil threatened the empire and all of Christendom. Mohammed posed as a prophet among the Saracens, but his people expelled him from Mecca (A.D. 622). His flight marks the beginning of the famous Hegira, by which the Mohammedans count their years. The false prophet gave his victories as the only proof of his mission. In nine years he subjugated all of Arabia by fair means or foul, thus laying the foundation for the empire of the caliphs.

To this evil was added the heresy of the Monothelites (A.D. 629), who, through almost inconceivable eccentricity, though recognizing two natures in Our Lord, wanted to recognize in them only a single will. According to them, the Man did not will anything, so that there was only the will of the Word in Jesus Christ. These heretics were concealing their poison under ambiguous words, and from a spurious love of peace they suggested that one should speak neither of a single will nor of two wills. Such cunning induced Pope Honorius I to treat them with dangerous leniency and to consent to a silence in which both truth and falsehood were suppressed (A.D. 633). As a crowning misfortune, Emperor Heraclius undertook some time later (A.D. 639) to decide the question on his own authority and proposed his Ecthesis, or Exposition of the Faith, which was favorable to the Monothelites. But in the end the cunning of the heretics was discovered (A.D. 640). Pope John IV condemned the Ecthesis. Heraclius' grandson, Constans, upheld his grandfather's edict in an edict of his own called the Typus (A.D. 648). The Holy See and Pope Theodore opposed his action (A.D. 649) and Pope St. Martin convoked the Lateran synod in which the Typus and the Monothelete leaders were anathematized. St. Maximus, famous throughout the East for his piety and learning, left the court, which was infected by the new heresy, openly criticized the emperors for daring to make
pronouncements in matters of faith, and suffered greatly on behalf of the Catholic religion (A.D. 650). The pope, dragged from exile to exile and always harshly treated by the emperor, finally died in great suffering, without complaining and without abandoning the duties of his ministry (A.D. 654).

Meanwhile, the new English church, strengthened by the solicitude of Popes Boniface V and Honorius, became illustrious throughout the world. There was an abundance of miracles and virtue, as in the time of the apostles; and nothing was more striking than the saintliness of its kings. Edwin and all his people (A.D. 627) professed the faith that had given him victory over his enemies, and he converted his neighbors. Oswald served as interpreter to the preachers of the Gospel (A.D. 634); although renowned for his conquests, he preferred the glory of being a Christian. The Mercians were converted by King Oswio of Northumbria (A.D. 655); their neighbors and successors followed in their footsteps, and their good works were immense.

The East was going to its ruin. While the emperors were consuming themselves in religious disputes and inventing heresies (A.D. 634-37), the Saracens invaded the empire; they occupied Syria and Palestine; the Holy City came under their domination; Persia was open to them because of its divisions, and they took that great kingdom without encountering resistance. They entered Africa and soon were able to make it one of their provinces (A.D. 647); the island of Cyprus yielded to them (A.D. 648); and in less than thirty years they added all these conquests to those made by Mohammed.

Italy, still suffering and helpless, was groaning under the power of the Lombards. Constans lost all hope of driving them out and decided to ravage what he could not defend. More cruel than the Lombards themselves, he went to Rome only to pillage its treasures (A.D. 663); even the churches were not safe. He also devastated Sardinia and Sicily. Finally, he had become so hateful to everyone that he perished at the hands of his own men (A.D. 668). Under his son Constantine Pogonatus, that is, the Bearded, the Saracens took over Cilicia and Lycia (A.D. 671). Constantinople was besieged and was saved only by a miracle (A.D. 672). The Bulgarians, a people
from the mouth of the Volga, joined the many enemies beleaguerung the empire and occupied the part of Thrace now called Bulgaria, which is the ancient Mysia (A.D. 678).

The English church begot new churches; and St. Wilfrid, bishop of York, having been expelled from his see, converted Friesland.

All of the Church received new light from the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 680), the sixth ecumenical council, where Pope St. Agatho presided through his legates and explained the Catholic faith in an admirable letter. The Council launched its anathema against one bishop famous for his doctrine, one patriarch of Alexandria, and four patriarchs of Constantinople, that is to say, all the authors of the Monothelite sects; neither did it spare Pope Honorius, who had treated them leniently. After Agatho's death, which occurred during the Council, Pope St. Leo II confirmed all its decisions and upheld all its anathemas. Constantine Pogonatus imitated the great Constantine and Marcianus when he came to the Council following their example; and since he expressed the same submission, he was honored with the same titles of Orthodox, Religious, and Peaceful Emperor and Restorer of Religion. His son, Justinian II, succeeded him while still a child (A.D. 685). In his time, the faith spread to the north (A.D. 686), where it shone brilliantly. St. Kilian, sent by Pope Conon, preached the Gospel in Franconia (A.D. 689). At the time of Pope Sergius, Cadwallawn, one of the kings of England, personally went to acknowledge the Roman church, which had brought the faith to his island. Having been baptized by the pope himself, he died in the manner which he had desired.

The house of Clovis had fallen into deplorable weakness. Because its princes were so often minors, they had become so pampered that they were unable to stand on their own feet once they were grown up. Hence there was a long line of do-nothing kings, who were king in name only and left all the power to their mayor of the palace. Under that title Pepin of Herstal governed their realm (A.D. 693) and raised the expectations of his house. By his authority, and after the martyrdom of St. Wigbert (A.D. 695), the faith was established in Friesland, which France had just added to its conquests. St. Swidbert, St. Willibrord, and other apostolic workers spread the Gospel in the neighboring provinces.
Meanwhile, the minority of Justinian had been a fortunate time. The victories of Leontius had broken the power of the Saracens and restored the glory of the Eastern empire. But when this valiant captain was unjustly arrested and released for the wrong reason, he cut off his master’s nose and drove him out (A.D. 694). The rebel suffered a similar treatment at the hand of Tiberius (A.D. 696), surnamed Absimarus, who did not last long himself. After his restoration, Justinian showed no gratitude to his friends (A.D. 702), and by taking revenge upon his enemies he created new and more dangerous ones, who finally killed him. The images of his successor, Philippicus, were not received in Rome (A.D. 711), because he favored the Monothelites and strongly opposed the sixth council. At Constantinople, Anastasius II, a Catholic prince, was elected (A.D. 713), and Philippicus had his eyes gouged out.

In the same time, the debauchery of Roderick, or Rodrigue, delivered Spain into the hands of the Moors, as the Saracens of Africa were called. Count Julian <of Ceuta> called in the infidels in order to avenge his daughter, who was being taken advantage of by Roderick. They came with an immense army, and the king perished; Spain was subjugated, and the Spanish empire of the Goths came to an end. Again the church of Spain was put to the test; but, just as it had been preserved under the Arians, the Mohammedans were unable to destroy it. In the beginning they left it relatively free; but in the following centuries it had to endure great suffering, and chastity as well as faith found its martyrs under the tyranny of a nation that was as brutal as it was infidel.

Emperor Anastasius did not last long. The army forced Theodosius III to accept the purple (A.D. 715). The two were pitted against each other in a battle; and when the new emperor won, Anastasius was put into a monastery.

As masters of Spain, the Moors hoped soon to extend their domination beyond the Pyrenees. But Charles Martel, destined to halt them, had become great in France and, though of illegitimate birth, had succeeded his father, Pepin of Herstal, who bequeathed Austrasia to his family as a kind of sovereign principality, and the command of Neustria as part of his office of mayor of the palace. Charles united all of this by his valor.

The situation in the East was confused (A.D. 716). Leo III, the
Isaurian, an Eastern prefect, did not recognize Theodosius, who was perfectly willing to give up the emperorship he had accepted only under constraint. Withdrawing to Ephesus, he occupied himself with the truly great things.

The Saracens were dealt some serious blows (A.D. 718) while Leo was emperor. To their own shame, they raised the siege of Constantinople (A.D. 719). Pelagius, who ensconced himself in the Asturian mountains with the most determined of the Goths, won a distinguished victory and opposed to the infidels a new kingdom, by which they were one day to be driven out of Spain. Despite the efforts and the immense army of their general, Abdurrahman <b. Abdullah>, Charles Martel defeated them in the famous Battle of Tours (A.D. 725). An infinite number of infidels perished in that battle, and Abdurrahman himself was left dead on the field. This victory was followed by other successful actions, so that Charles was able to halt the Moors and to extend the kingdom as far as the Pyrenees. Now almost all of Gaul was under the rule of the French, and Charles Martel was universally recognized. Powerful in peace as in war, and absolute master of the kingdom, he ruled under a number of kings, whom he made and unmade as he saw fit, without daring to assume that great title. The jealousy of the French lords wanted to be deceived in this manner.

Christianity was becoming established in Germany (A.D. 723). The priest St. Boniface converted these nations and was made their bishop by Pope Gregory II, who had sent him.

The empire at that time was rather peaceful, but Leo threw it into disorder for a long time to come. He undertook to overthrow as idols the images of Jesus Christ and his saints (A.D. 726). Since he was unable to win St. Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople, over to his views, he acted on his own authority; and, following a senatorial order, his first act was to break an image of Jesus Christ affixed to the great portal of the church of Constantinople. This was the beginning of the violence of the iconoclasts, that is, the image-breakers. The other images which emperors, bishops, and all the faithful had set up since the peace of the Church, in both public and private locations, were also broken. Seeing this, the people revolted. The statues of the emperor were overthrown in a number of places.
He felt outraged in his person; but he was charged with outraging Jesus Christ and his saints in a similar fashion, and, by his own admission, he recognized that the insult to the image fell back on the original. Italy went even further and refused to pay the ordinary taxes because of the emperor's impiety. Liudprand, king of the Lombards, seized this pretext to take Ravenna, the residence of the exarchs. This was the name for the governors sent to Italy by the emperors. Pope Gregory II was opposed to the breaking of images, but at the same time he was also opposed to the enemies of the empire and endeavored to maintain the people in obedience. Peace was made with the Lombards (A.D. 730), and the emperor executed his decrees against images with more violence than ever. But the famous John of Damascus declared that in matters of religion he accepted only the Church's decrees and was made to suffer greatly for it. The emperor expelled from his see the patriarch St. Germanus, who died in exile at the age of ninety.

Shortly thereafter, the Lombards took up arms again (A.D. 739), and the suffering they inflicted on the Roman people was mitigated only by the authority of Charles Martel (A.D. 740), whose help Pope Gregory II had implored.

The new kingdom of Spain, called the kingdom of Oviedo in these first times, grew through the victories and leadership of Alphonso, Pelagius' son-in-law, who took the name of The Catholic, following the example of his ancestor Reccared.

Leo died (A.D. 741), leaving the empire as well as the Church in great agitation. Artavasdes, a praetor of Armenia, had himself proclaimed emperor in the place of Constantine Copronymus, Leo's son, and restored the images.

After the death of Charles Martel, Liudprand again threatened Rome. The exarchate of Ravenna was in danger (A.D. 742), and Italy owed its salvation to the discretion of Pope St. Zacharias. Constantine, faced with a difficult situation in the East, was concerned only with establishing himself; he defeated Artavasdes and took Constantinople (A.D. 743), where he meted out severe punishment.

Charles Martel's two sons, Carloman and Pepin, had succeeded to their father's power (A.D. 747), but Carloman, feeling distaste for the
world amidst his grandeur and his victories, took up the monastic life. Therefore, all the power fell to his brother, Pepin. He was able to maintain it by his great merit and decided to aspire to royal rank. Childeric, the most wretched of princes, opened his way to it, adding the quality of a fool to his indolence (A.D. 752). The French, disgusted with their do-nothing kings and accustomed for so long to the house of Charles Martel, which had given them many great men, were concerned only about the oath they had sworn to Childeric. Upon the response of Pope Zacharias, they felt free and, all the more, absolved from the oath they had sworn to their king, as for the last hundred years he and his forebears seemed to have renounced the right to command by permitting all the power to become attached to the office of mayor of the palace. Thus Pepin was placed on the throne, and the title and the authority of kingship were united.

Pope Stephen III (A.D. 753) found that the new king was as eager as Charles Martel had been to defend the Holy See against the Lombards. Having in vain beseeched the emperor for help, he cast his lot with the French. The king respectfully received him in France and wished to be anointed and crowned by his hands (A.D. 754). At the same time, he crossed the Alps, freed Rome and the exarchate of Ravenna, and forced Aistulf, king of the Lombards, to conclude an equitable peace.

Meanwhile, the emperor made war on the veneration of images. In order to obtain the support of ecclesiastic authority, he convoked a sizable council to Constantinople. Yet neither the legates of the Holy See, nor the bishops, nor the legates of the other patriarchal sees appeared there, as they ordinarily did. This council not only condemned as idolatry any honor given to images in memory of their originals; it also condemned sculpture and painting as arts to be execrated. This was the opinion of the Saracens, whose advice Leo was said to have followed when he overthrew the images. Nothing, however, was said against relics. Copronymus' council did not prohibit honoring them, and it anathematized those who refused to have recourse to the intercession of the Holy Virgin and the saints. When the Catholics were persecuted for honoring the images, they gave the emperor to know that they preferred the most extreme suffering to not honoring Jesus Christ even in his shadow.
Meanwhile, Pepin again crossed the Alps and chastised the faithless Aistulf (A.D. 755), who refused to abide by the peace treaty. The Roman church never received a more beautiful gift than that given by this pious prince. He gave it the towns he had reconquered from the Lombards and paid no attention to Copronymus, who demanded that they be restored to him, unable though he had been to defend them. From this time on, the emperors had little credit in Rome, where they were scorned for their weakness and detested for their errors. Pepin came to be regarded as the protector of the Roman people and the Roman church. In a certain sense, this quality has become hereditary to his house and to the kings of France.

Charlemagne, Pepin's son, upheld the Church with as much courage as piety. Pope Hadrian appealed to him (A.D. 772) for help against Desiderius, king of the Lombards, who had taken several towns and was threatening all of Italy. Charlemagne crossed the Alps (A.D. 773). Everything gave way before him, and Desiderius was handed over (A.D. 774). The Lombard kings, enemies of Rome and its popes, were destroyed. Charlemagne had himself crowned king of Italy and took the title of King of the French and the Lombards. At the same time, he exercised sovereign authority in Rome itself, in his quality of patrician, and confirmed the donations his royal father had made to the Holy See. The emperors were hard put to resist the Bulgarians, and they tried in vain to support the dispossessed Lombards against Charlemagne.

The controversy over the images continued to rage (A.D. 780). Leo IV, the son of Copronymus, seemed to be less harsh in the beginning; but he renewed the persecution as soon as he believed himself to be in control. He soon died. Constantine, his ten-year-old son, succeeded him and reigned under the guardianship of his mother, Empress Irene. At this point, things began to take a different turn (A.D. 784). Paul, the patriarch of Constantinople, declared toward the end of his life that he had combatted the veneration of images against his conscience, and he retired to a monastery. There, in the presence of the empress, he deplored the misfortune of the Church of Constantinople, separated as it was from the four patriarchal sees, and told her that the holding of an ecumenical council would be the only remedy for this unhappy
situation. His successor Tarasius maintained that the question had not been judged in the proper order; since the point of departure had been a decree from the emperor, an improper council had ensued, while, in matters of religion, it is the duty of the council to initiate the procedure and the duty of the emperors to support the judgment of the Church. For this reason, he accepted the patriarchate only on condition that the ecumenical council be held; and in fact it was begun at Constantinople (A.D. 787) and continued at Nicaea. The pope sent his legates, and the council of the iconoclasts was condemned. Henceforth we detest them as men who, following the example of the Saracens, accused the Christians of idolatry. It was decided that images should be honored in memory and out of love for the originals; this is called by the council “relative worship, veneration, and honorary salutation” as opposed to “supreme worship and veneration of the image, or entire submission,” which the council reserved for God alone. Not only the legates of the Holy See and the patriarch of Constantinople in person were present, but also legates of the other patriarchal sees which at that time were occupied by the infidels. Their mission has sometimes been questioned; but no one has questioned that, far from disavowing their legates, all these sees have accepted the Council without voicing any opposition, and that it has been accepted by the entire Church.

The French, surrounded as they were by idol-worshipers or new Christians, whose ideas they feared to confuse, and perplexed, furthermore, by the equivocal term “veneration,” hesitated for a considerable time. Of all the images, they wanted to give honor only to that of the Cross, since it was entirely different from the figures which the pagans believed to be filled with divinity. Yet they kept other images in honored places, even in churches, and loathed the iconoclasts. The remaining diversity did not lead to any schism. The French finally realized that the Fathers of Nicaea demanded for images only the same kind of worship which, in their own way, they already had for relics, the books of the Gospel, and the Cross. Thus the Council was honored by all of Christendom under the name of seventh ecumenical council.

Thus we have seen the seven ecumenical councils, which are held in equal veneration by the East and the West, by the Greek Church
and the Latin Church. The emperors convoked these great assemblies by their sovereign authority over all bishops, or at least the principal ones, who directed all the others and who at that time were subjects of the empire. Public conveyances were furnished to them by order of the princes. They assembled the councils in the East, where they resided, and usually dispatched commissioners to maintain order. Assembled in this manner, the bishops embodied the authority of the Holy Spirit and the Tradition <Traditio> of the churches. From the beginning of Christianity, there were three principal sees, which took precedence over all the others, namely, those of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. The Council of Nicaea had approved that the bishops of the Holy City should have the same rank. The second and the fourth councils raised the rank of the see of Constantinople and decided that it should be second. Thus five sees were created which in time came to be called patriarchal. Their precedence was established by the council. Among all these sees, that of Rome was always considered to be the first, and the Council of Nicaea used it as the model for the others. There were also metropolitan bishops, who were at the head of provinces and took precedence over other bishops. They were not called archbishops until rather late; nonetheless, their authority was recognized. When the council was formed, the study of the Holy Scriptures was proposed. Passages from the ancient Church Fathers were read, since they are witnesses to the Tradition; and it was the Tradition which interpreted the Scriptures. It was believed that their true sense was that on which past centuries had agreed, and no one felt he had the right to explain them differently. Those who refused to submit to the decisions of the council were stricken with anathema. After the faith had been explained, the discipline of the Church was regulated, and canons—that is, rules of the Church—were established. It was believed that the faith never changed and that, though the discipline was susceptible to various changes, according to time and place, one should aim as much as possible for a perfect imitation of the early Church. The popes, incidentally, took part in the first councils only through their legates; but they expressly approved their teaching, and there was only one faith in the Church.

Constantine and Irene (A.D. 787) saw to it that the decretals of the
seventh council were executed religiously, but in other ways their conduct did not keep pace. The young prince, who had been forced by his mother to marry a woman he did not love, embroiled himself in illicit love affairs; and, tired of blindly obeying his domineering mother, he tried to remove her from the affairs of state, in which she continued to interfere against his will.

Alphonso the Chaste was reigning in Spain (A.D. 793). By his perpetual continence, this prince deserved his epithet and also became worthy of freeing Spain from the shameful tribute of a hundred maidens which his uncle Maurecat had accorded the Moors. A battle in which 70,000 of these infidels and their general, Mugait, were killed proved Alphonso’s worth.

Constantine also tried to distinguish himself against the Bulgarians, but his success was not commensurate with his expectations. In the end he completely broke Irene’s power (A.D. 795), and, being as incapable of governing himself as of tolerating the domination of another person, he repudiated his wife Marie in order to marry her servant Theodota. In her anger, his mother fomented the disorders created by this great scandal (A.D. 796). Her guile caused Constantine’s end (A.D. 797). She gained popular support by lowering taxes and won over the monks and the clergy by her apparent piety. Finally she was recognized as sole empress.

The Romans were contemptuous of this government and turned to Charlemagne, who subjugated the Saxons, repressed the Saracens, destroyed heresies, protected the popes, won the infidel nations for Christianity, restored the sciences and the ecclesiastic discipline, convoked famous councils in which his profound learning was admired, and made the benefits of his piety and justice felt, not only in France and Italy, but also in Spain, England, Germany, and everywhere.

Twelfth Epoch

Charlemagne, or the Establishment of the New Empire

Finally, in the year of Our Lord 800, this great protector of Rome and Italy or, rather, of all the Church and of all Christendom, was
elected emperor by the Romans without having sought that honor, and was crowned by Pope Leo III, who had persuaded the Roman people to make that choice. In this manner he became the founder of the new empire and of the temporal greatness of the Holy See.

These, then, Monseigneur, are the twelve epochs I have followed in this condensation. I have presented each one of them with the principal events attached to it. Now it will not be very difficult for you to see the great events of ancient history in their proper place in time and to line up each one of them, as it were, under its own banner.

In this condensation I have not forgotten the famous division of world history into seven ages, which is made by the chronologists. The beginning of each age serves us as an epoch; and if I have brought in a number of others, it was in order to make certain things stand out more distinctly and to develop the sequence of ages more clearly.

If I speak to you of the sequence of ages, this does not mean, Monseigneur, that you should scrupulously encumber yourself with all the dates; even less should you go into all the disputes of the chronologists, which usually involve only a few years. Controversies over chronology, with their scrupulous attention to minutiae, no doubt have their place; but they are not your concern and are of very little use when it comes to enlightening the mind of a great prince. It was not my intention to make fine points in this discussion of ages; and, among the available calculations, I have followed those that seemed the most probable to me, without trying to guarantee them.

Whether the reckoning of the years between the time of the Creation and Abraham should be made according to the Septuagint, which makes the world older, or according to the Hebrew version, which makes it younger by several centuries—even though it seems that the authority of the Hebrew original should count for more—is in itself a question of so little importance that the Church, which, following St. Jerome, has accepted the reckoning of the Hebrew version in our Vulgate, has preserved that of the Septuagint in its Martyrology. And indeed, what difference does it make to history whether we lengthen or shorten empty centuries, since, in any case, there is nothing to tell about them? Is it not enough that ages in
which there are important dates have a firm contour and that their division is based on solid foundations? And even if there were differences of opinions for a few years of these ages, it would hardly ever matter. With regard to the question, for example, whether the foundation of Rome or the birth of Jesus Christ should be placed a few years earlier or later, you are now in a position to realize that this diversity does not in any way influence either the course of events or the accomplishment of God's decrees. You must avoid those anachronisms which confuse the order of events and let others be debated by scholars.

Neither do I wish to encumber your mind with counting the olympiads, though the fact that the Greeks used them makes them necessary to identify the ages. You only need to know what they are in order to have recourse to them when necessary. As for the rest, it is sufficient to keep in mind the dates I have offered you as the simplest and most consistent, namely, the dates of the world until Rome, those of Rome until Jesus Christ, and those of Jesus Christ for the remaining time.

But this condensation is not really intended to explain to you the sequence of the ages, indispensable though they are for tying all the histories together and for showing their interrelation. As I pointed out to you, Monseigneur, it is my principal aim to put before you, in the sequence of the ages, the history of God's people and that of the great empires.

These two things move on together in the great movement of the centuries, where they follow the same course, as it were. But in order to understand them fully, it is sometimes necessary to separate them and to examine in detail the things which are peculiar to each.
PART TWO

The Continuity of Religion
Chapter 1

The Creation and the Early Ages

Religion and the continued existence of the people of God throughout the centuries is the greatest and most useful of all things a man can study. It is a noble thing to review the different states of God's people, under the Law of Nature and the patriarchs; under Moses and the Written Law; under David and the prophets; from the return out of the Captivity until Jesus Christ; and, finally, under Jesus Christ himself, that is, under the Law of Grace and the Gospel; in the ages that expected the Messiah, and in those wherein he appeared; in the ages when the worship of God was confined to one people, and in those in which, in accordance with the ancient prophecies, it was spread abroad over all the earth; in the ages, finally, when men, still full of infirmity and grossness, needed the support of temporal rewards and punishments, and in those wherein the faithful, better instructed, are thenceforth to live by faith alone, having their hearts set upon eternal good things and, in the hope of possessing them, are suffering all the evils that can try their patience.

And surely, Monseigneur, nothing can be conceived more worthy of God than to have, first of all, chosen to himself a people who should be a palpable example of his eternal Providence; a people whose good or ill fortune should depend upon their piety or impiety and whose condition should testify to the wisdom and justice of him who governed them. With this did God begin, and this did he make manifest in the Jewish people. But after having, by so many tangible proofs, established this immovable foundation—that he alone disposes, as he wishes, all the events of this life—it was time to raise men's minds to higher notions and to send Jesus Christ, who was chosen to show the secrets of the life-to-come to the new people, who had gathered from all the nations of the world.
You may easily trace the history of both of these people and observe how Jesus Christ unites them; since either while awaited or after having come, he has been, in all ages, the consolation and hope of the children of God.

Religion has therefore always been uniform or, rather, always the same since the Creation of the world. The same God has always been acknowledged as the Creator, and the same Christ as the Savior, of mankind.

Thus you will see that there is nothing more ancient among men than the religion you profess and that it is not without reason that your ancestors have considered their greatest glory to lie in being its protectors.

What a convincing testimony it is of the truth of your religion to find that, in times when secular histories have nothing to tell us but fables or, at most, confused and half-forgotten facts, the Scriptures—indisputably the most ancient book in the world—carry us back, by so many precise events and by the very succession of things, to their true principle, that is to say, to God, the author of everything, and point out to us so distinctly the creation of the universe, that of man in particular, the happiness of his first state, the causes of his miseries and frailties, the corruption of the world and the Flood, the origin of arts and nations, the distribution of lands, and, finally, the propagation of mankind and other matters of like importance of which human histories speak only confusedly, obliging us to seek undisputed sources elsewhere.

But though the antiquity of religion gives it so much authority, its continued existence without interruption and without alteration during so many ages, in spite of so many intervening obstacles, shows clearly God's sustaining hand.

What can be more wonderful than to behold religion enduring upon the same foundations from the beginning of the world? Neither the idolatry and impiety which surrounded it on all sides, nor the tyrants who persecuted it, nor the heretics and infidels who endeavored to corrupt it, nor the cowards who basely betrayed it, nor its unworthy followers who dishonored it by their crimes, nor, lastly, the great length of time, which alone is sufficient to lay low all things
human, has ever been able, I shall not say to destroy it, but to alter it.

If we now consider what idea that religion whose antiquity we revere gives us of its object, that is, of primordial Being, we shall confess that this idea is beyond all human conception and worthy of being regarded as coming from God himself.

The God whom the Jews and Christians have always served has nothing in common with the divinities full of imperfection and even of vice whom the rest of the world adored. Our God is one, infinite, perfect, alone worthy to avenge wickedness and to crown virtue, because he alone is holiness itself.

He is infinitely above that first cause and prime mover known by philosophers, though they did not worship it. Those of them who pursued the question farthest have proposed for us a God who, finding eternal matter which existed in its own right, as he himself did, put it to use and fashioned it like a common craftsman, limited in his work by that matter and its dispositions, which he had not made. These philosophers were never able to comprehend that, if matter existed of itself, it would not have to await an outside hand to be perfected and that, if God is infinite and perfect, he needed but himself and his own almighty will to make whatever he pleased. But the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God whose wonders Moses recorded, did not merely arrange the world; he created it entirely, in both its matter and its form. Until he gave being, nothing existed but himself alone. He is shown to us as the Creator of all things and as making all things by his word, not only because he makes all things by reason, but also because he makes all things without effort; and the performance of such great works costs him but a single word, that is, it costs him but to will it.

Now, since we have begun it, let us pursue the history of the Creation. Moses has taught us that this mighty architect, whose works cost him so little, wanted to do it in stages and to create the universe in six days, to show that he does not act out of necessity or blind impetuosity, as some philosophers have imagined. The sun shoots forth at once, and unreservedly, all the rays it has; but God, who acts by understanding and with sovereign liberty, applies his
power where he pleases and as much as he pleases; and as in making the world by his word he shows that nothing is difficult for him, so by making it in stages he demonstrates that he is master of his matter, of his action, of the whole undertaking and that he has, in acting, no other rule than his own will, which is always right in itself.

This manner of acting on God's part also shows us that everything proceeds immediately from his hand. The peoples and the philosophers who believed that the earth, mixed with water and assisted, if you will, by the heat of the sun, had, of itself and by its own fruitfulness, produced plants and animals have most grossly erred. The Scriptures have given us to understand that the elements are barren unless the word of God makes them fruitful. Neither the earth, nor the water, nor the air would ever have brought forth the plants and animals which we see if God, who had made and prepared their matter, had not also formed it by his almighty will and given to each thing the seed proper for its multiplication throughout the centuries.

Those who see that the plants are brought forth and grow by the sun's heat might fancy that the sun is their creator. But the Scriptures show us the earth clothed with grasses and all manner of plants before the sun was created in order that we may understand that everything depends on God alone.

It pleased this great craftsman to create the light even before he had reduced it to the form he gave it in the sun and stars because he meant to teach us that those great and glorious luminaries, of which some have thought fit to make deities, had in their own right neither that precious and shining matter of which they were composed nor that admirable form to which we see them reduced.

In short, the account of the Creation as given by Moses shows us this great secret of true philosophy, that fecundity and absolute power dwell in God alone. Happy, wise, almighty, alone self-sufficient, he acts without necessity, as he acts without need; never compelled or impeded by matter, of which he makes what he pleases, because by his very will he has given it the foundation of its being. By this sovereign right he turns it, he molds it, he moves it, effortlessly; everything depends immediately upon him; and if, according to the order established in nature, one thing depends on
another, as, for instance, the birth and growth of plants depend upon the heat of the sun, it is because the same God who made all the parts of the universe has been pleased to link them to one another and to display his wisdom by that wonderful linking of parts.

But nothing that the Holy Scriptures teach us concerning the creation of the universe compares with what they say of the creation of man.

Hitherto God had done everything by commanding: *Let there be light. Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters. Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place: and let the dry land appear. Let the earth bring forth. Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night. Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life and the fowl that may fly over the earth. Let the earth bring forth the moving creature. But when it comes to creating man, Moses ascribes to God a different mode of expression: Let us make man, he says, in our image, after our likeness.*

It is no longer that authoritative word of command but one more mild, though no less efficacious. God takes counsel with himself: God arouses himself, as it were, to show us that the work he is now contemplating surpasses all the works he has hitherto performed.

*Let us make man.* God speaks within himself; he speaks to someone who creates as well as he, to someone of whom man is the creature and image; he speaks to another self; he speaks to him by whom all things were made, to him who says in his Gospel, *What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.* In speaking to his son, or with his son, he speaks at the same time with the almighty Spirit, equal and coeternal with both of them.

Nowhere in the entire Scriptures does anyone but God speak of himself in the plural, *Let us make.* God himself speaks this way only two or three times in the Scriptures, and this extraordinary language is used for the first time when it is a question of creating man.

When God changes his language, and in some way his manner of acting also, it is not that he himself changes; he shows us only that he is going to begin, according to his eternal counsels, a new order of things.
Thus man, so highly exalted above the other creatures whose creation Moses had described to us, is brought forth in an entirely new manner. The Trinity manifests itself for the first time when it creates a creature whose intellectual operations are an imperfect image of those eternal operations whereby God is fruitful in himself.

The word "counsel," which God uses, denotes that the creature about to be created is the only one that can act by counsel and understanding. All the rest is no less extraordinary. Until then we had not seen, in the history of Genesis, the hand of God applied to corruptible matter. But to form the body of man, God himself takes earth; and that earth, molded by such a hand, receives the most beautiful form that has yet appeared in the world. Man's body is straight, his head is held high, and his sight is turned toward Heaven. This form, which is his alone, shows him whence he has come and whither he must go.

The particular care with which God creates man shows us that he felt a special concern for him, even though everything was immediately guided by his wisdom.

But the manner in which he brought forth the soul was far more wonderful: he did not draw it from matter but breathed it in from above. It is a breath of life that proceeds from God himself.

When he created the beasts, he said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature, and in this manner he created the sea monsters and every moving living creature that was to fill the waters. He said also, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beasts of the earth.

Thus were to be brought forth those living creatures whose life is brutish and bestial and to which God allots no other action than motions dependent on the body. God called them forth from the depths of the sea and the earth; but that soul, whose life was to be an imitation of his own, which was to live as he does by reason and understanding, which was to be united to him by contemplating and loving him, and which therefore was made in his image, could not be derived from matter. God, in fashioning matter, may well form a beautiful body, but no turning or fashioning will ever make him find in it his own image and likeness. The soul, made after his image and capable of being happy in the enjoyment of him, must be brought
forth by a new creation: it must come from above; and this is what is meant by that breath of life which God draws from his mouth.

Let us always remember that by tangible images Moses showed pure and intellectual truths to carnal men. Let us not imagine that God breathes after the manner of animals; let us not fancy that our soul is a subtle air or thin vapor. The breath which comes from God and which bears in itself the image of God is neither air nor vapor. Let us not believe that our soul is a portion of the divine nature, as some philosophers have dreamed. God is not a whole that can be divided. Even if God had parts, they would not be created ones. For the Creator, the uncreated being, could not be composed of creatures. The soul is made, and so made that it is no part of the divine nature but only a substance made in the image and likeness of the divine nature: a substance that will always continue united to him that formed it. This is the meaning of that divine breathing; that is what the breath of life represents to us.

Thus, then, was man formed. From him God also fashions the companion he is pleased to give him. All men are born from a single marriage, in order to belong forever to but one and the same family, however dispersed or multiplied.

Our first parents, thus formed, are placed in that delightful garden which is called Paradise. God owed it to himself to make his image happy.

He gives one command to man to let him know he has a master: a command relating to a tangible thing, because man was made with senses; an easy command, because he wished to make man's life agreeable as long as it was innocent.

Man does not obey a precept that is so easy to follow: he hearkens to the tempting spirit and to himself, instead of hearkening to God only; his Fall is inevitable; but we must consider it in its origin as well as in its consequences.

In the beginning God had made his angels pure spirits distinct from all matter. He who does only good had created them all in holiness, and they had it in their power to secure lasting bliss by voluntarily submitting to the Creator. But whatever is derived from nothing is fallible. Some of those angels allowed themselves to be seduced by self-love. Woe to the creature that delights in itself and
not in God! In a moment it loses all God’s gifts. What a strange result of sin! Those spirits of light became spirits of darkness; all the light that was left them turned into malicious cunning. An evil envy now took the place of love; their original greatness now was only pride; their happiness was changed into the dismal comfort of finding companions in their misery, and their former blessed exercises changed to the wretched task of tempting men. The most perfect of them all, who had also been the most proud, proved the most mischievous, as he was the most miserable. Man, whom God hath made a little lower than the angels by giving him a body, became an object of jealousy to so perfect a spirit; he wished to draw him into his rebellion so that he might afterward involve him in his destruction.

[The spiritual creatures had, like God himself, tangible means of communicating with man, who was their equal in the principal part of his being. The evil spirits, whom God was willing to use to test the fidelity of mankind, had not lost the means to maintain this intercourse with our nature, any more than they had lost a certain power over material creation, which had been given them in the beginning. Satan made use of this power against our first parents. God permitted him to speak to them in the form of a serpent, as the serpent was best suited to symbolize wickedness and the punishment of the evil spirits, as we shall see in a moment. Satan is not afraid that he will horrify them by taking this shape. All the animals had been brought to Adam’s feet in the same way, to receive from him a suitable name and to recognize the sovereign whom God had given them. Thus none of the animals aroused horror in man, because, his state was such that no animal could harm him.]*

Let us hear now how Satan speaks to man and let us understand his guile. He addresses himself to Eve, as to the weaker; but in the person of Eve he speaks to her husband as well as to her. Why has God forbidden you to do this? If he has made you reasonable creatures, you ought to know the reason of everything: this fruit is not poison. Ye shall not surely die. This is the beginning of the spirit of revolt: first, the command is discussed, and then obedience is brought into doubt. Ye shall be as gods, free and independent,

*For the use of brackets, see the Editorial Note at the front of the book.
happy in yourselves and wise through yourselves. Knowing good and evil, nothing shall be unfathomable to you. By these persuasive arguments the deluding spirit sets himself up against the Creator's order and above his rule. Eve, half convinced, looks upon the fruit whose beauty promised an excellent taste. Knowing that God had given man a soul and a body, she thought that as a favor to man he might also have attached supernatural properties to plants and intellectual gifts to palpable objects. Having eaten of this beautiful fruit, she herself offered it to her husband as well. What a dangerous predicament! Her example and his desire to please add strength to the temptation: he takes the side of the tempter, who is so ably seconded: deceitful curiosity, a flattering feeling of pride, the secret pleasure of acting independently and according to his own mind allure and blind him: he is willing to put his liberty to this dangerous test, and with the forbidden fruit he tastes the pernicious sweetness of satisfying his mind; there is also sensuous pleasure in this new charm; he follows his senses, submits to them, and becomes their slave, he who was formerly their master.

At the same time, everything changes for him. The earth no longer smiles upon him as formerly; he shall receive no more from it other than by persistent labor; the sky no longer seems serene; the animals, which all, even the most odious and fierce, used to afford him an innocent pastime, assume hideous forms. God, who had made everything for his happiness, in a moment turns everything into his punishment. He who had loved himself so well is now a burden to himself. The rebellion of his senses makes him observe in himself something shameful. He is no longer that finest work of the Creator, which was completely perfect. Sin has created something new that must be hidden. Man can no longer bear his shame and would fain hide it from his own eyes. But God becomes even more unbearable to him. That great God, who had made him in his likeness and had given him senses as a necessary help to his understanding, was pleased to show himself to him in a tangible form. But man can no longer endure his presence. He seeks the deepest recesses of the woods, to hide himself from the presence of him who formerly was his whole happiness. His conscience accuses him before God ever speaks. His woeful excuses complete his embarrassment. He must die; the remedy of immortality is taken
from him, and a more dreadful death, namely, that of the soul, is foreshadowed to him by that bodily death to which he is condemned.

In this manner, our sentence is pronounced in his. God, who had resolved to reward his obedience in all his posterity, condemns and smites him as soon as he revolts, not only in his own person, but in that of his children as well, as in the most vital and dearest part of himself; we are all cursed in our beginning; our birth is tainted and infected at its source.

Let us not examine here those terrible rules of divine justice by which the human race is cursed in its origin. Let us worship the judgments of God, who sees all men as one in the form of him from whom he intends to make all men issue. Let us also look upon ourselves as degraded in our rebellious parent, as stigmatized forever by the sentence that dooms him, as banished with him and excluded from the paradise in which he was to give us birth.

The rules of human justice may help us fathom the depths of divine justice, of which they are a shadow; but they can never show us the bottom of that abyss. Let us believe that God's justice as well as his mercy will not be measured by those of men, and that their effects are far more extensive and personal.

But while God's severity for mankind alarms us, let us admire how he turns our thoughts in a more comforting direction when he shows us our future deliverance, on the very day of our Fall. In the form of a serpent, whose tortuous creeping was a vivid image of the dangerous insinuations and fallacious devices of the evil spirit, God shows our mother Eve the hateful character and at the same time the just punishment of her vanquished enemy. [The serpent was to be the most hated of all animals, as Satan is the most accursed of all creatures. As the serpent creeps on its belly, so Satan, justly cast down from Heaven, where he had been created, can no longer rise. The dust, on which, it is said, the serpent feeds, signifies the base thoughts with which Satan inspires us; he himself has only base thoughts, since all his thoughts are sin. In the eternal enmity between mankind and Satan, we learn that victory will be given us, since in this enmity] we are shown a blessed seed who was to crush the head of our conqueror, signifying that his pride was to be brought low and his empire destroyed everywhere on earth.

This blessed seed was Jesus Christ, the son of a virgin; Jesus
Chapter 1: The Creation and the Early Ages

Christ, in whom alone Adam had not sinned, because he was to issue from Adam in a divine manner and to be conceived, not of man, but of the Holy Spirit. [It was, therefore, by this divine seed, or through the woman who would bear him, depending on the various readings of this passage, that mankind was to be restored and that the power was to be taken away from the Prince of the World, who has nothing in Jesus Christ.]

But before the Savior should be given to us, mankind had to learn by long experience how badly it needed such help. Man was left to himself, his inclinations became corrupt, his debauchery went beyond all bounds, and iniquity covered the whole face of the earth.

Then God bethought himself of vengeance, the memory of which he wanted to remain with men forever. This was the universal Flood. The memory of the deluge and of the wickedness that brought it down upon man does indeed still linger among all nations.

Let men no longer fancy that the world moves on its own and that what has been shall always be. God, who has made all things and by whom all things subsist, was about to drown both man and beast, that is, he was about to destroy the most beautiful part of his work.

God needed only himself in order to destroy what he had made by a word; but he deemed it more worthy of him to make his creations the instrument of his vengeance, and so he called the waters to ravage the crime-ridden earth.

Yet there was found in it one just man. Before saving him from the deluge of waters, God had preserved him by his grace from the deluge of iniquity. His family was spared to replenish the earth, which was about to become one immense solitude. Through that just man, God saved the animals, so that man might understand that they are made for him and that [he is to use them for the glory of]* their Creator.

[God did more; and as though he repented having inflicted such a severe judgment upon mankind, he solemnly promised never again to send a deluge to flood the whole earth; and he deigned to make this treaty not only with man but also with all the animals, whether of the earth or of the air, to show that his Providence extends to everything that lives. This is when the rainbow appeared. God chose

*The second edition read: "they are made for him and subject to his power by their Creator."
its pleasing colors, agreeably diversified on a cloud filled with harmless dew rather than with a harsh rain, as an eternal testimony that the rains he would henceforth send would never cause a universal flood. Since that time, the rainbow appears in heavenly visions as one of the principal ornaments of the throne of God, and it conveys the idea of his mercies.]

The world becomes new again, and the earth once more rises from the depths of the waters; but in this new world there remains a lasting impression of divine vengeance. Until the Flood, all nature was stronger and more vigorous; but that immense body of water which God brought upon the earth, and their long sojourn on it, had altered the essences it contained; the air, laden with excessive moisture, strengthened the process of decomposition; and, the original constitution of the world being thus weakened, the human life-span, which previously had run to nearly a thousand years, gradually decreased; herbs and fruits no longer had their former strength, and men needed a more substantial food in the flesh of animals.

Thus the remains of the original way of life would gradually disappear and vanish; and changed nature gave man to understand that God was no longer the same to him ever since he had become angered by so many crimes.

Moreover, that long life of the first men, recorded in the annals of God's people, has not been unknown to other nations, and their ancient traditions have preserved the memory of it. Now that death advanced with swifter steps, men felt a speedier vengeance; and as they daily plunged deeper and deeper into wickedness, it was fit they should likewise, so to speak, daily be plunged deeper into their punishment.

The change to a diet of meat might alone have intimated to them how much their state was deteriorating, since, while becoming weaker, they at the same time became more voracious and blood-thirsty. Before the Flood, men found food peacefully in fruits which fell of their own accord and in grasses, which in any case would have withered very quickly. This nourishment was, no doubt, some remnant of the primitive innocence and of the mildness for which we were created. Now, for our nourishment, we must shed blood, in spite of the horror this naturally arouses in us; and all the niceties we
use in setting our tables are scarcely sufficient to disguise the carcasses we must devour in order to satisfy ourselves.

But that is but the least of our misfortunes. Life, already shortened, is still more abridged by the violence which sprang up among mankind. Man, who in the first times spared the life of beasts, has now learned not to spare even that of his fellows. In vain did God, immediately after the Flood, forbid the shedding of human blood. In vain, to preserve some vestiges of the primeval mildness of our nature, did he make the blood of animals an exception when he allowed man to eat their flesh. Murders multiplied without measure. It is true that before the Flood Cain had sacrificed his brother to his jealousy, that Lamech, a descendant of Cain, had committed the second murder, and that quite possibly other murders were committed following those damnable examples. But war had not yet been invented. It is after the Flood that we see the first of those ravagers of provinces, called conquerors, who, spurred on only by the glory of command, have exterminated so many innocent victims.

Nimrod, a cursed spawn of Ham, who was cursed by his father, began to make war merely to establish an empire for himself. Ever since that time, ambition has wantonly sported with the lives of men. They went so far as to kill each other without hating each other; the height of glory and the most noble of all arts was to put one another to death.

[Some one hundred years after the Flood, God struck mankind with another scourge through the confusion of tongues. The common language spoken by the first men and taught by Adam to his children would have remained a social bond when the family of Noah had to disperse throughout the habitable world. But this vestige of ancient harmony perished at the Tower of Babel. This tower may have been attempted by the children of Adam because they were still incredulous and had so little faith in the promise and assurance of God that there would not be another flood that they sought refuge against a similar occurrence in the solidity and the height of that proud edifice. Or it may be that they merely wished to immortalize themselves by this great work before scattering abroad into all lands, as is stated in the Book of Genesis. In any case, God did not permit them to raise this tower to the clouds, as they had hoped, nor, as it were, to threaten Heaven by the erection of that]
bold structure. God brought confusion among them by making them forget their first language. It was at this place, therefore, that the children of Adam became divided in language and nationality. The name Babel, which means confusion, remained attached to the tower in testimony to that confusion and also as a perpetual reminder to mankind that pride is the source of division and discord among men.]

Such were the beginnings of the world, as the history of Moses describes them: beginnings happy at first, but afterward filled with misfortunes; always admirable, since related to God, who makes all things; such beginnings, in short, that we, by thinking them over in our mind, learn to see the universe and mankind as always in the Creator’s hand, brought forth out of nothing by his word, preserved by his goodness, governed by his wisdom, punished by his justice, delivered by his mercy, and always subject to his power.

This is not the universe as philosophers have conceived it: formed, according to some, by a fortuitous concourse of first particles or, according to the wisest of them, furnishing its matter to its author; which consequently is dependent on him neither for the essence of its being nor for its original state, and which subjects him to certain laws, which he himself cannot violate.

Moses and our ancient fathers, whose traditions Moses has collected, give us other notions. The God he has made manifest to us has a very different power: he can do and undo just as he pleases; he gives laws to Nature and abrogates them when he wishes.

If, in order to make himself known in times when most men had forgotten him, he wrought astonishing miracles and forced Nature to depart from its most constant laws, he did so to continue to demonstrate that he was its absolute master and that his will is the only bond that preserves the order of the world.

And this was just what men had forgotten. The stability of so beautiful an order now served only to persuade them that this order had always been, that it existed of itself. Thus they were prompted to worship either the world as a whole or else the stars, the elements, and all the great bodies which compose it. God therefore showed mankind a goodness worthy of himself when, upon remarkable occasions, he reversed that order, which not only no longer impressed them, because they had become used to it, but which even
prompted them—so grossly were they blinded—to imagine eternity and independence elsewhere than in God.

The history of God’s people is attested by its own successive stages and by the religion, not only of those who wrote it, but of those who have so carefully preserved it. It has kept, as in a faithful record, the memory of those miracles and thereby gives us a true idea of the supreme dominion of God, almighty master of his creatures, either to hold them subject to the general laws he has established or to give them others when he deems it necessary by some surprising stroke to awaken sleeping mankind.

Such is the God whom Moses has shown us in his writings as the only one we ought to serve; such the God whom the patriarchs worshiped before Moses’ birth; in a word, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to whom our father Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son; of whom Melchizedek, the symbol of Jesus Christ, was high priest; to whom our father Noah sacrificed upon leaving the ark; whom righteous Abel had acknowledged when he offered him that which was most precious to him; whom Seth, given to Adam in place of Abel, had made known to his children, called also the children of God; whom Adam himself had shown to his descendants, as him out of whose hands he had lately come and who alone could put an end to the woes of his unhappy posterity.

O excellent philosophy, which gives us such pure ideas of the author of our being! Excellent tradition, which preserves for us the memory of his glorious works! How holy the people of God, since, by an uninterrupted succession, from the origin of the world down to our day, they have always preserved so holy a tradition and philosophy!

Chapter 2

Abraham and the Patriarchs

But since God’s people began to take a more definite form under the patriarch Abraham, it will be necessary, Monseigneur, to dwell with you at some length upon that great man.
He was born about 350 years after the Flood, at a time when human life, though reduced to narrower limits, was still very long. Noah had just died; Shem, his eldest son, was still alive, and Abraham was able to spend most of his life with him.

Imagine, then, the world still new and still, so to speak, drenched with the waters of the Flood, when men, so near the origin of things, in order to know the unity of God and the service that was due to him needed nothing but the tradition which had been preserved from Adam and Noah: a tradition, moreover, so consistent with the light of reason that one would have thought that so clear and important a truth could never have been obscured or forgotten among men. Such is the first state of religion, which continued down to Abraham and in which, to know the greatness of God, men had to consult only their reason and memory.

But reason was weak and corrupted; and the farther men became removed from the origin of things, the more confused they were about the ideas which had come down to them from their ancestors. Disobedient or unmannerly children would no longer believe what their decrepit grandfathers had said, since they scarcely knew them after so many generations; man’s mind had sunk so low that it could no longer rise to intellectual matters; and since men now chose to worship only what they saw, idolatry spread over the whole world.

The spirit who had beguiled the first man now tasted the full fruit of his seduction and beheld the complete result of his saying, Ye shall be as gods. From the moment he uttered that word, he was hoping to fuse in man the idea of God with that of the creature and to divide a name whose majesty consists in being uncommunicable. His scheme succeeded. But men, though sunk in flesh and blood, had preserved an obscure idea of divine power, which maintained itself by its own force but which, mingled with the images that entered men through their senses, made them worship all things in which they perceived any activity or power. Thus the sun and stars, which made their influence felt at such a distance, and fire and the elements whose effects were so universal, became the first objects of public adoration. The great kings and the great conquerors, who were so mighty on earth, and the authors of inventions useful to human life soon after received divine honors. Men now paid the
price for having given in to their senses: the senses decided every-
thing and created, in spite of reason, all the gods that were wor-
shiped on earth.

How distant man now seemed from his first state! And how badly
God's image was defaced in him! Could God have made him with
those perverse inclinations that were becoming more manifest every
day? And did not his amazing propensity to submit to everything but
his natural Lord betray too visibly the strange hand by which God's
workmanship had been so deeply altered in the human mind that
scarcely any trace of it could be found? Driven by that blind impulse
which swayed him, he sank into idolatry, and there was nothing to
halt his downward course. So great an evil made wonderful progress.
For fear it should infect all mankind and utterly extinguish the
knowledge of God, the great God called from on high his servant
Abraham, in whose family he meant to establish his worship and
preserve the ancient belief as to the Creation of the universe as well
as to the special Providence with which he governs human things.

Abraham has always been well known in the East. The Hebrews
are not the only ones who look upon him as their father. The
Idumaeans also take pride in the same origin. Ishmael, son of
Abraham, is known among the Arabs as their forefather. They
continue to practice circumcision as the mark of their origin, and
they have always received it, not on the eighth day, after the manner
of the Jews, but in their thirteenth year. The Scriptures inform us
that circumcision was given to their father Ishmael at that age, and
this custom still prevails among the Mohammedans. Other Arab
nations commemorate Abraham and Hagar, and they are the
peoples the Scriptures say issued from that marriage. This patriarch
was a Chaldaean, and those people, famed for their astronomical
observations, have considered Abraham one of their most learned
astronomers. The Syrian historians have made him king of Damasc-
cus, though he was a foreigner and came from the neighborhood of
Babylon; and they tell how he left the kingdom of Damascus in order
to settle in the country of the Canaanites, afterward called Judaea.
But it is better to observe what the history of God's people tells us
concerning this great man.

We have seen that Abraham led the kind of life lived by the
ancients before the entire world was divided into kingdoms. He
reigned in his family and with them embraced that pastoral life so
noted for its simplicity and innocence, rich in flocks, in slaves, and in
money but without land and without domain; he nonetheless lived in
a foreign kingdom, respected and as independent as a prince. His
piety and uprightness, which were protected by God, won him this
respect. He negotiated as an equal with kings who sought to ally with
him, giving rise to the ancient opinion which made him a king.
Though his life was simple and peaceful, he knew how to make war,
but only in defense of his oppressed allies. He defended them and
avenged them in an important victory. He restored to them all their
riches, recaptured from their enemies, keeping only the tithe, which
he offered to God, and the portion that belonged to the auxiliary
troops which he had led into battle. Moreover, after so great
a service he refused presents from kings with unparalleled mag-
nanimity and could not bear that any man should boast that he
had enriched Abraham. He would owe nothing but to God, who
protected him and whom alone he followed in perfect faith and
obedience.

Guided by that faith, he had left his native country to come into a
land which God showed him. God, who had called him and rendered
him worthy of the Covenant with him, concluded it upon the
following conditions:

He declared to him that he would be his God and the God of his
children, that is, that he would be their protector and that they
should serve him as the only God, Creator of heaven and earth.

He promised him a land (namely, that of Canaan) which was to be
a perpetual dwelling-place for his seed and the seat of religion.

Now, Abraham had no children, and Sarah, his wife, was barren.
God swore to him personally, and by his eternal truth, that from him
and that woman should issue a nation that would equal the stars of
heaven and the sands of the sea.

But now comes the most memorable article of the divine promise.
All nations were running headlong into idolatry. God promised the
holy patriarch that in him and his seed all those blind nations which
had forgotten their Creator would be blessed, that is, recalled to the
knowledge of him, where true blessing is to be found.

This promise makes Abraham the father of all the faithful, and
his posterity is chosen to be the source from which the blessing is to extend to all the earth.

In this promise was included the coming of the Messiah, so often foretold to our fathers, but who was always spoken of as him who was to be the Savior of all the Gentiles and of all the nations of the world.

Thus that blessed seed promised to Eve also became the seed and offspring of Abraham.

Such is the foundation of the Covenant; such are its conditions. As a token of it, Abraham was circumcised, a ceremony which was to signify that this holy man and his entire family belonged to God.

Abraham was childless when God began to bless his race. God gave him no children for several years. Later he had Ishmael, who was to be father of a great nation but not of the Chosen People, which had so often been promised to Abraham. The father of the Chosen People was to issue from him and his wife Sarah, who was barren. At length, thirteen years after Ishmael, that ardently wished-for child came: he was named Isaac, that is to say, laughter, a child of joy, a child of miracle, a child of promise, who shows by his birth that the true children of God are born of grace.

The blessed child was already grown and of an age at which his father could expect other children by him, when suddenly God commanded him to sacrifice him. To what trials is faith exposed! Abraham led Isaac to the mountain of which God had told him and was going to sacrifice that son through whom alone God promised to make him father both of his people and of the Messiah. Isaac bared his breast to the knife which his father held, ready to strike. God, satisfied with the obedience of both father and son, asked no more of them. After these two great men had given the world so vivid and beautiful an image of the voluntary oblation of Jesus Christ and had tasted in spirit the bitterness of the Cross, they were judged truly worthy of being his ancestors. Because of Abraham's faithfulness, God confirmed all his promises to him and again blessed not only his family but also, in his family, all the nations of the earth.

And indeed, he continued to protect Isaac, his son, and Jacob, his grandson. They followed in his footsteps, adhering like him to the ancient faith, to the ancient pastoral way of life, and to the ancient government of mankind, where every father of a family was a prince
in his house. Thus, amid the changes daily occurring among men, the venerable old ways lived once more in the religion and the way of life of Abraham and his children.

Therefore, God repeated to Isaac and to Jacob the same promises he had made to Abraham; and as he had called himself the God of Abraham, he took also the name of God of Isaac and God of Jacob.

Under his protection these three great men began to dwell in the land of Canaan, but only as foreigners and without possessing *one foot of land* in it, until the famine drew Jacob into Egypt, where his children multiplied and soon became a great nation, as God had promised.

Moreover, though that people whom God was causing to be born in his Covenant was to spread by procreation, and though the blessing was to follow the bloodline, that great God did not fail to give them signs of the election of grace. For, after having chosen Abraham from among the nations, among the children of Abraham he chose Isaac, and of Isaac’s twins he chose the younger, namely, Jacob, to whom he gave the name of Israel.

[The preference shown to Jacob was exemplified in the solemn blessing which he obtained from Isaac, apparently by deceit but in fact following an express disposition of divine wisdom. This prophetic and mysterious deed had been prepared by an oracle as far back as the time when Rebecca, mother of Esau and Jacob, carried both in her womb. For this pious woman, disturbed by the struggle which she felt between the children in her womb, consulted God, from whom she received this answer: *Two nations are in thy womb, and the elder shall serve the younger.* As a fulfillment of that oracle, Jacob had received from his brother the surrender of his birthright, confirmed by an oath; and when Isaac blessed Jacob, he merely put him in possession of the right which Heaven itself already had given him. The fact that God favored the Israelites, descendants of Jacob, over the Idumean descendants of Esau, is foretold by this event. This event also foreshadows the future favor of the Gentiles, recently called to the Covenant by Jesus Christ, over the ancient people.]

Jacob had twelve children, who became the twelve patriarchs, heads of the twelve tribes. They all were to enter into the Covenant, but Judah was chosen from among all his brethren to be father of the
Chapter 2: Abraham and the Patriarchs

kings of Israel and father of the Messiah, so often promised to his ancestors.

The time was to come when ten tribes would be cut off from God's people because of their infidelity and when Abraham's posterity would preserve its old blessing—that is, its religion, the land of Canaan, and the hopes of the Messiah—only in the tribe of Judah. This tribe would give its name to the rest of the Israelites, who were called Jews, as well as to the country itself, which was named Judaea.

Thus the divine election can be seen at all times, even in that sensual people who were to be preserved by ordinary procreation.

Jacob saw in his mind the secret of this election. When he was about to die and the children around his bed were craving the blessing of so good a father, God showed him the state of the twelve tribes when they should be in the Promised Land. He explained it in a few words, and those few words contain countless mysteries.

Though all he says of Judah's brethren is expressed with extraordinary dignity and bespeaks a man transported beyond himself by the spirit of God, yet when he comes to Judah, he rises still higher: Judah, he says, thou art he whom thy brethren praise: thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies: thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as a lioness; who shall rouse him up? The scepter (that is to say, authority) shall not depart from Judah, and captains, magistrates, and judges born of his race shall be seen until the one who shall be sent shall come, who shall be the expectation of the peoples. According to another reading, which is, perhaps, no less ancient and which in the main does not differ from the above, until he comes for whom things are reserved. The rest is as quoted.

The rest of the prophecy describes to the letter the region which the tribe of Judah was to possess in the Holy Land. But the last words which we have seen, interpret them how we will, signify nothing else than him who was to be God's envoy, the minister and interpreter of his will, the accomplishment of his promises, and the king of the new people, that is to say, the Messiah, or the Lord's Anointed.

Jacob speaks of him specifically only to Judah, from whom that
Messiah was to issue; he includes in the destiny of Judah alone the destiny of the whole nation, which, after its dispersion, was to see the remnant of the other tribes reunited under Judah's banners.

All the terms of the prophecy are clear: there is only the word scepter, which the usage of our language might make us interpret as royalty alone, while in the sacred language it signifies, in general, power, authority, and office. This use of the word scepter is encountered in every page of the Scriptures; it appears even explicitly in Jacob's prophecy, and the patriarch means that in the days of the Messiah all authority would cease in the house of Judah, which implies the total overthrow of a state.

Thus the days of the Messiah are indicated here by a double change. By the first, the kingdom of Judah and of the Jewish nation is threatened with its final ruin. By the second, there is to arise a new kingdom, not of one people but of all the nations, of whom the Messiah is to be the leader and the hope.

In the style of the Scriptures, the Jewish people are referred to in the singular (in particular as the people or God's people); and, when we find the peoples, those who are versed in the Scriptures understand that this means the other nations, who also had been promised to the Messiah in Jacob's prophecy.

That great prophecy contains in a few words the whole history of the Jewish people and of the Christ who is promised to them. It points out the whole history of God's people, and its result still endures.

But I do not intend to make you a commentary on it: you will have no need for that, since by simply observing the continued existence of God's people you will see the meaning of the oracle unfold itself, and the events themselves shall interpret it.

Chapter 3

Moses, the Written Law, and the Arrival of the People in the Promised Land

After Jacob's death, God's people sojourned in Egypt until the time of Moses' mission, that is to say, about 200 years.
Thus 430 years passed before God gave his people the land he had promised them.

He meant to accustom his elect to rely upon his promise, confident that it would be fulfilled sooner or later, and always within the time appointed by his eternal Providence.

The iniquity of the Amorites, whose land and spoils he wanted to give his people, had not yet, as he declares to Abraham, reached the height for which he was waiting in order to deliver them up to the harsh and pitiless vengeance he intended to bring down upon them by the hands of his Chosen People.

His people had to be given time to multiply, so that they might be in a position to fill the land that was destined for them and to occupy it forcibly by exterminating its inhabitants, whom God had cursed.

In Egypt he wanted them to live in harsh and unbearable bondage so that, when delivered by unheard-of wonders, they might love their Deliverer and eternally praise his mercies.

Such was the order of God's counsels, as he himself has revealed them to us, in order to teach us to fear him, to worship him, to love him, and to wait for him with faith and patience.

When the time had come, he heard the cries of his people, cruelly afflicted by the Egyptians, and sent Moses to deliver his children from their tyranny.

He reveals himself to that great man, more than he had ever done to any living man. He appears to him in a manner that is as glorious as it is reassuring; and he declares to him that he is the one who is. All that is before him is but a shadow. I Am, says he, That I Am: being and perfection belong to me alone. He assumes a new name, which indicates that being and life are contained in him as in their source; and it is under that great name God, terrible, mysterious, incommunicable, that he will henceforth be served.

I shall not give you a detailed account of the plagues of Egypt, of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, of the passage of the Red Sea, or of the smoke, the lightning, the resounding trumpet, and the frightful noise noticed by the people on Mount Sinai. There God carved with his own hand, upon two stone tablets, the fundamental precepts of religion and society; with a loud voice he dictated the rest to Moses. To maintain this law in its full force, Moses was given orders to form a venerable assembly of seventy elders, which might
be called the senate of God's people and the perpetual council of the nation. God appeared publicly and had his law announced in his presence with an astonishing demonstration of his majesty and his power.

Until then God had given nothing in writing that could serve as a rule to man. The children of Abraham had only circumcision and the ceremonies which accompanied it as a token of the Covenant which God had made with that chosen race. They were distinguished by this token from the nations that worshiped false deities. Otherwise, they adhered to God's Covenant because they remembered the promises made to their fathers, and they were known as a people who served the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God was so strangely forgotten that it was necessary to distinguish him by the name of those who had worshiped him and whose declared protector he was.

This great God no longer wished to leave to the mere memory of men the mysteries of religion and of his Covenant. It was time to erect stronger barriers against idolatry, which was engulfing all mankind and extinguishing all traces of natural light.

Ignorance and blindness had prodigiously increased since the days of Abraham. In his time and a little after, the knowledge of God was still alive in Palestine and Egypt. Melchizedek, king of Salem, was the priest of the most high God, who made heaven and earth. Abimelech, king of Gerara, and his successor of the same name, feared God, swore by his name, and admired his power. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, dreaded the threats of this great God. But in Moses' time those nations had become perverted. The true God was no longer known in Egypt as the God of all the nations of the world but as the God of the Hebrews. Men worshiped even beasts and reptiles. Everything was God except God himself; and the world, which God had made to show his power, seemed to have become a temple of idols. Mankind went astray to the point of worshiping its own vices and passions; nor must we be astonished at this, for there was no power more inescapable or tyrannical than the power of vice and passion. When man, accustomed as he was to think that everything powerful was divine, felt himself drawn to vice by an irresistible force, he easily came to believe that this force was outside him, and soon made it into a god. Thus it was that unchaste love had
so many altars and that horrid impurities began to be mingled with the sacrifices.

Cruelty, too, became part of the sacrifices. Guilty man, racked with the sense of his wickedness and looking upon the deity as an enemy, thought he could not appease him with ordinary victims. He must shed human blood along with that of beasts; blind terror drove fathers to offer up their children and to burn them to their gods instead of incense. These sacrifices were common even in the days of Moses, but they were only a part of the horrible iniquities of the Amorites, whose punishment God entrusted to the Israelites.

But they were not peculiar to these peoples. It is well known that in all nations of the world, without exception, men have sacrificed their fellows, and there is not a place on the face of the earth where they have not made offerings to those dismal and dread deities whose implacable hatred for mankind required such victims.

Amid so much ignorance, man finally reached the point of worshiping his own handiwork. He thought he could lodge the divine spirit in statues, and he so completely forgot that God had made him that, in his turn, he thought he could make a God. Who could believe it if experience did not show us that so stupid and brutal an error was not only the most universal but even the most inveterate and incorrigible among men? Thus we must admit, to the shame of mankind, that the most important of truths, the truth which the world proclaims, the truth which strikes us so powerfully, was now the farthest from man's sight. The tradition which preserved it in their minds, though still clear and sufficiently close to them—had they been attentive to it—was ready to vanish away; prodigious fables, as full of impiety as of extravagance, assumed its place. The moment had come when the truth, so ill kept in the memory of men, could no longer be preserved except in writing; and since God had already resolved to make his people more virtuous by more specific and more numerous laws, he also resolved at the same time to give these laws in writing.

Moses was called to do this work. That great man collected the histories of past ages, those of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—or, rather, that of God himself and of his wondrous acts.

He did not need to dig very deep for the traditions of his ancestors.
He was born a hundred years after Jacob’s death. The old men of his time might have conversed several years with that holy patriarch; and the memory of Joseph, and of the wonders God had wrought through this great minister of the kings of Egypt, was still fresh. The aggregate lifetime of three or four successive men reached back as far as Noah, who had seen Adam’s children and touched, as it were, the origin of things.

Thus the ancient traditions of mankind and those of Abraham’s family were not hard to collect: the memory of them was still alive; and we need not wonder that Moses, in his Genesis, speaks of things that happened in the first ages as certainties, of which there were still remarkable monuments, both in the neighboring nations and in the land of Canaan.

While Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had inhabited that land, they had erected monuments everywhere to the things that had befallen them. In that land one was still shown the places where these patriarchs had lived; the wells they had dug in those dry countries to water their families and their flocks; the mountains where they had sacrificed to God and on which he had appeared to them; the stones they had erected or piled up as a memorial to posterity; and the tombs in which their blessed ashes rested. The memory of those great men was recent, not only in the whole country, but likewise throughout the East, where several famous nations have never forgotten that they developed from their race.

Thus, when the Hebrew people entered the Promised Land, everything there extolled the memory of their ancestors; cities, mountains, and the very stones there spoke of those wondrous men and of the astonishing visions by which God had confirmed them in the original and true faith.

Those who are even a little acquainted with antiquity know how eagerly the early ages erected and preserved such monuments and how carefully their descendants kept alive the memory of the occasions on which they had been set up. This was one way of writing history. Later the stones were shaped and polished; and, after pillars, statues took the place of the crude and solid masses erected in the earliest times.

We even have good reasons for believing that, in the lineage in
which the knowledge of God was preserved, written memoirs of ancient times were also kept; for men have always been concerned about this. At least, it is certain that songs were composed, which fathers taught to their children, and that these songs, which were sung at feasts and assemblies, perpetuated the memory of the most outstanding deeds of past ages.

This gave birth to poetry, which in the course of time assumed several forms, the most ancient of which is still preserved in the odes and hymns used by all the ancients, and even at present by unlettered nations, to praise the deity and great men.

The style of these canticles is bold, unusual, and yet natural in that it is suited to represent nature in its emotions, thus moving on in quick and impetuous sallies, free from the usual connectives which plain speech requires but at the same time enclosed in numerous cadences which add to its strength; it is a style that surprises the ear, captures the imagination, moves the heart, and more easily imprints itself upon the memory.

Among all nations of the world, the one in which such songs were most in use was the people of God. Moses mentions a great many of them, referring to them by their first lines, because the people knew the rest. He composed two of this kind himself. The first sets before our eyes the triumphant passage through the Red Sea and the enemies of God’s people, some already drowned and others half-dead with fear. In the second, Moses shows up the people’s ingratitude by celebrating the goodness and wonders of God. The following ages imitated him. God and his wondrous works were the theme of the odes they composed. God inspired them himself, and in fact God’s people are the only ones to whom poetry came by inspiration.

In this mystical language Jacob had expressed the oracles which contained his children’s destiny, so that each tribe might the more easily remember what concerned it and might learn to praise him who was as glorious in his predictions as he was faithful in their accomplishment.

These, then, are the means which God used, down to the time of Moses, for preserving the memory of things past. That great man, instructed by all these means, and raised even higher by the Holy
Spirit, wrote the works of God with an exactitude and a simplicity which attract faith and admiration, not for him, but for God himself.

To the things of the past, which contained the origin and ancient traditions of God's people, he added the wonders which God had recently worked for their deliverance. For this, he gives the Israelites no other witness than their own eyes. Moses does not tell them things that have happened in impenetrable recesses and deep caves; he does not speak vaguely; he gives specific circumstances for everything, like a man who has no fear of being refuted. He founds all their laws and their whole constitution on the wonders they have seen. Those wonders were nothing less than nature changed suddenly, upon different occasions, for their deliverance and for the punishment of their enemies: the sea divided, the dry land opened up, a heavenly bread, abundant waters gushing from rocks at the stroke of a rod, the heavens giving them a visible signal to direct their march, and other similar miracles which they saw for forty years.

The people of Israel were no more intelligent or discerning than the other nations, who, being wholly given up to their senses, could not conceive of an invisible God. On the contrary, they were as vulgar and rebellious as any other people, or more so. But this God, though invisible by his nature, rendered himself so perceptible by continual miracles, and Moses inculcated these miracles so energetically, that at last these sensual people were willing to be touched by that pure idea of a God who made everything by his word—a God who was pure spirit, reason, and intelligence.

In this manner, while idolatry, so greatly increased since Abraham, covered the whole face of the earth, only the posterity of that patriarch was exempt from it. Their enemies bore witness to this, and nations in which the truth of traditions was not yet wholly extinguished cried out with astonishment: There is no idol in Jacob, neither are there any superstitious omens; there are no divinations, no spells: the people trust the Lord their God, whose power is invincible.

In order to impress upon their minds the unity of God and the perfect uniformity he required in his worship, Moses often repeats that in the Promised Land this one God would choose one place as
the only one where feasts, sacrifices, and all public worship should be performed. In the meantime, until this desired place should be found, while the people wandered in the wilderness, Moses built the Tabernacle, a portable temple, where the children of Israel presented their petitions to the God who had created heaven and earth and who did not disdain, as it were, to journey with them and to be their guide.

Upon this principle of religion, upon this sacred foundation, the whole Law was built: a Law holy, just, and good, wise, provident, and simple, which connected the society of men with one another through the sacred society of man with God.

To these holy institutions, he added noble ceremonies, feasts which recalled the memory of the miracles by which the children of Israel had been delivered; and, what no other lawgiver had ever presumed to do, he added specific assurances that all would go well with them as long as they lived in obedience to the Law, while their disobedience would be pursued with clear and inevitable vengeance. He must have been seconded by God to give such a foundation to his laws, and the result has shown that Moses did not speak on his own.

As for the great number of rituals he established for the Hebrews: though they now may seem superfluous, they were necessary then in order to distinguish God’s people from other nations, and they served as a barrier to idolatry, for fear that idolatry would engulf the Chosen People along with all the rest.

To maintain religion and all the traditions of God’s people among the twelve tribes, one was chosen to whom God allotted for its portion, together with tithes and oblations, the care of the sacred things. Levi and his children are themselves consecrated to God as the tithe of all the people. Among the Levites, Aaron is chosen to be high priest, and the priesthood is made hereditary in his family.

Thus the altars have their ministers, the Law its advocates, and the continued existence of God’s people is testified by the succession of its high priests, which goes on without interruption from Aaron, the first of them.

But the excellent thing about this Law was that it prepared the way for one more august, less encumbered with ceremonies, and more productive of virtues.

To keep the people in expectation of this Law, Moses assures them
of the coming of that great prophet who was to spring from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *The Lord thy God,* says he, *will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me: Unto him ye shall hearken.* That prophet who would be like Moses and, like him, a lawgiver—who can he be but the Messiah, whose teachings were one day to rule and sanctify the universe?

[The Christ was to be the first to form a new people, to whom he was to say, *A new commandment I give unto you; and again, If you love me, keep my commandments;* and, even more specifically, *Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time: Thou shalt not kill . . . But I say to you—and so on, in the same style and with the same forcefulness.*

This, then, is the new prophet, like Moses and author of a new Law, of whom Moses likewise says, in announcing his coming: *Unto him ye shall hearken;* and it is to accomplish this promise that God, sending his Son, makes that divine voice echo on high like a peal of thunder: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.*

It was this prophet and this Christ whom Moses foreshadowed in the brazen serpent which he erected in the desert. The bite of the ancient serpent, which had spread among all mankind the poison from which we all perish, was to be healed by looking at him, that is, by believing in him, as he himself explains. But why refer here only to the brazen serpent? The whole Mosaic Law, with all its sacrifices, the high priest whom he establishes with so many mysterious ceremonies, his entrance into the sanctuary, in a word, all the sacred rites of the Jewish religion, where everything was purified with blood, the very lamb immolated at the principal solemn ceremony, that is, at Passover, in memory of the deliverance of the people—all this meant nothing but Christ, Savior by his blood of all God’s people.

Until he should come, Moses was to be read at all meetings as the sole legislator; and so,]# until the time of the Messiah, the people at all times and in all difficulties rely upon Moses only. As Rome revered the laws of Romulus, Numa, and the Twelve Tables; as Athens had recourse to those of Solon; as Lacedaemon preserved

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*The second edition read: “Until he came, no prophet was supposed to appear in Israel who would resemble Moses, to whom God spoke face to face and who gave laws to his people. Thus . . . .”*
and respected those of Lycurgus; so the Hebrew people continually cited those of Moses. And, indeed, so well had the lawgiver regulated everything that there was never any need to make the least alteration in them. That is why the body of Jewish Law is not a collection of different statutes made at different times and occasions. Moses, enlightened by the Spirit of God, had foreseen everything. We see no laws of David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, or Ezekiel, though all were very zealous for justice. Good princes needed only to enforce the Mosaic Law, and they contented themselves with recommending the observance of it to their successors. The people looked with horror upon any attempt to add or to take away from it one single article. They needed the Law at every moment to regulate not only the holy days, sacrifices, and ceremonies but also all other public and private actions, trials, contracts, marriages, inheritances, funerals, the very fashion of their dress, and, in general, everything relating to morality. There were no other books in which to study the precepts of a good life. They were to peruse it and meditate upon it night and day; to collect maxims from it and to have them always before their eyes. It was here that the children learned to read. The only rule of education given to their parents was to teach their children that holy Law, to inculcate it in them, to make them follow it, since it alone could make them wise from childhood on. Thus it was to be made available to everybody. Besides the constant reading which everyone was obliged to give it in private, every seventh year, during the solemn year of remission and rest, it was read publicly and, as it were, promulgated anew at the Feast of Tabernacles, at which all the people assembled for eight days. Moses caused the original of Deuteronomy to be deposited beside the Ark.* But for fear that the Law would be altered in the course of time through the malice or negligence of men, besides the copies which circulated among the people, authentic transcripts of it were made, which, being carefully revised and kept by the priests and Levites, were used instead of originals. The kings (for Moses had well foreseen that this people would at length have kings, like all other nations)—the kings, I say, were obliged, by a specific law of Deuteronomy, to receive from the hands of the priests one of those transcripts thus religiously corrected, that they might copy it and read it all the days of their life.

*The second edition read, in addition: “It was an abridgment of the entire Law.”
The copies so revised by public authority were held in special veneration by all the people: they regarded them as proceeding immediately from the hands of Moses, as pure and complete as God had dictated them to him. An ancient volume, which was strictly and religiously correct, was found in the house of the Lord during the reign of Josiah. Perhaps it was the original itself, which Moses had placed beside the Ark. It aroused the piety of that saintly king and also proved an occasion for bringing that people to repentance. The great results achieved in all ages by the public reading of this Law are innumerable. In a word, it was a perfect book, which, being joined by Moses to the history of God's people, taught them at once their origin, their religion, their institutions, their morals, their philosophy, everything that tends to regulate life, everything that unites and forms society, good and bad examples, the reward of the former and the severe punishments of the latter.

By this admirable discipline, a people newly freed from slavery and kept forty years in a desert, arrives fully formed in the land it is to possess. Moses conducts it to the entrance; and, being warned of his approaching end, he entrusts to Joshua what remains to be done. But before he died, he composed that long and admirable song which begins with these words: Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear O earth, the words of my mouth. In this silence of all nature, he at first speaks to the people with inimitable strength and, foreseeing their infidelity, shows them what horrors it will bring. But suddenly he goes beyond himself, as if all human language were beneath so grand a subject; he relates what God said, and makes him speak with so much majesty and so much goodness that it is hard to say what he inspires most, awe and confusion, or love and confidence.

All the people learned that divine song by heart by God's and Moses' orders. And then that great man died content, as a man who had forgotten nothing that could preserve among his followers the memory of God's kindness and commands. He left his own children lost amid the multitude of their countrymen, without any social distinctions and without any special provisions. He has been admired not only by his own people but by all the nations of the world; and no lawgiver has ever had so great a name among men.

[All the prophets who have followed Moses in the ancient Law and
all other sacred writers have taken pride in being his disciples. Indeed, he speaks like a master. In his writings one notices a very distinctive quality and a certain originality found in no other writing. In his simplicity, Moses strikes a note so sublime and majestic that nothing can equal it. In the case of other prophets, we feel that we hear men inspired by God; but in the voice and the writings of Moses, we feel that we hear God himself.]

Some think that he wrote the Book of Job. The sublime quality of the thoughts and the majesty of the style make that history worthy of Moses. For fear that the Hebrews would become overly proud and would attribute God's grace to themselves only, it was proper to let them know that this great God had his elect even in the race of Esau. What teaching was more important? What more useful subject for consideration could Moses give to the afflicted people in the wilderness than that of the patience of Job? This man, when delivered into the hands of Satan to be tried by all manner of hardships, sees himself deprived of his possessions, his children, and every earthly comfort; immediately afterward, smitten with a loathsome disease and distracted inwardly by the temptation of blasphemy and despair, he nevertheless shows by his steadfastness that a faithful soul supported by divine aid, amid the most dreadful trials and in spite of the gloomiest thoughts the evil spirit can suggest, can not only preserve an invincible confidence but can even raise itself by its own calamities to the highest contemplation and can acknowledge, in the troubles it endures, the nothingness of man and the supreme dominion and infinite wisdom of God. Such are the lessons taught in the Book of Job. In keeping with these times, we see the holy man's faith crowned with temporal prosperity: yet the people of God learn to know the virtue of suffering and to anticipate the grace that was one day to be attached to the Cross.

Moses had felt that grace by anticipation when he chose to suffer affliction and shame with his people rather than enjoy the pleasures and plenty of the house of the king of Egypt. From that time on God caused him to feel the opprobrium heaped on Jesus Christ. He felt it even more in his precipitous flight and in his forty years of exile. But he drained the cup of Jesus Christ to the last when, being chosen to deliver that people, he had to bear with its continual revolts, in which his life was often in danger. He learned the price of saving the
children of God and prefigured what a higher deliverance was one
day to cost the Savior of the world.

That great man had not even the consolation of entering the
Promised Land. He beheld it only from a mountain top and was not
at all ashamed to record that he was excluded from it by a sin [of
incredulity], which, slight as it appears, deserved to be so severely
punished in a man who was endowed with so great a portion of
grace. Moses served as an example of God’s severe jealousy and of
the judgment he exercises with such fearful strictness upon those
whom his gifts bind to a more perfect fidelity.

But a higher mystery is set forth to us in Moses’ exclusion. This
wise lawgiver, who, through so many wonders, leads the children of
God into only the neighborhood of their land, is himself a proof to
us that his Law made nothing perfect and that, unable to give the
accomplishment of the promises, it makes us see them afar off or
conducts us at most, as it were, to the gateway of our inheritance. It
is a Joshua, it is a Jesus (for this was the true name of Joshua, who by
that name and by his office represented the Savior of the world)—it
is that man, so far inferior to Moses in everything and superior to
him only by the name he bears, it is he, I say, who is to bring God’s
people into the Holy Land.

By the victories of that great man, before whom the Jordan turns
back, the walls of Jericho fall down by themselves, and the sun
stands still in the midst of heaven, God establishes his children in
the land of Canaan, from which he by the same means drives out the
abominable nations. The hatred for these people which he inspired
in his faithful kept them far away from their impiety; the punish-
ment he inflicted on these nations at the hands of his Chosen People
filled them with an awe of the divine justice whose decrees they were
carrying out. One part of those nations, whom Joshua expelled from
their land, settled in Africa, where an ancient inscription was found
long after, commemorating their flight and the victories of Joshua.

After those miraculous victories had put the Israelites in posses-
sion of the greater part of the land promised to their fathers, Joshua
and Eleazar, the high priest, with the heads of the twelve tribes,
divided it among them, according to the Law of Moses, and assigned
to the tribe of Judah the first and greatest share. In the days of
Moses this tribe had surpassed the others in numbers, courage, and
dignity. Joshua died, and the people continued the conquest of the Holy Land. God wanted the tribe of Judah to be the leader and declared that he had delivered the country into its hands. Indeed, that tribe defeated the Canaanites and took Jerusalem, which was to be the Holy City and the capital of God’s people. This was the ancient Salem, where Melchizedek had reigned at the time of Abraham, that king of justice (for so his name imports) and, at the same time, king of peace, since Salem signifies peace. Abraham had acknowledged him as the greatest high priest in the world, as if Jerusalem had even then been destined to be a holy city and the fountainhead of religion. That city was given at first to the children of Benjamin. As they were weak and few in number, they were unable to drive out the Jebusites, the ancient inhabitants of the country, and so lived among them.

Under the judges, the people of God are dealt with in various ways, according to their good or bad behavior.

After the death of the old men, who had seen the miracles of God’s hands, the memory of those great works fades away and the universal tendency of mankind draws the people to idolatry. Each time they succumb to it, they are punished; whenever they repent, they are delivered. Faith in Providence and in the truth of the promises and threats of Moses is gradually becoming firmer in the hearts of the true believers. But God was preparing still greater examples of it. The people demanded a king, and God gave them Saul, who was soon censured for his sins. He resolved at last to establish a royal family from which the Messiah should issue, and this he chose in Judah. David, a young shepherd, sprung from that tribe, the youngest of the sons of Jesse, whose merit his father and family did not realize but whom God found after his own heart, was anointed by Samuel in Bethlehem, his native city.

Chapter 4

David, Solomon, the Kings, and the Prophets

Now God’s people assume a more august form. The kingdom is established in the house of David. This house begins with two kings
of different character, but both admirable. David, a warlike conqueror, subdues the enemies of God's people, whose arms he causes to be feared throughout the East; and Solomon, renowned for his wisdom both at home and abroad, makes his people happy by a profound peace. But here the history of religion requires some particular remarks upon the lives of those two great kings.

David reigned first over Judah, powerful and victorious, and afterward was acknowledged by all Israel. He took from the Jebusites the stronghold of Zion, which was the citadel of Jerusalem. Master of that city, he established there, by God's order, the seat of the kingdom and of religion. Zion was his dwelling place: he built a city around it and named it the City of David. Joab, his sister's son, built the rest of the city, and Jerusalem took a new form. The men of Judah occupied the whole country, and the tribe of Benjamin, few in number, dwelled intermingled with them.

The Ark of the Covenant, built by Moses, where God dwelled between the cherubim and where the two Tablets of the Law were kept, had at that time no fixed place. David brought it in triumph to Zion, which he had conquered with the almighty aid of God, that God might reign in Zion and be acknowledged there as the protector of David, of Jerusalem, and of the whole kingdom. But the Tabernacle, in which the people had served God in the wilderness, was still at Gibeon, and it was there that the sacrifices were offered on the altar which Moses had set up. But it was to remain there only until such a time as there should be a temple in which the altar could be reunited with the Ark and in which the whole worship service could be performed. When David had defeated all his enemies and had advanced the conquests of God's people as far as the Euphrates, when he had achieved peace and victory, he turned all his thoughts toward the establishment of divine worship; and upon the same mountain where Abraham, ready to offer up his only son, was stayed by an angel's hand, he marked out the place God had designated for the Temple.

He drew all the plans for it; he collected rich and precious materials for it; he dedicated the spoils of the conquered nations and kings to its use. But this Temple, which was to be prepared by the conqueror, was to be erected by the peaceful prince. Solomon
built it on the model of the Tabernacle. The altar of burnt offerings, the altar of perfumes, the golden candelabrum, the tables of shewbread, and all the rest of the sacred furnishings of the Temple were patterned after similar objects which Moses had had made in the wilderness; Solomon added nothing but magnificence and grandeur. The Ark which the man of God had built was placed in the Holy of Holies, an inaccessible place, symbolic of the impenetrable majesty of God and of Heaven, forbidden to men until Jesus Christ had opened an entrance into it by his blood. On the day of the dedication of the Temple, God appeared there in his majesty. He chose that place to establish his name and his worship, and it was forbidden to sacrifice elsewhere. God’s unity was demonstrated by the unity of his Temple. Jerusalem became a holy city, an image of the Church, where God was to dwell as in his true temple, and of Heaven, where he will make us eternally happy by the manifestation of his glory.

After Solomon had built the Temple, he also built the palace of the kings, the architecture of which was worthy of so great a prince. His pleasure house, which was called the House of the Forest of Lebanon, was equally stately and delightful. The palace he reared for the queen was a new ornament to Jerusalem. Everything was vast in those edifices: the halls, the vestibules, the galleries, the walks, the king’s throne, and the tribunal where he sat to render judgment. Cedar was the only wood he used in these works. Everything was resplendent with gold and precious stones. Citizens and foreigners all admired the majesty of the kings of Israel. Everything else corresponded to this magnificence: the cities, arsenals, horses, chariots, and the prince’s guard. Commerce, navigation, law and order, together with a profound peace, rendered Jerusalem the richest city of the East. The kingdom enjoyed peace and plenty; and everything in it reflected the glory of Heaven. David’s wars showed how much toil it takes to attain that glory, and Solomon’s reign showed how peaceable is its enjoyment.

Moreover, the exaltation of those two great kings and of the royal family was the result of a special selection. David himself praises the wonder of that selection in these words: God hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make me king over all
Israel. And of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel.

This divine election had a higher aim than at first appears. The Messiah, who was so often promised as the son of Abraham, was also to be the son of David and of all the kings of Judah. It was with an eye to the Messiah that God promised David he would establish the throne of his kingdom forever. Solomon, chosen to succeed him, was destined to represent the person of the Messiah. And therefore God says to him, He shall be my son, and I will be his father, a thing he never said so emphatically of any other king or any other man.

Thus in David's time, and under his royal offspring, the mystery of the Messiah becomes clearer than ever in glorious prophecies that are brighter than the sun.

David had seen him from afar and had sung of him in his Psalms with a loftiness that will never be equaled. Often, when he meant only to praise the glory of his son Solomon, he was suddenly carried beyond himself and transported far beyond that subject, seeing him who is greater than Solomon in glory as well as in wisdom. The Messiah appeared to him seated on a throne more lasting than the sun and the moon. He saw at his feet all nations, subdued, and at the same time blessed in him, in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. He raised his vision still higher; he saw him in the brightness of the saints and before the daystar, proceeding eternally from the bosom of his Father, a priest forever, and without successor, succeeding nobody, created in an extraordinary manner, not according to the order of Aaron, but according to the order of Melchizedek, a new order which the Law did not know. He saw him sitting at the right hand of God, beholding from the highest heavens his enemies made his footstool. He is astonished at so grand a spectacle; and, transported with the glory of his Son, he calls him his Lord.

He saw him as God, whom God had anointed to make him reign over all the earth by truth, meekness, and justice. He was present in spirit at the council of God and heard from the eternal Father's own mouth that expression which he addresses to his only Son: This day have I begotten thee; to which God adds a promise of perpetual
dominance and the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Why do the heathen rage? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together. The Lord from the height of Heaven laughs at their mad projects and in spite of them establishes the empire of his Christ. He establishes it over them; and they are obliged to be the first subjects of that Christ whose yoke they wanted to shake off. And though the reign of that great Messiah was often foretold in the Scriptures in glorious images, God did not conceal from David the ignominies that were to be offered to that blessed fruit of his loins. God's people needed this instruction. Though that people, still weak, stood in need of being allured by temporal promises, they were not, however, to be allowed to look upon human greatness as the sovereign happiness and as their sole reward. Therefore, God shows them from afar that Messiah—so long promised and so ardently desired, the pattern of perfection and the object of his complacency—as overwhelmed in sorrow. The Cross appears to David as the true throne of this new king. He sees his hands and feet pierced, all his bones staring through his skin, violently suspended by the whole weight of his body; his garments parted, lots cast upon his vesture, his tongue moistened with gall and vinegar, his enemies raging all around him and glutting themselves with his blood. But at the same time he sees the glorious results of his humiliation: All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, whom they had forgotten for so many centuries, the poor coming first to the table of the Messiah and afterward the rich and powerful, all adoring and blessing him, himself presiding in the great and numerous Church, that is, in the assembly of the converted nations, and there declaring to his brethren the name of God, and his eternal truths. David, who saw these things, acknowledged upon seeing them that the kingdom of his Son was not of this world. He is not astonished at it, for he knows that the world will pass away; and a prince, always so humble upon the throne, saw plainly that a throne was not a possession in which his hopes ought to end.

Other prophets have also seen the mystery of the Messiah. There is nothing great or glorious that they have not said of his reign. One sees Bethlehem, the smallest city of Judah, made illustrious by his
birth; and at the same time, rising a little higher, he beholds a birth whereby he comes forth from all eternity out of the bosom of his father. Another sees his mother's virginity, an Immanuel, a God with us, proceeding from that virgin womb, and a wonderful child, whom he calls God. One perceives him coming to his temple; the other beholds him glorious in his grave, where death was conquered. While they publish his glory, they do not conceal the opprobriums he suffered. They saw him sold to his people, they knew the number and use of the thirty pieces of silver at which he was prized. At the same time that they beheld him exalted and extolled, they saw him despised and rejected of men, the astonishment of the world, as much by his humiliation as by his greatness; the least of men, a man of sorrows, surely he hath borne our griefs; doing good to an ungrateful people; disfigured by his wounds, and by them healing ours; treated as a malefactor; brought as a lamb to the slaughter, a long posterity proceeding from him by this means, and vengeance overtaking his unbelieving people. That nothing might be wanting to the prophecy, they counted the years till his coming; and unless we willfully blindfold ourselves, it is no longer possible to mistake him.

Not only did the prophets see Jesus Christ, they were also images of him and exemplified his mysteries, especially that of the Cross. Almost all of them suffered persecution for justice's sake and by their sufferings foreshadowed to us the innocence and truth persecuted in our Lord. We see Elijah and Elisha constantly threatened. How many times was Isaiah made the laughingstock of the populace and of the kings, who in the end, as the unchanging tradition of the Jews records it, sacrificed him to their fury? Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, is stoned; Ezekiel seems constantly afflicted; the misfortunes of Jeremiah are continual and inexplicable; and we see Daniel twice cast into the lions' den. All of them were contradicted and maltreated; and all have shown us by their example that, if the weakness of the ancient people required, in general, the encouragement of temporal blessings, the strong men of Israel, and men of extraordinary piety, were fed the bread of affliction and drank beforehand, for their sanctification, of the cup prepared for the Son of God; but that cup was all the bitterer, since the person of Jesus Christ was holier.

But what the prophets saw most clearly, and what they also
declared in the most eloquent terms, was the blessing bestowed upon the Gentiles by the Messiah. That root of Jesse and of David, appeared to the holy prophet Isaiah as an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek. The Man of Sorrows, by whose stripes we are healed, was chosen to wash the Gentiles by a holy sprinkling, which we recognize in his blood and in baptism. The kings, overcome with respect in his presence, shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. This is the witness given to the people, a leader, and a teacher to the Gentiles. Under him, an unknown nation shall join God's people, and the Gentiles shall come from all directions. This is the just of Zion, who shall go forth as brightness; this is the salvation as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings shall know this man, so highly celebrated in the prophecies of Zion.

But see him even better described, and of a unique nature: a man of wonderful meekness, the singularly elect of God, and in whom his soul delighteth, brings forth judgment to the Gentiles: and the isles shall wait for his law. (Thus the Hebrews call Europe and other distant countries.) He shall make no noise: he will scarcely be heard, so meek and peaceful shall he be. A bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. Far from confounding the weak and the sinners, his gracious voice shall call them, and his merciful hand shall be their mainstay. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and he shall open the prison to them that are bound. His power shall be no less than his goodness. His essential character is to join together meekness and efficacy; therefore, that sweet voice shall sound in a moment from one end of the world to the other; and without causing any sedition among men, it shall excite the whole earth. He is neither forbidding nor impetuous; and he, whom they hardly knew when he was in Judaea, shall be, not only a foundation for the Covenant of the people, but also a light to the Gentiles. Under his admirable reign the Assyrians and Egyptians shall form with the Israelites but one and the same people of God. Everything becomes Israel, everything becomes holy. Jerusalem is no longer an individual city; it is the image of a new society, in which all nations are gathered together: Europe, Africa, and Asia receive
preachers, among whom God has set his sign, among them, and they shall declare his glory among the Gentiles. The elect, until now called by the name of Israel, shall be called by a new name, which shall commemorate the accomplishment of the promises and a happy Amen. The priests and Levites, who until then had come from the line of Aaron, shall be taken henceforth out of the midst of the heathen. A new sacrifice, purer and more acceptable than the old ones, shall be substituted in their place, and it shall be known why David had sung the praises of a high priest of a new order. The Just shall come down from heaven like a dew, the earth shall bring forth its seed, and this shall be the Savior, with whom righteousness shall be born. Heaven and earth shall unite in bringing forth, as by one common birth, him who shall be at once of Heaven and of earth; new ideas of virtue shall appear to the world in his example and teachings; and the grace which he shall dispense shall imprint them on men's hearts. Everything changes at his coming, and God swears by himself, that every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear his sovereign power.

This was a part of the wonders which God showed to the prophets under the kings, the sons of David, and to David above all the rest. They all wrote in advance the history of the Son of God, who was also to be made the son of Abraham and of David. And thus everything followed its appointed course in the order of the divine counsels. The Messiah, seen from afar as the son of Abraham, is also shown at closer hand as the son of David. An eternal kingdom is promised him; the knowledge of God spread abroad throughout all the earth is shown as the certain sign, the fruit, as it were, of his coming; the conversion of the Gentiles and the blessing of all the nations of the world, so long promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is confirmed anew, and all God's people live in this expectation.

In the meantime, God continues to govern them in an admirable manner. He makes a new covenant with David and promises to protect him and his royal descendants, so long as they walk in the statutes he has given them through Moses; but if not, he threatens them with the severest punishments. David, who for a time forgets himself, is the first to feel them; but having made amends for his sin
by his repentance, he is crowned with prosperity and is proposed as the model of a perfect king. The throne is established in his house. So long as his son Solomon imitates his piety, he is happy; he goes astray in his old age, and God, who spares him for his servant David's sake, declares to him that he will punish him in the person of his son. Thus he shows fathers that, according to the secret order of his judgments, he continues their rewards or punishments after their death; and he holds them in submission to his laws by their dearest concern, that is, by their concern for their children. In execution of his decrees, Rehoboam, headstrong in himself, accepts foolish advice: his kingdom is diminished by ten tribes. While these ten rebellious and schismatic tribes turn aside from their God and from their king, the children of Judah, faithful to God and to David, whom he had chosen, adhere firmly to the Covenant and the faith of Abraham. The Levites, with Benjamin, also join them; the kingdom of God's people persists by their union under the name of the kingdom of Judah, and the Mosaic Law is maintained there with all its rites and ceremonies. Despite the idolatry and the dreadful corruption of the ten separated tribes, God remembers his Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His Law is not extinguished among those rebels; he constantly calls them to repentance by countless miracles and by continual warnings, which he sends them through his prophets. But as they become hardened in their wickedness, he can no longer bear with them and drives them out of the Promised Land, without hope of ever being reestablished in it.

The history of Tobias, which happened at the same time and during the beginning of the Captivity of the Israelites, shows us the behavior of God's elect who remained in the separated tribes. This holy man, while dwelling among them before the Captivity, found a way not only to preserve himself from the idolatries of his brethren but even to observe the Law and to worship God publicly in the Temple at Jerusalem, unmoved either by bad example or by fear. When he was a persecuted captive at Nineveh, he and his family persevered in piety; and the wonderful manner in which he and his son were rewarded for their faith, even upon earth, shows that, despite captivity and persecution, God had secret ways of making his servants taste the blessings of the Law by nonetheless raising
them, through the misfortunes they had to suffer, to more exalted ideas. By the examples of Tobias and by his righteous admonitions, the men of Israel were at least prompted to recognize, in the rod, God's hand which chastened them; but almost all continued in their obstinacy. The children of Judah, far from profiting by the chastisements of Israel, followed their bad example. God constantly warns them through his prophets, whom he sends them time after time, rising by night and sending them in the morning, as he says himself, to express his paternal solicitude. Angered by their ingratitude, he is moved against them and threatens to deal with them as with their rebellious brethren.

Chapter 5

The Prophetic Life and Ministry. God's Judgments Declared by the Prophecies

There is nothing more remarkable in the history of God's people than this ministry of the prophets. We see men set apart from the rest of the people by a secluded life and by a special garb. They have dwellings where they live in a sort of community, under a superior given them by God. Their poor and penitent life was an image of the mortification which was to be enjoined by the Gospel. God communicated himself to them in a special manner and made manifest to the eyes of the people that wonderful communication; but it never was so eminently conspicuous as in the times of disorder, when idolatry seemed about to abolish God's law. During those unhappy times, both by word of mouth and by writing, prophets loudly proclaimed on all sides God's threats and the testimony they bore to his truth. The writings they composed were in the hands of all the people and were carefully preserved in continual remembrance for future ages. Those of the people who remained faithful to God adhered to them; and we see that even in Israel, where idolatry reigned, the few faithful who remained observed with the prophets the Sabbath and the holy days established by the Law of Moses. It
was they who encouraged upright people to stand fast in the Covenant. Several of them suffered death; and, following their example, there were in the worst times—that is, even in the reign of Manasseh—countless faithful who laid down their lives for the truth, so that the truth has not been a single moment without a witness.

Thus the community of the people of God persisted: the prophets continued in it; a great number of the faithful strenuously persisted in the law of God, with them and with [the pious sacrificers, who kept the religious observances which their predecessors, back to the time of Aaron, had left them. During the most impious reigns, such as those of Ahaz and Manasseh, Isaiah and the other prophets did not complain that the people had given up the use of circumcision, which was the seal of the Covenant and in which, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, the entire observance of the Law was contained. Nor were the Sabbath and the other holy days abolished; and if Ahaz closed the gate of the Temple for a time, and if there was some interruption in the sacrifices, it was a violence which could not close the lips of those who praised and confessed God’s name publicly; for God never permitted this voice to become extinct among his people; and when Haman undertook to destroy the Lord’s heritage, to change his promises, and to put an end to his praises, we know what God did to prevent it. His power was no less evident when Antiochus wanted to destroy religion. Recall what the prophet said to Ahaz and Manasseh in order to uphold the truth of religion and the purity of worship! \textit{The words of the seers that spoke to them in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, as the sacred text remarks, are contained in the words of the kings of Israel.} If Manasseh was touched by them, we may not doubt that their doctrine kept a great number of the faithful in obedience to the Law; and the good party was so strong that, in judging the kings after their death, the faithful considered these impious kings unworthy of the sepulcher of David and of their other pious predecessors. For though it is written that Ahaz was buried in the City of David, the Scriptures specifically mention that \textit{they received him not in the sepulchers of the kings of Israel.} Mannasseh was not excepted from the severity of that judgment, although he had done penance in order to leave an eternal
monument of the horror in which his conduct was held. And lest it be thought that the multitude of those who, along with the prophets, adhered publicly to the worship of God lacked the legitimate succession of its usual pastors, Ezekiel refers specifically in two places to] the priests and Levites, the sons of Zadok who kept the ceremonies of the sanctuary, when the children of Israel went astray from him.

Yet, in spite of the prophets, in spite of the faithful priests, and in spite of the people united with them in observing the Law, idolatry, which had ruined Israel, often infected in Judah itself both the princes and the mass of the people. Though the kings forgot the God of their fathers, he long bore with their iniquities for the sake of David, his servant. David is always in his mind. When the royal sons of David follow their father’s good example, God works surprising wonders on their behalf; but when they degenerate, they feel the invincible strength of his arm, which then falls heavily upon them. The kings of Egypt, the kings of Syria, and, above all, the kings of Assyria and Babylon are used as instruments of his vengeance. Impiety increases, and God raises up in the East a king more haughty and more formidable than all that had hitherto appeared, namely, Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, the most terrible of all conquerors. From afar God shows him to the nations and kings as the avenger destined to punish them. He draws near, and terror marches before him. He takes Jerusalem a first time and carries away a part of its inhabitants to Babylon. Yet, neither those who remain in the country nor those who are transported—though warned, the former by Jeremiah and the latter by Ezekiel—turn to repentance. To those holy prophets they prefer the prophets who prophesied lies and flattered them in their wickedness. The avenger again marches on Judaea, and the yoke of Jerusalem is made heavier; but the city is not quite destroyed. At last, impiety reaches its height; pride increases with weakness; and Nebuchadrezzar razes the city.

God did not spare his own sanctuary. That glorious Temple, the ornament of the world, which was to have been everlasting had the children of Israel persevered in piety, was consumed by the fire of the Assyrians. In vain did the Jews cry out incessantly, The Temple
of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, is among us, as if that sacred Temple alone should have protected them. God had resolved to let them see that he was not confined to an edifice of stone, but that he would find his habitation in faithful hearts. So he destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem and delivered its treasure to the plunderers; and the many costly vessels, consecrated by pious kings, were given to an impious king.

But the fall of God's people was to teach a lesson to the whole world. In the person of this impious and, at the same time, victorious king, we see what conquerors are. They are for the most part merely instruments of divine vengeance. God exercises his justice through them and then exercises it upon them. Nebuchadrezzar, vested with divine power and invincible because of that ministry, punishes all the enemies of God's people; he devastates the Idumaeans, the Ammonites, and the Moabites and then proceeds to overthrow the kings of Syria. Egypt, under whose power Judaea had so often groaned, is now the prey of the proud tyrant and becomes tributary to him; and his power is no less fatal to Judaea itself, which does not know how to profit from the reprieves God grants her. Everything falls, everything is destroyed by divine justice, of which Nebuchadrezzar is the minister. He too shall fall in his turn, and God, who employs the hand of that prince to chastise his children and to bring down his enemies, reserves him for his own almighty arm.

Chapter 6

God's Judgments upon Nebuchadrezzar, upon the Kings Who Succeed Him, and upon the Entire Babylonian Empire

God did not leave his children ignorant of the destiny of that king who chastised them or of the empire of the Chaldaeans, under which they were to be captives. For fear that they might wonder at the glory of the wicked and of their proud reign, the prophets revealed their short duration. Isaiah, who saw the glory of Nebuchadrezzar and his
mad pride a long time before his birth, foretold his sudden fall, as well as that of his empire. Babylon was scarcely anything when that prophet foresaw its power and, shortly afterward, its downfall. Thus, the overthrow of the cities and empires which harassed God's people or profited by their destruction were written in the prophecies. These oracles were promptly fulfilled; and the Jews, so severely punished, saw fall before them, or with them, or shortly after them, according to the predictions of the prophets, not only Samaria, Idumaea, Gaza, Ascalon, Damascus, the cities of the Ammonites and Moabites—their perpetual enemies—but also the capitals of the great empires, even Tyre, mistress of the sea; even Tanis; even Memphis; even hundred-gated Thebes, with all the riches of its Sesostris; even Nineveh itself, the seat of the kings of Assyria, their persecutors; and even proud Babylon, victorious over all the rest and rich with their spoils.

It is true that Jerusalem perished at the same time for its sins; but God did not leave it without hope. Isaiah, who had foretold its ruin, had seen its glorious restoration and had even named Cyrus as its deliverer, 200 years before he was born. Jeremiah, whose predictions had been so precise in pointing out to that ungrateful people their certain overthrow, had also promised them their return after 70 years of captivity. During those years the humbled people were respected in their prophets: these captives pronounced to kings and nations their dreadful doom. Nebuchadrezzar, who wished to be worshiped, himself worships Daniel, astonished at the divine secrets he revealed to him. Nebuchadrezzar learns from Daniel the sentence which swiftly overtook him. This victorious prince triumphed in Babylon, which he made the greatest, strongest, and most beautiful city under the sun. There God intended to confound his pride. Happy and invulnerable, as it were, at the head of his armies and during the whole course of his conquests, he was to perish in his house, according to Ezekiel's oracle. While admiring his own greatness and the beauty of Babylon, he exalts himself above humanity. God strikes him, deprives him of his understanding, and degrades him to the rank of the beasts. Nebuchadrezzar recovers his senses at the time specified by Daniel and recognizes the God of Heaven, who had made him feel his power.
But his successors do not take warning from his example. The affairs of Babylon fall into confusion, and the time specified by the prophecies for the restoration of Judah arrives amid all these troubles. Cyrus appears at the head of the Medes and Persians; everything gives way before that formidable conqueror. He advances slowly toward the Chaldaeans, and his march meets with frequent interruptions. Rumors of his coming are heard from time to time, as Jeremiah had foretold. At last he makes up his mind. Babylon, often threatened by the prophets and always proud and impenitent, sees its conqueror arrive and despises him. Its riches, its lofty walls, its countless inhabitants, its prodigious ramparts, which enclosed a whole large country, as all the ancients attest, and its infinite supplies—all these make it overly confident. 

Besieged a long time without experiencing any inconvenience, Babylon laughs at its enemies and at the ditches Cyrus has dug about it; nothing is talked of there but banquets and rejoicings. King Belshazzar, a grandson of Nebuchadrezzar and as proud as he but a lesser man, gives a solemn feast to all his lords. This feast is celebrated with unheard-of excesses. Belshazzar sends for the sacred vessels which had been taken from the Temple and mingles profanation with luxury. God’s wrath breaks forth: a heavenly hand writes terrible words upon the wall of the room where the feast is held. Daniel interprets its meaning, and that prophet, who had foretold the fatal fall of the grandfather, likewise shows the grandson the thunder that is about to burst upon him. In fulfillment of God’s decree, Cyrus suddenly opens a breach into Babylon. The Euphrates, deflected into the channels he had so long been preparing for it, bares to him its immense bed, and he enters by this unexpected passage. Thus was delivered up as prey to the Medes, to the Persians, and to Cyrus, as the prophets had said, that proud Babylon. And thus perished with it the empire of the Chaldaeans, which had destroyed so many other kingdoms; and the hammer which had broken the whole earth in pieces was itself cut asunder and broken. Jeremiah had foretold it. The Lord broke the rod with which he had smitten so many nations. Isaiah had foreseen it. The nations accustomed to the yoke of the Chaldaean kings now see them under the yoke themselves: Art thou also become weak as we?
said they, art thou become like unto us? For thou hast said in thy heart, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will be like the Most High. This Isaiah had also foretold. Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground. Bel is broken, and Nebo, its great god, from whom the kings took their names, is toppled. For the Persians, their enemies, worshipers of the sun, would not permit idols or kings as gods. But how did this Babylon perish? Why, just as the prophets had declared. Its waters were dried up, as Jeremiah had foretold, to give passage to the conqueror. Drunk, sleeping, betrayed by its own rejoicing, according to the same prophet, the city found itself in the power of its enemies and was taken as in a snare and was not aware of it. All the inhabitants were put to the sword; for the Medes, her vanquishers, as Isaiah had foretold, sought neither gold not silver but vengeance, to satiate their hatred by the destruction of a cruel people whose pride made them the enemy of all the peoples of the world. The messengers came one after another to tell the king that the enemy was entering the city: so Jeremiah had described it. The astrologers, in whom Babylon trusted and who promised it a perpetual rule, could not save it from its destroyer. Isaiah and Jeremiah declare this with one accord. In that dreadful slaughter, the Jews, having timely warning, alone escaped the victors' sword. Cyrus, who by this conquest had become master of the whole East, acknowledges that in a mysterious way there is something divine in that often-conquered people. Enraptured with the oracles which had foretold his victories, he confesses that he owes his empire to the God of Heaven whom the Jews served, and he marks the first year of his reign by the restoration of his Temple and his people.

Chapter 7


Who would not here admire the Divine Providence so clearly revealed to the Jews and the Chaldaeans, to Jerusalem and Babylon?
God means to punish both; and lest they be ignorant that it is he alone who does it, he is pleased to declare it by more than a hundred prophecies. Jerusalem and Babylon, both threatened at the same time and by the same prophets, fall one after the other within the appointed time.

But here God reveals the great secret of the two chastisements he inflicts: a rigorous chastisement of the Chaldaeans; a fatherly chastisement of the Jews, who are his children.

The pride of the Chaldaeans (for this was the characteristic of the nation and the spirit of that whole empire) is humbled beyond all hope. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up. So said Jeremiah, and Isaiah before him. Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldee, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, to whom God left no appeal. But not so with the Jews. God chastened them like disobedient children, whom he returns to their duty by correction, and then, moved by their tears, he forgets their faults. Fear then not, O Jacob, saith the Lord; for I am with thee, for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure, yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished. Thus Babylon, taken forever from the Chaldaeans, is delivered up to another people; and Jerusalem, restored by a wonderful alteration, sees its children return from all directions.

Chapter 8

Return of the People under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah

It was Zerubbabel, of the tribe of Judah and of the royal blood, who brought them back out of captivity. The men of Judah return in crowds and fill the whole country. The ten scattered tribes are lost among the Gentiles, save those who, under the name of Judah and reunited under its standards, return to the land of their fathers.

In the meantime, the altar is reerected, the Temple is rebuilt, the walls of Jerusalem are raised again. The jealousy of the neighboring
nations is checked by the kings of Persia, who have become the protectors of God’s people. The high priest resumes his office, with all the other priests who proved their descent by the public registers; the rest are cast out of the priesthood. Ezra, a priest himself and a doctor of the Law, and Nehemiah, the governor, reform all the abuses which the Captivity had introduced and enforce the Law in its purity. The people mourn with them for the transgressions which had brought those severe chastisements upon them, and they acknowledge that Moses had foretold them. Together they all read in the sacred books the threats of the man of God and see their fulfillment. The oracle of Jeremiah, and the so-often-promised return after the seventy years’ Captivity, astonishes and comforts them; they worship the judgments of God and, reconciled with him, live in peace.

Chapter 9

God, Ready to Put an End to the Prophecies, Spreads His Lights More Abundantly than Ever

God, who does everything in his own due time, had chosen this time to put an end to the extraordinary means, that is to say, the prophecies, among his people, henceforth sufficiently instructed. About 500 years remained until the days of the Messiah. God, in honor of his Son’s majesty, silences the prophets during that whole time, to keep his people in expectation of him who was to be the fulfillment of all their oracles.

But toward the expiration of the times in which God had resolved to put an end to the prophecies, he seemed willing to spread abroad all his light and to disclose all the counsels of his Providence, so clearly did he reveal the secrets of times to come.

During the Captivity and especially as it approached its end, Daniel, revered for his piety even by infidel kings and employed for his prudence in the greatest affairs of their kingdoms, saw in successive order, at different times, four monarchies under which
the Israelites were to live. He describes each of them by its own special characteristics. We see the empire of a king of the Greeks pass like a torrent: it was that of Alexander. Its fall leads to the establishment of a lesser empire, an empire weakened by its divisions. This was the empire of Alexander’s successors. Four of them are pointed out in this prophecy: Antipater, Seleucus, Ptolemy, and Antigonus are visibly described. It is evident from history that these were more powerful than the rest and were the only ones whose power was passed on to their children. We see their wars, their rivalries, and their deceitful alliances; the cruelty and ambition of the kings of Syria; the pride and the other characteristics which distinguish Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the implacable enemy of God’s people; the shortness of his reign and the speedy punishment of his excesses. Finally, toward the end, we see the reign of the Son of Man rise out of these monarchies. By this name you recognize Jesus Christ: but that reign of the Son of Man also is called the Kingdom of the Saints of the Most High. All nations are made subject to this great and peaceful empire: eternity is promised to it, and it is to be the only one whose power shall not pass to another empire.

God clearly shows Daniel when the Son of Man and the so-much-longed-for Christ shall come and how he shall accomplish the work entrusted to him, that is to say, the redemption of mankind. While his mind is taken up with the Captivity of his people in Babylon and the seventy years which God had set for this Captivity, while he is making supplications for the deliverance of his brethren, Daniel is suddenly raised to more exalted mysteries. He sees another number of years and another far more important deliverance. Instead of the seventy years foretold by Jeremiah, he is shown seventy weeks, beginning with the issuance of the commandment of Artaxerxes I Longimanus, in the twentieth year of his reign, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Indicated in precise terms at the end of these weeks is the remission of sins, everlasting righteousness, the complete fulfillment of the prophecies, and the anointing of the Most Holy. The Christ is to assume his office and appear as the leader of the people after sixty-nine weeks. After sixty-nine weeks (for the prophet repeats it) the Christ shall be put to death. He is to die a violent death: he must
be sacrificed in order to fulfill the mysteries. One week is distinguished among the rest, the last and seventieth. It is the week in which the Messiah shall be sacrificed, in which the Covenant shall be confirmed; and in the midst of which the sacrifice and the oblation shall cease. Doubtless, by the death of Christ: for it is by reason of his death that this change is pointed out. After the Messiah's death and the abolition of the sacrifices, nothing is to be seen but horror and confusion; we see the destruction of the Holy City and sanctuary: a people and a captain who come to destroy everything: abomination in the Temple; and the final and irremediable desolation of the people, ungrateful toward their Savior.

We have seen that those weeks, understood as weeks of years, according to scriptural usage, make 490 years and bring us precisely from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes down to the last week, a week full of mysteries, in which Jesus Christ, sacrificed, by his death puts an end to the sacrifices of the Law and fulfills its prefigurations. The learned make various computations to make the times agree with the actual dates. The one which I have proposed to you involves no inconveniences. Far from obscuring the historical sequence of the kings of Persia, it throws light upon it, although it would not be very surprising to find some uncertainty in the dates of those princes; and the few years that could be disputed, in a total of 490, will never be a matter of importance. But why need we say more? God has solved the difficulty, if there were any, by a decision that admits of no reply. A manifest event sets us above all the little niceties of the chronologists; and the total destruction of the Jews, which followed so closely upon the death of our Lord, demonstrates to the dullest understanding the fulfillment of the prophecy.

There now remains but one circumstance to which I must call your attention. Daniel discloses to us a new mystery. Jacob's prophecy had taught us that the kingdom of Judah was to cease with the coming of the Messiah; but it did not tell us that his death should be the cause of that kingdom's downfall. God revealed this important secret to Daniel and declares to him that the ruin of the Jews shall be the consequence of the death of Christ and of their rejection of the Messiah. Please be sure to keep this passage in mind; subsequent events will soon throw a wonderful light on it.
Chapter 10

The Prophecies of Zechariah and Haggai

You see what God showed the prophet Daniel shortly before the victories of Cyrus and the rebuilding of the Temple. While it was being built, he raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah; and immediately after, he sent Malachi, who was to close the prophecies of the ancient people.

And how much Zechariah saw! One would think that the book of divine decrees had been opened to this prophet and that he had read in it the whole history of God's people from the time of the Captivity.

The persecutions by the kings of Syria and the wars they wage against Judah are disclosed to him from beginning to end. He sees Jerusalem taken and sacked; a dreadful pillage and endless disorders; the people fleeing into the wilderness, uncertain of their fate, hovering between life and death; but, when they are on the brink of utter desolation, he sees a new light suddenly appearing to them. The enemies are conquered; the idols are toppled throughout the Holy Land; we see peace and plenty prevailing in town and country; and the Temple is revered throughout the East.

One memorable circumstance of those wars is revealed to the prophet: [And Judah also, he says, shall fight at Jerusalem. This meant] that Jerusalem was to be betrayed by its own children, and that many Jews would be found among its enemies.

Sometimes he sees a long period of prosperity: Judah is filled with strength; the kingdoms that oppressed it are humbled; the neighbors who unceasingly harassed it are punished; some are converted and become part of God's people. The prophet beholds this people crowned with divine favors, among which he includes the triumph, no less modest than glorious, of the lowly king, the peaceful king and Savior, riding upon an ass to his city of Jerusalem.

After recounting their prosperity, he summarizes, from the beginning, the whole series of their calamities. He suddenly sees the Temple on fire; the whole country destroyed with the capital; murders and violence, and a king authorizing them. God takes pity
on his forsaken people; he himself becomes their shepherd, and his protection upholds them. In the end, civil wars break out, and decadence begins. The time of this change is specified by a special sign: [three shepherds or, in accordance with the ancient style, three princes cut off in one month. The words of the prophet are precise. He said, *Three shepherds* (that is to say, three princes) *also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them* (my people); *and their soul abhorred me*, and did not remain faithful to my precepts. *And I said, I will no longer be your shepherd.* I will not govern you any longer (with that special care you always enjoy); I will abandon you to yourselves, to your unfortunate destiny, to the spirit of division which will rise among you. I will henceforth take no care to avert the evils which threaten you. *That that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.* This, then, was to be the lot of the Jews justly abandoned by God; and in precise terms this decadence begins with the fall of these three princes. The events which followed will show us that the fulfillment of the prophecy has been no less manifest.]*

In the midst of so many woes, predicted so clearly by Zechariah, appears an even greater misfortune. Shortly after those divisions, and during the times of decadence, *God is priced at thirty pieces of silver* by his ungrateful people; and the prophet sees everything, *even to the potter’s or sculptor’s field*, for which the money is used. Extreme disorders among the shepherds of the people follow; at last they are blinded, and their power is destroyed.

What shall I say of the wonderful vision of Zechariah, who sees *the shepherd smitten, and the sheep scattered*? What shall I say of the *look which the people cast upon their God, whom they have pierced*, and of their mourning for a more lamentable death than that of an only son or than that of Josiah? Zechariah saw all these things; but the greatest sight he saw was *the Lord sent by the Lord to inhabit Jerusalem, whence he calls the Gentiles, to join them to his people, and to dwell in the midst of them.*

Haggai says less, but what he says is surprising. While the second Temple is being built, and while the old men who had seen the first

*The second edition read simply: “and three princes fallen in a single month provide a sign of its beginning.”*
burst into tears on comparing the meanness of this latter edifice with the magnificence of the former, the prophet, who sees farther than they, declares the glory of the second Temple and prefers it to the first. He explains the source of the glory of this new house: *The Desire of the Gentiles shall come*; the Messiah, promised for 2,000 years, even from the very beginning of the world, as the Savior of the Gentiles, shall appear in this new Temple. *Peace shall be established there; the whole world, moved, shall bear witness to the coming of its Redeemer; there is now but a little while to await him, and the times appointed for that expectation are in their last phase.

**Chapter 11**


At length the Temple is finished. Victims are sacrificed, but the covetous Jews present only defective offerings. Malachi, who reproves them for it, is raised to a higher thought: upon the occasion of the polluted offerings of the Jews, he sees that an offering which is always pure and never tainted will be presented to God, no longer, as in the past, only in the Temple of Jerusalem, but from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down: no longer by the Jews but by the Gentiles, among whom, he prophesies, the name of God shall be great.

Like Haggai, he also sees the glory of the second Temple and the Messiah honoring it with his presence; but at the same time he sees that the Messiah is the God to whom that Temple is dedicated: *Behold, I will send my messenger, says the Lord, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord ye seek, even the messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in, shall come to his Temple.*

An angel is a messenger. But here is a messenger of marvelous rank: a messenger who has a Temple, a messenger who is God and who enters into the Temple as into his own dwelling; a messenger
desired by all the people, who comes to make a new convenant and who for that reason is called the Messenger of the Covenant or of the Testament.

It was therefore in the second Temple that this God, the messenger of God, was to appear; but another messenger goes before him and prepares his way. Here we see the Messiah preceded by his forerunner. The character of that forerunner is also revealed to the prophet. He is to be a new Elijah, remarkable for his holiness, for the austerity of his life, for his authority, and for his zeal.

Thus the last prophet of the ancient people pointed out the first prophet who was to come after him, or that Elijah, the forerunner of the Lord, who was to appear. Until that time God’s people expected no prophet; the Mosaic Law was to be sufficient for them, and therefore Malachi concludes with these words: Remember ye the Law of Moses my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their father, who will show the latter what was expected by the former.

To this Law of Moses God had added the prophets—who had spoken in conformity with it—and the history of God’s people composed by these same prophets, in which the promises and warnings of the Law were confirmed by visible experiences. Everything was carefully written down; everything was set forth in chronological order; and this was what God left for the instruction of his people when he put an end to the prophecies.

Chapter 12

The Times of the Second Temple. Fruits of the Chastisements and of the Preceding Prophecies. Cessation of Idolatry and of the False Prophets

Such instruction worked great changes in the ways of the Israelites. They no longer needed either visions, manifest predictions, or those
unheard-of wonders which God had so often performed for their preservation. The proofs they had received were sufficient; and once their incredulity had been not only overcome by events but also frequently punished, they at last became docile.

Therefore, from that time on we never see them return to idolatry, to which they were so strangely inclined. They had fared too badly whenever they had rejected the God of their fathers. They were always calling to mind Nebuchadrezzar and their own destruction, which, so often foretold in all its circumstances, was yet upon them before they believed it. No less did they admire their restoration, brought about, contrary to all appearances, in the time and by the person that had been pointed out to them. Never did they behold the second Temple without remembering why the former had been destroyed and how this latter had been rebuilt; and thus did they confirm themselves in the faith of their Scriptures, to which their whole state bore testimony.

False prophets were no longer to be seen among them. They had thrown off both their propensity to believe in them and their propensity for idolatry. Zechariah had foretold in one and the same oracle that both these things would happen to them. [These are the words of the prophecy: And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord. One may see in this very text the remainder of this prophecy, which is equally strong.] This prophecy was clearly fulfilled. The false prophets ceased under the second Temple. The people, scandalized at their imposture, were no longer inclined to listen to them. The true prophets of God were read over and over, continually; they needed no commentary, and the things which occurred daily in fulfillment of their prophecies interpreted them only too faithfully.
And indeed, all their prophets had promised them a profound peace. We still behold with pleasure the beautiful picture which Isaiah and Ezekiel draw of the happy times that were to follow the Captivity of Babylon. All the ruins are repaired, the cities and towns are magnificently rebuilt, the people are without number, the enemies are brought low, and plenty abounds in town and country; in the prophecies of both we see joy, rest, and, in short, all the fruits of a long peace. God promises to keep his people in a lasting and perfect tranquillity. They enjoyed it under the kings of Persia. So long as that empire stood, the favorable decrees of Cyrus, who was its founder, secured the peace of the Jews. Though they were threatened with their final destruction under Ahasuerus, whoever he was, God, moved by their tears, suddenly turned the king’s heart and took a remarkable vengeance upon Haman, their enemy. Except in this emergency, which was soon over, they knew no fear. Instructed by their prophets to obey the kings to whom God had subjected them, their fidelity was inviolable. That is why they were always treated well. In exchange for a rather slight tribute which they paid to their sovereigns, who were their protectors rather than their masters, they lived according to their own laws: the sacerdotal power was preserved in its entirety; the priests guided the people; the public council, first established by Moses, enjoyed its full authority; and they exercised among themselves the power of life and death, without anyone’s interfering with their conduct. So the kings ordered it. The destruction of the Persian Empire did not change their situation. Alexander respected their Temple, admired their prophecies, and added to their privileges. They suffered somewhat under his first successors. Ptolemy, son of Lagus, took Jerusalem by surprise and carried away into Egypt a hundred thousand captives; but he soon ceased to hate them. [Rather, he never hated them; he merely wished to win them away from the kings of Syria, his enemies. In fact, he had no sooner subjugated them than] he
personally made them citizens of Alexandria, the capital of his kingdom (or rather, he confirmed to them the grant that Alexander, the founder of that city, had already made them); and finding in all his dominions none more faithful than the Jews, he filled his armies with them and entrusted to them the most important fortresses. If the Lagidae had some consideration for them, they were still better treated by the Seleucidae, under whose domination they lived. Seleucus Nicator, head of that family, settled them in Antioch; and after Antiochus Theos, his grandson, had given orders to receive them in all the cities of Asia Minor, we see them spreading throughout Greece, living there according to their own law and enjoying the same privileges with the other citizens as they did at Alexandria and Antioch. In the meantime, their Law is put into Greek at the instigation of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt. The Jewish religion is made known among the Gentiles; the Temple of Jerusalem is enriched by the gifts of kings and of peoples; the Jews live in peace and liberty under the power of the Syrian monarchs and enjoyed such tranquillity as they had rarely had under their own kings.

Chapter 14

INTERUPTION AND REESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE. DIVISION IN THE HOLY PEOPLE. PERSECUTION OF ANTIOCHUS. ALL THIS FORETOLD.

It seemed that this tranquillity would be everlasting, had they not themselves disturbed it by their dissensions. For 300 years they had enjoyed this rest, so often foretold by their prophets, when ambition and jealousy arose among them and came near to undoing them. Some of the most powerful betrayed their people in order to flatter the kings; they wished to make themselves famous after the manner of the Greeks and preferred that vain pomp to the solid glory which the observance of the laws of their ancestors acquired for them among their countrymen. They held games like the Gentiles. This
novelty dazzled the people, and idolatry clothed in such magnificence appeared beautiful to many of the Jews. To these changes were joined disputes over the high priesthood, which was the chief dignity of the nation. The ambitious devoted themselves to the kings of Syria in order to attain it, and that sacred dignity was the reward for the flattery of those minions. The jealousies and divisions of individuals very soon caused, as usual, great misfortunes for the entire people and to the Holy City. [Then what Zechariah had foretold occurred, as we noted earlier: And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem, and that city was betrayed by its citizens.] Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, conceived the plan of destroying this divided people in order to seize its wealth. When that prince appeared, he had all the characteristics Daniel had given him: he was ambitious, covetous, crafty, cruel, insolent, impious, mad, elated with his victories, and then enraged at his losses. He enters Jerusalem in a condition to attempt anything; the factions of the Jews, and not his own strength, embolden him: and so Daniel had foreseen it. He commits unheard-of cruelties: his pride carries him to the greatest excesses, and he spews forth blasphemies against the Most High, as foretold by the same prophet. In fulfillment of these prophecies, and by reason of the people’s sins, strength is given him against the daily sacrifice. He profanes God’s Temple, which the kings, his ancestors, had revered; he pillages it and, with the riches he finds there, restores the ruins of his exhausted treasury. Under pretext of promoting conformity in the morality of his subjects but in reality to satiate his own avarice by plundering Judaea, he commands the Jews to worship the same gods as the Greeks; above all, he orders that they adore Olympian Zeus, whose idol he places in the very Temple; and, more impious than Nebuchadrezzar himself, he attempts to destroy the holy days, the Mosaic Law, the sacrifices, the religion, and the whole people. But this prince’s success had its limits, set by the prophecies. Mattathias takes a stand against his violence and unites all the good people under his banner. Judas Maccabaeus, his son, with a handful of men, performs unheard-of exploits and purifies God’s Temple three and a half years after its profanation, as Daniel had foretold. He pursues the Idumaeans and all the other Gentiles who joined Antiochus; and, having taken from
them their strongest fortresses, he returns victorious and humble, just as Isaiah had seen him, singing the praises of God, who had delivered into his hands the enemies of his people, and still red with their blood. He continues his victories, notwithstanding the pro-
digious armies of Antiochus' captains. Daniel had allowed this wicked prince only six years to torment the people of God; and, behold, at the appointed time he learns at Ecbatana of the heroic deeds of Judas. He falls into a profound melancholy and dies a miserable death, as foretold by the prophet, but not by the hand of man, after acknowledging, but too late, the power of the God of Israel.

I need not now tell you about how his successors carried on the war against Judaea or about the death of Judas, its deliverer, or about the victories of his two brothers, Jonathan and Simon, successively high priests, whose valor restored the ancient glory of God's people. These three great men saw the kings of Syria and all the neighboring nations joined against them; and, what was more deplorable, they saw, at different times, the men of Judah itself in arms against their country and against Jerusalem: a thing till then unheard of, but specifically noted by the prophets. In the face of such calamities, their confidence in God rendered them undaunted and invincible. The people remained happy under their rule, and at length, in Simon's time, being freed from the yoke of the Gentiles, they submitted to him and his children, with the consent of the kings of Syria.

But the act by which the people of God transfer to Simon the whole public authority, and grant him royal powers, is remarkable. The decree states that he and his posterity shall enjoy them, until there shall arise a faithful and true prophet.

The people—accustomed from their origin to a divine government and knowing that, ever since the time when David had been set upon the throne by God's command, the sovereign power had belonged to his house, to which it was at last to be restored at the time of the Messiah, though in a more mysterious and higher way than they would anticipate—placed this specific restriction upon the power they gave their high priests and continued to live under them in expectation of that so-often-promised Christ.
Thus did that absolutely free kingdom exercise its rights and provide for its government. Jacob’s posterity, through the tribe of Judah and the others who marched under its banners, was preserved in a body politic and enjoyed independently and peaceably the land that had been assigned them.

[The Jewish religion shone with great luster and received new evidence of divine protection. Jerusalem, besieged and reduced to the last extremity by Antiochus Sidetes, king of Syria, was freed from this siege in a wonderful manner. This prince, moved at the sight of a famished people more concerned about its religion than about its misfortunes, granted an armistice of seven days in favor of the sacred week of the Feast of the Tabernacles. Far from disturbing the besieged during that sacred time, with royal munificence he sent them victims to be sacrificed in their Temple, heedless of the fact that he was at the same time furnishing them food in their extreme need. As the learned chronologists note, the Jews had just observed the sabbatical or rest year, that is, the seventh year, when, as Moses writes, the ground was to be left alone and allowed to rest. Everything was lacking in Judaea; and the king of Syria could with one stroke have destroyed the entire nation, which had been portrayed to him as perpetually hostile and rebellious. God, to guard his children against such an inevitable loss, did not, as in the past, send his exterminating angels; but, what is no less marvelous, although in another manner, he moved the king’s heart. Antiochus, admiring the piety of the Israelites, whom no danger had turned from the most burdensome observances of their religion, granted them life and peace. The prophets had foretold that God would no longer save his people by working miracles, like those of times past, but by the workings of a milder Providence, which, nevertheless, would be equally efficacious and in the long run just as obvious. As a result of this milder Providence, John Hyrcanus, whose distinguished valor had been noted in the armies of Antiochus, after the death of that prince took up again the reins of the government of his country.]*

Under him the Jews extended their dominion by important

*The second edition read: “By virtue of the popular decree which we have just described, John Hyrcanus, Simon’s son, succeeded his father.”
conquests. They subjugated Samaria (Ezekiel and Jeremiah had foretold this), they subdued the Idumaeans or Edomites, the Philistines, and the Ammonites, their perpetual enemies, and these nations embraced their religion (Zechariah had foretold this). At last, in spite of the hatred and jealousy of the surrounding nations, under the authority of their priests, who eventually became their kings, they founded the new kingdom of the Hasmonaeans or Maccabees, a kingdom more extensive than ever, except for the days of David and Solomon.

In this manner God's people continued to subsist amid great changes; and that people, sometimes punished, and sometimes comforted in its afflictions by the different treatment they meet with according to their deserts, bears public witness to the Providence which governs the world.

Chapter 15

Expectation of the Messiah. Its Basis. Preparation for His Reign and the Conversion of the Gentiles

But in whatever state they were, the Jews always lived in expectation of the time of the Messiah, in which they looked for new favors, greater than any they had yet received; and no one fails to see that their faith in the Messiah and his miracles, which continues to this day among the Jews, has been transmitted to them by their patriarchs and prophets from the very origin of their nation. For during those long years when, as they themselves acknowledged, Providence had determined that no more prophets would arise among them and when God gave them no new predictions or promises, that faith in the Messiah who was to come was more firm than ever. It was so well established when the second Temple was built that no prophet was needed to reassure the people. They lived by their faith in the ancient prophecies, which they had seen so literally fulfilled before their eyes in so many instances; from that time, the other prophecies never appeared doubtful to them, nor had
they the slightest difficulty in believing that God, so faithful in everything, would also, in his own good time, fulfill his promise concerning the Messiah, which was the chief of his promises and the foundation of all the others.

And indeed, their whole history, everything that happened to them from day to day, was but one continued unfolding of the oracles which the Holy Spirit had left them. If, reinstated in their own land after the Captivity, they enjoyed 300 years of profound peace; if their Temple was revered and their religion honored throughout the East; if at last this peace was disturbed by their dissensions; if the haughty king of Syria made unheard-of efforts to destroy them; if he prevailed for a time; if, shortly thereafter, he was punished; if the Jewish religion and the entire people of God were restored with a more wonderful glory than ever before, and the kingdom of Judah grew in the latter times through new conquests, we have seen that all this was written in their prophets. Yes, everything was specified there, even the length of time the persecutions were to last, the places where the battles were to be fought, and the lands that were to be conquered.

I have given you a general account of those prophecies; minute detail would involve a longer discourse, but you see enough of them to remain convinced of these famous predictions, which are the basis of our belief. The deeper one delves into them, the more truth one finds in them; and, during all those periods, the prophecies of God’s people have been so clearly fulfilled that afterwards, when the pagans themselves, a Porphyry or a Julian the Apostate, who were, moreover, enemies of the Scriptures, wanted to give examples of prophetic predictions, they sought them among the Jews.

And I may even truthfully assert to you that though God’s people were without a prophet for 500 years, the whole mood of those times was prophetic: God’s work was going forward, and the way was insensibly being prepared for the full accomplishment of the ancient oracles.

The return from the Babylonian Captivity was but a shadow of the greater and more necessary liberty which the Messiah was to bring to men, the captives of sin. The people, scattered in divers places of
Upper Asia, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Greece itself, began to show forth among the Gentiles the name and glory of the God of Israel. The Scriptures, which were one day to be the light of the world, were put into the language most widely known upon earth; their antiquity was acknowledged. While the Temple is revered and the Scriptures are spread abroad among the Gentiles, God gives some idea of their future conversion and from afar lays its foundations.

What took place even among the Greeks was a preparation for the knowledge of the truth. Their philosophers were aware that the world was ruled by a God very different from those whom the populace worshiped and whom they themselves worshiped with the populace. The Greek histories show that this excellent philosophy came from the East and from the places to which the Jews had been dispersed. But from whatever place it may have come, so important a truth propagated among the Gentiles—however opposed, however ill followed, even by those who taught it—began to awaken mankind and furnished beforehand certain proof to those who were one day to rescue them from their ignorance.

Chapter 16

Amazing Blindness of Idolatry before the Coming of the Messiah

But since the conversion of the Gentile world was a work reserved for the Messiah and was the proper nature of his coming, error and impiety prevailed everywhere. The most enlightened and wisest nations, the Chaldaeans, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans, were the most ignorant and the most blind in matters of religion, which only proves that one must be brought to religion by a special grace and by a more than human wisdom. Who would dare tell of the ceremonies of the immortal gods and of their impure mysteries? Their loves, their cruelties, their jealousies, and all their other excesses were the subject of their festivals, of their sacrifices,
of the hymns that were sung to them, and of the paintings that were consecrated in their temples. Thus wickedness was worshiped and considered necessary to the service of the gods. The gravest of the philosophers forbids drinking to excess except at the feasts of Bacchus and in honor of that god. Another, after severely censuring all disreputable images, made an exception for those of the gods who chose to be honored by such infamies. One cannot read without astonishment of the honors that were paid to Venus and of the prostitution that was established for her worship. Greece, however polished and wise, had accepted those abominable mysteries. In pressing emergencies, private persons and republics vowed courtesans to Venus; and Greece did not blush to ascribe her preservation to the prayers they offered up to their goddess. After the defeat of Xerxes and his formidable armies, a picture was placed in the temple in which were portrayed their vows and processions, with this inscription of Simonides, the famous poet: "They prayed to the goddess Venus, who for their sake saved Greece."

If love had to be worshiped, it should at least have been honorable love; but this was not the case. Solon (who could believe it, or expect so great an infamy from so great a name?), Solon, I say, erected at Athens a temple to Venus the prostitute, the Venus of unchaste love. All Greece was full of temples consecrated to this goddess, and conjugal love had not one shrine in the whole country.

Yet the Greeks detested adultery in men and women; the conjugal tie was sacred among them. But when it came to religion, they appeared possessed by a strange spirit, and their natural light forsook them.

Nor did Roman gravity treat religion any more seriously, since it consecrated to the honor of the gods the impurities of the theater and the bloody spectacles of the gladiators, that is to say, the most corrupt and barbarous things imaginable.

But it is hard to say if the ridiculous follies that became part of religion had not a still more pernicious effect, for they brought religion into great contempt. Could people preserve the respect due to divine things when the memory or reenactment of these impertinent fables constituted so great a part of the divine worship? The whole public service was but one continued profanation, or
rather a derision, of God’s name; and there must have been some
power, an enemy to that sacred name, who, in order to disparage it,
prompted men to use it in things so contemptible and even to debase
it for such vile service.

It is true that the philosophers did at last realize that there was
another God besides those which the populace worshiped; but they
dared not admit it. On the contrary, Socrates advanced it as a
maxim that everyone ought to follow the religion of his country.
Plato, his disciple, who saw Greece and all the countries of the world
filled with an absurd and scandalous worship, nevertheless put
forth, as one of the basic tenets of his Republic, “that men must
never make any change in the religion they find established, and
that it is madness even to think of it.” Such serious philosophers,
who said excellent things concerning the divine nature, did not dare
oppose public error and were without hope of overcoming it. When
Socrates was accused of denying the gods the public adored, he
defended himself from the accusation as from a crime; and Plato,
speaking of the god who had formed the universe, says that it is hard
to find him and that it is forbidden to declare him to the people. He
protests that he never speaks of him but enigmatically, for fear of
exposing so great a truth to ridicule.

Mankind was plunged into such an abyss that it could not bear
the least idea of the true God! Athens, the most polished and most
learned of all the Greek cities, regarded as atheists those who spoke
of things intellectual, and this was one of the reasons for which
Socrates was condemned. Though some philosophers presumed to
Teach that statues were not gods, as the populace imagined, they
were forced to recant this doctrine; and even then they were
banished as profane persons by sentence of the Areopagus. The
whole earth was gripped by the same error; truth did not dare to
show its head. The God who had created the world had neither
temple nor worship except in Jerusalem. When the Gentiles sent
their offerings there, the only honor they gave to the God of Israel
was to associate him with the other gods. Judaea alone knew his holy
and severe jealousy and knew that to divide religion between him
and other gods was to destroy it.
Chapter 17

Corruption and Superstition among the Jews. False Doctrines of the Pharisees

And yet, in the latter days, the Jews themselves, who knew God and were the guardians of religion, began (so prone are men always to weaken the truth), not to forget the God of their fathers, but to contaminate religion with superstitions unworthy of him. Under the reign of the Hasmonaeans, and in the time of Jonathan, the sect of the Pharisees arose among the Jews. At first they acquired a great reputation by the purity of their doctrine and by their strict observance of the Law. Moreover, their conduct was mild, though according to rule, and they lived in great harmony among themselves. The rewards and punishments of the life to come, to which they zealously adhered, gained them much honor. But in the end they succumbed to ambition. They wanted power and accordingly assumed absolute power over the people, setting themselves up as arbiters of learning and religion. Thus they gradually perverted religion to superstitious practices, subservient to their interest and to the domination they wished to gain over men's consciences. In this way the true spirit of the Law was in danger of being lost.

To these evils was added a greater evil, namely, pride and presumption; but presumption went so far as to arrogate to itself the gift of God. The Jews, accustomed to his benefits and enlightened by his knowledge for so many centuries, forgot that his goodness alone had set them apart from other nations, and they looked upon his grace as their due. Being a chosen race and continually blessed for 2,000 years, they judged themselves alone worthy of knowing God and thought themselves of a different species from other men, whom they considered deprived of the knowledge of him. On these grounds, they looked upon the Gentiles with an unbearable disdain. To be descendants of Abraham according to the flesh seemed to them a distinction which set them naturally above all others; and, puffed up with so noble an extraction, they fancied themselves holy by nature and not by grace: an error which persists among them. It was the Pharisees who, priding themselves on their own lights and on their strict observance of the ceremonies of the Law, introduced this
opinion in the latter days. As their sole aim was to distinguish themselves from other men, they endlessly created new outward observances and peddled all their notions, however contrary to God’s Law they might be, as authentic traditions.

Chapter 18

Further Corruption among the Jews. The Sign of Their Decadence, As Foretold by Zechariah

Although these sentiments had never been made into a dogma of the synagogue by a public decree, they insensibly spread among the people, who became restless, turbulent, and seditious. At length the divisions, which, according to their prophets, were to be the beginning of their decadence, broke out as a result of the quarrels that divided the house of the Hasmonaeans. Scarcely fifty years before Jesus Christ, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, sons of Alexander Jannaeus, went to war about the priesthood, to which the kingship was attached. This is the fatal moment when history shows us the first cause of the destruction of the Jews. Pompey, whom the two brothers called in as a mediator, subdued both of them at the same time that he dispossessed Antiochus Asiaticus, the last king of Syria. These three princes, brought down together and, as it were, at one blow, were the sign of the decay marked in precise terms by the prophet Zechariah. It is certain from history that this change of affairs in Syria and Judaea was brought about at the same time by Pompey, when, after putting an end to the Mithradatic war and about to return to Rome, he settled the affairs of the East. The prophet observed only what concerned the destruction of the Jews. Of the two brothers who had been their kings, one adorned Pompey’s triumph as a prisoner; the other—the weak Hyrcanus, from whom the same Pompey took, together with his diadem, a great part of his realm—now retained but an empty title of authority, which he soon lost. Then it was that the Jews were made dependent upon the Romans; and the ruin of Syria entailed their ruin too,
because that great kingdom, reduced to the state of a province in their neighborhood, so greatly increased Roman power there that the only safety lay in obeying the power of Rome. The governors of Syria made continual attempts upon Judaea; the Romans made themselves absolute masters there and weakened its government in many respects. Through them the kingdom of Judah finally passed from the hands of the Hasmonaeans, to whom it had submitted, into those of Herod, a foreigner from Idumaea. The cruel and ambitious policy of that king, who professed the Jewish religion only in appearance, altered the tenets of the ancient government. They are no longer the Jews who were masters of their own fate under the vast empire of the Persians and the first Seleucids, when the only thing required of them was to live in peace. Herod, who keeps them in very close subjection under his government, throws everything into disorder; he arranges the succession of the high priests as he sees fit; weakens the priesthood, which he renders arbitrary; undermines the authority of the council of elders, which can no longer do anything. All public power passes into the hands of Herod and the Romans, whose slave he is, and he shakes the foundations of the Jewish state.

The Pharisees and the people, who were entirely led by sentiment, tolerated these conditions with the utmost impatience. The more they felt themselves galled by the yoke of the Gentiles, the greater contempt and hatred they conceived for them. They no longer wanted any Messiah who should not be a warrior and formidable to the powers that controlled them. Thus, forgetting the many prophecies which told them so specifically of his humiliations, they no longer had eyes or ears for any prophecies but those which announced triumphs, though very different from those they desired.

Chapter 19

Jesus Christ and His Doctrine

In this decline of Jewish religion and interests, at the end of Herod’s reign and at the time the Pharisees were introducing so many abuses, Jesus Christ was sent to earth to restore the kingdom to the
house of David, in a manner more sublime than the carnal Jews understood, and to preach the doctrine which God had resolved should be declared to the whole world. This wonderful child, called by Isaiah the Mighty God, the everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace, is born to a virgin at Bethlehem and chooses that place to acknowledge the origin of his race. Conceived by the Holy Ghost, holy in his birth, alone worthy to atone for the guilt of our birth, he receives the name Savior because he was to save his people from their sins. Immediately after his birth, a new star, the image of that light he was to show to the Gentiles, appears in the East and leads the first-fruits of the conversion of the Gentiles to the still infant Savior. Shortly thereafter, that Lord, so greatly desired, comes to his holy Temple, where Simeon beholds him, not only as the glory of Israel, but also as a light to lighten the Gentiles. When the time of preaching his Gospel drew near, St. John the Baptist, who was to prepare his way, called all sinners to repentance and made his cries resound throughout the wilderness, where he had lived from his early years in an austerity equaling his innocence. The people, who for 500 years had seen no prophet, acknowledged this new Elias and were ready to take him for the Savior, so great did his holiness appear; but he himself pointed out to the people him whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose. At length, Jesus Christ begins to preach his Gospel and to reveal the secrets he had seen from all eternity in the bosom of his Father. He lays the foundations of his church by calling twelve fishermen and puts St. Peter at the head of the whole flock, with so clear a prerogative that the Evangelists, who follow no special order in the catalogue they make of the apostles, unanimously agree in naming St. Peter as the first before all the rest. Jesus Christ travels through all Judaea, doing kind deeds wherever he goes: healing the sick; bestowing compassion upon sinners, whose true physician he shows himself to be by the free access he allows them to his presence; making men feel an authority and sweetness that never had appeared but in his person. He speaks of exalted mysteries and confirms them by great miracles; he requires great virtue but also gives great insights, great examples, and great mercy. And he thereby appears full of grace and truth, and of his fullness have all we received.

Everything is consistent in his person, his life, his teachings, his
miracles. The same truth shines through the whole: everything concurs to exhibit in him the master of mankind and the pattern of perfection.

He, and only he, living among men and in the sight of all the world, could say without danger of being refuted, *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* And again, *I am the light of the world; My meat is to do the will of him that sent me. He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that please him.*

His miracles are of a peculiar order and of a new kind. They are not *signs from heaven,* such as the Jews sought. He works almost all of them upon men themselves, and to heal their infirmities. All these miracles imply kindness rather than power and do not so much surprise the beholders as touch the depths of their hearts. He performs them with authority: devils and diseases obey him; at his word the blind from birth receive their sight, the dead arise, and sins are forgiven. The source of the miracles is within himself; they flow from a wellspring: *I know,* says he, *that virtue is gone out of me.* And, indeed, none had ever performed either so great or so many miracles; and yet he promises that his disciples shall, in his name, do still *greater works than these,* so fruitful and inexhaustible is the virtue he bears within him.

Who would not admire the condescension with which he tempers the sublimity of his teachings? It is milk for babes and at the same time bread for the strong. We see him full of the secrets of God; but we see that he is not astonished at them, as are mortals to whom God makes himself known. He speaks naturally of them, as being born in that secret and that glory; and *what he has without measure* he dispenses with measure, so that our weakness may be able to bear it.

Although he has been sent for the whole world, he speaks at first only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to whom likewise he had chiefly been sent; but he prepares the way for the conversion of the Samaritans and the Gentiles. A woman of Samaria acknowledges him to be the Christ, whom her nation was awaiting, as well as that of the Jews; and she learns from him the mystery of the new worship, which was no longer to be confined to any one certain place. A woman of Canaan and an idolatress, though at first rejected,
snatches from him, so to speak, her daughter's healing. In several places he recognizes the children of Abraham among the Gentiles and speaks of his doctrine as a doctrine to be preached, debated, and received over the whole earth. The world had never seen such a thing, and his apostles were astonished at it. He does not at all conceal from his followers the sad trials through which they were to pass. He pictures to them the violence and seduction that are to be employed against them: the persecutions, false teachings, false brethren, the wars within and without, and the purification of the faith by all these trials; he speaks of the weakening of this faith in the last days, and he foretells that charity will be growing cold among his disciples. Yet he says that, in the midst of so many dangers, his Church and the truth will remain invincible.

This, then, is a new way of acting and a new order of things. The children of God are no longer promised temporal rewards; Jesus Christ sets forth to them a future life; and keeping them hanging on that expectation, he teaches them to disengage themselves from all things of the senses. The Cross and patience become their lot on earth, and they are told that Heaven must be taken by force. Jesus Christ, who shows men this new way, is himself the first to take it: he preaches pure truths which confound gross yet arrogant men; he detects the hidden pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees and doctors of the Law, who had corrupted it by their interpretations. But although he reproaches them, he honors their ministry and Moses' seat, on which they sit. He often goes to the Temple, for whose holiness he demands reverence, and he sends back to the priests the lepers he has healed. In so doing he instructs men how they ought to reprove and check abuses, without prejudice to the ministry appointed by God, and shows that the body of the synagogue persisted, notwithstanding the corruption of individual members. But it was visibly going to its ruin. The priests and Pharisees stirred up against Jesus Christ the Jewish people, whose religion was degenerating into superstition. That people cannot bear the Savior of the world, who calls them to well-founded but difficult observances. The holiest and best of all men, indeed, holiness and goodness itself, becomes the most envied and hated. He is not discouraged, nor does he cease doing good to his countrymen; but he sees their ingratitude, he
foretells its punishment with tears, and he warns Jerusalem of its approaching fall. He prophesies also that the Jews, enemies to the truth he had brought them, would be prey to error and would become the tool of false prophets.

Meanwhile, the jealousy of the Pharisees and priests brings him an infamous sentence. His disciples forsake him; one of them betrays him; the first and most zealous of them all denies him thrice. Accused before the council, he honors the priest's office to the last and answers, in precise terms, the high priest, who was interrogating him judicially. But the moment for the synagogue's censure had come. The high priest and the whole council condemn Jesus Christ because he called himself the Christ, the Son of God. He is delivered up to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor; his innocence is acknowledged by his judge, whom policy and interest induce to act contrary to his conscience: the Just One is condemned to death; the most heinous of all crimes is the occasion for the most perfect obedience that the world ever saw. Jesus, master of his life and of all things, voluntarily surrenders to the fury of wicked men and offers the sacrifice which was to be the expiation of mankind. On the Cross, he sees in the prophecies what still remains for him to do: he fulfills it and says, at last, It is finished. When this word is spoken, everything changes in the world. The Law ceases, its symbols pass away, its sacrifices are abolished by a more perfect oblation. This done, Jesus Christ, with a loud cry, gives up the ghost. All nature is moved. The centurion who watched him, astonished at such a death, cries out, Truly, this was the Son of God, and the spectators return home, beating their breasts. On the third day he rises again; he appears to his followers, who had forsaken him and who obstinately persisted in disbelieving his Resurrection. They see him, talk with him, touch him, and are convinced. To confirm the faith in his Resurrection, he shows himself to them at various times and in divers manners. His disciples see him in private, and they see him also when they are all together; once he appears to more than 500 brethren assembled. An apostle, who has recorded it, asserts that the greatest part of them were still alive when he recorded it. Jesus Christ, risen again, gives his apostles as much time as they please to observe him carefully; and after putting himself into their hands in all the ways they desire,
so that the least doubt can no longer remain, he commands them to bear witness to what they have seen, to what they have heard, and to what they have touched. And so that none may doubt their sincerity any more than their convictions, he obliges them to seal their testimony with their blood. Thus, their preaching is unshakable, its foundation a positive fact, unanimously attested to by those who saw it. Their sincerity is vindicated by the strongest proof imaginable, that of torments and of death itself. Such are the instructions the apostles received. Upon this foundation, twelve fishermen undertake the conversion of the whole world, so set against the laws they had to prescribe and the truths they had to proclaim. They are commanded to begin at Jerusalem and from there to go into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Jesus Christ promises to be with them always, even unto the end of the world. By saying this, he assures the perpetual continuance of the ecclesiastical ministry. Having thus spoken, he ascends into Heaven in their presence.

The promises are about to be accomplished; the prophecies are going to receive their final clarification. The Gentiles are called to the knowledge of God by the orders of the risen Jesus Christ. A new ceremony is instituted for the regeneration of the new people; and the faithful learn that the true God, the God of Israel, that one and indivisible God to whom they are consecrated in baptism, is at once Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There, then, are set forth to us the incomprehensible depth of the Divine Being, the ineffable greatness of his unity, and the infinite riches of that nature, even more fruitful within than without, capable of being three equal persons while not divided.

This is the unfolding of the mysteries which were wrapped up and, as it were, sealed up in the ancient Scriptures. We now understand the secret of that saying, Let us make man in our image; and the Trinity, intimated in the creation of man, is expressly declared in his regeneration.

We learn what is that wisdom, conceived, in the words of Solomon, before time began in the bosom of God, the wisdom that is his delight and by which all his works are ordained. We know who he
was, who, according to David, was begotten before the daystar; and the New Testament teaches us that he is the Word, the inner Word of God, and his eternal thought, who is always in his bosom, and by whom all things were made.

We thereby can answer the mysterious question proposed in the Proverbs: What is his name and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell? For we know that this name of God, so mysterious and so hidden, is the name of Father, used in that profound sense which makes us know him from eternity as Father of a Son equal to himself, and that the name of his Son is the name of the Word—the Word whom he eternally begets by contemplating himself, who is the perfect expression of his truth, his image, his only Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.

Together with the Father and the Son, we know also the Holy Spirit, the love of One for the Other, and their eternal union. It is that Spirit who makes the prophets and who is in them to show them the counsels of God and the secrets of the future, the Spirit of whom it is written, The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me, who is separate from the Lord and is also the Lord himself, since he sends the prophets and shows the things of the future to them. That Spirit, who speaks to the prophets and through the prophets, is united with the Father and the Son and participates with them in the consecration of the new man.

Thus the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God in three persons, shewn more darkly to our fathers, is clearly revealed in the New Covenant. Instructed in so exalted a mystery, and astonished at its incomprehensible depth, we cover our faces before God like the seraphim whom Isaiah saw; and with them we worship him, who is thrice holy.

It was for the only Son—which is in the bosom of the Father and who, without leaving it, came to us—to reveal to us fully those wonderful secrets of the divine nature which Moses and the prophets had but dimly glimpsed.

It was for him to make us understand how it came to pass that the Messiah, promised as a man who was to save other men, was at the same time shown as God in the singular and in absolutely the same manner in which the Creator is described to us; and he also made us
understand this by teaching us that, though a son of Abraham, he existed before Abraham was made, that he came down from Heaven, and yet is in Heaven; that he is at once God, the Son of God, and man, the son of Man; the true Immanuel, God with us; in short, the Word made flesh, uniting in his person the human nature with the divine in order to reconcile all things unto himself.

Thus the two great mysteries are revealed to us, that of the Trinity and that of the Incarnation. But he who has revealed them to us makes us find the image of them in ourselves, so that they may always be present with us and so that we may understand the dignity of our nature.

Indeed, if we impose silence on our senses and shut ourselves up for awhile in the inmost recesses of our soul, that is, in that part where truth makes its voice heard, we shall see there some image of the Trinity we adore. Thought, which we feel being born as the seed of our spirit, as the son of our intelligence, gives us some idea of the Son of God eternally conceived in the intelligence of the Heavenly Father. For this reason, this Son of God assumes the name of the Word, so that we may understand that he is born in the bosom of the Father, born not as a body but as that inner word which we perceive in our soul when we contemplate the truth.

But our mind's fertility does not end with that inner word, that intellectual thought, that image of the truth which is formed in us. We love both that inner word and the mind in which it is born; and by loving it, we perceive in ourselves something no less precious to us than our mind and our thought, something which is the fruit of both, which unites them, which is united with them and constitutes with them but one and the same life.

Thus, as far as any analogy between God and man can be found, thus, I say, is produced in God the eternal love which proceeds from the Father who thinks, and from the Son who is his thought, in order to make with him and his thought one and the same nature equally blessed and perfect.

In short, God is perfect; and his Word, the living image of an infinite truth, is no less perfect than he; and his love, proceeding from the inexhaustible source of good and thus having all the fullness of it, cannot fail to be infinitely perfect; and since we have
no other idea of God than that of perfection, each of the three persons considered separately deserves to be called God; but because the three persons possess necessarily one and the same nature, these three are but one God.

Hence we must not imagine anything unequal or separate in this divine Trinity; and however incomprehensible this equality may be, our soul, if we listen, will tell us something about it.

For it is; and as it knows perfectly what it is, its understanding corresponds to the truth of its being; and as it loves its being with its intelligence, as much as both deserve to be loved, its love equals the perfection of both. These three things are never separated and contain one another: we understand that we are, and that we love; and we love to be and to understand. Who can deny this, if he understands himself? And not only is one of these three things no better than either of the others, but the three together are no better than any one of them in particular, since each contains the whole and since in the three lie the happiness and dignity of rational nature. Thus, and to an infinitely higher degree, the Trinity, whom we worship and to whom we are consecrated by our baptism, is perfect, inseparable, one in essence, and, in short, equal in every sense.

But we ourselves, who are the image of the Trinity, are, in another respect, also the image of the Incarnation. Our soul, by nature spiritual and incorruptible, is linked to a corruptible body; and from the union of both results a whole, which is man, a mind and body together, at the same time incorruptible and corruptible, intelligent and totally brutish. These attributes apply to the whole, in relation to each of its two parts; thus the Divine Word, whose power sustains the whole, is united in a special manner with—or rather the Word itself becomes, by a perfect union—Jesus Christ the son of Mary. This makes him God and man together: begotten in eternity and begotten in time; always living in the bosom of the Father and dying upon the Cross for our salvation.

But wherever God is involved, comparisons drawn from human things are bound to be imperfect. Our soul does not exist before our body, and something is lacking in the soul when it is separated from
the body. The Word, perfect in itself from all eternity, unites with our nature only in order to honor it. The soul, which presides over the body and causes various changes in it, in its turn suffers. As the body is moved at the command and according to the will of the soul, the soul is troubled, afflicted, and agitated in a thousand ways, either painful or pleasing, according to the dispositions of the body; so that, as the soul elevates the body to its own level by governing it, it is in turn debased by the things it suffers from the body. But in Jesus Christ, the Word presides over everything; the Word keeps everything under its control. Thus man is exalted, and the Word is not debased in any way: immovable and unchanging, it rules in all matters and in all places over that nature which is united to it.

Thus it is that in Jesus Christ, man—totally obedient to the inner direction of the Word, which raises him to its level—knows only divine actions and thoughts. Everything he thinks, everything he wills, everything he says, everything he conceals within himself, everything he shows outwardly is animated by the Word, is guided by the Word, is worthy of the Word, that is to say, is worthy of reason itself, of wisdom itself, and of truth itself. Therefore, everything is light in Jesus Christ; his conduct is a paradigm, his miracles are instruction, his words are spirit and life.

Not all are permitted to understand fully these sublime truths or to see perfectly in themselves that marvelous image of the divine things of which St. Augustine and the other Church Fathers have been so certain. The senses govern us too much, and our imagination, which insists on intruding in all our thoughts, does not always permit us to fix our attention upon so pure a light. We do not know ourselves; we are ignorant of the riches we carry deep down in our nature, and none but the most purified eyes can perceive them. But however little we enter into this secret, however little we are able to discern in ourselves the image of the two mysteries which are the foundation of our faith, it is sufficient to raise us above everything, so that nothing mortal can touch us.

Accordingly, Jesus Christ calls us to an immortal glory, which is the fruit of our faith in these mysteries.

That God-man, that incarnate truth and wisdom, who makes us
believe such lofty truths upon his sole authority, promises us the clear and beatific vision of them in eternity as the certain reward for our faith.

In this way Jesus Christ's mission is infinitely exalted above that of Moses.

Moses was sent to rouse sensual and besotted men by temporal rewards. Since they had become all body and flesh, it was first necessary to lay hold of them through the senses and to inculcate in them by this means a knowledge of God and an abhorrence of idolatry, for which mankind had such an amazing propensity.

Such was Moses' ministry; it was reserved for Jesus Christ to inspire man with higher ideals and to give him full and evident knowledge of the dignity, immortality, and eternal felicity of his soul.

During the times of ignorance, that is to say, during the times which preceded Jesus Christ, what the soul knew of its dignity and immortality usually led it into error. The worship of dead persons was almost the whole basis of idolatry: almost all men sacrificed to the manes, that is, to the souls of the dead. Such ancient errors show indeed how age-old was the belief in the immortality of the soul, and they demonstrate that it is to be ranked among the first traditions of mankind. But man, who perverted everything, strangely distorted this belief in the immortality of the soul, since it led him to sacrifice to the dead. Some went so far as to sacrifice living men to the dead; they killed the slaves and even the wives of the dead so that they might serve them in the other world. Together with many other nations, the Gauls observed this custom; and the Indians, noted by pagan authors as among the prime defenders of the immortality of the soul, were also the first who, under pretense of religion, introduced those abominable murders upon earth. The same Indians killed themselves to hasten the happiness of the future life; and to this day that deplorable blindness continues among those nations: so dangerous is it to teach the truth in any other order than that which God has followed, or to explain clearly to man what he is, before he has known God perfectly.

It was for lack of knowing God that most of the philosophers could not believe in the immortality of the soul without believing it a
portion of the deity: a deity itself, an eternal being, uncreated as well as incorruptible, and having no more beginning than end. What shall I say of those who believed in the transmigration of souls? These deluded people claimed that men's souls roam from Heaven to earth and then from earth to Heaven again; from animals into men, and from men into animals; from happiness to misery, and from misery to happiness; and all this without any fixed duration or certain order. How greatly was divine justice, Providence, and goodness darkened amid so many errors! How necessary it was to know God and the rules of his wisdom before knowing the soul and its immortal nature!

For this reason the Mosaic Law gave man but a first notion of the nature of the soul and its felicity. We have seen that in the beginning the soul was made by the power of God, as were the other creatures, but with this peculiar characteristic: that the soul was made after his own image and by the breath of his mouth, so that it might understand from whom it had its being and might never think that it was of the same nature as bodies or that it was formed by the combination of them. But the consequences of this doctrine and the wonders of the future life were at that time not universally understood. In the Messiah's day this great light was to appear openly.

God had scattered some rays of this light in the ancient Scriptures. Solomon had said, *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* The patriarchs and prophets lived in this hope. Daniel had foretold that there should come a time when *many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* But while these things are revealed to him, he is commanded to *shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end,* in order to make us understand that the full discovery of those truths belonged to another season and to another century.

The Jews, then, had in their Scriptures some promises of eternal happiness; and as the days of the Messiah approached, when these promises were to be made clear, the Jews spoke about them increasingly, as can be seen in the Book of Wisdom and the Books of the Maccabees. Yet this truth was so far from being a general
dogma of the ancient people that the Sadducees, who did not recognize it, were not only admitted into the synagogue but were even promoted to the priesthood. One of the characteristics of the new people would be to make the belief in a future life the foundation of religion; and this was to be the fruit of the coming of the Messiah.

This is why, not satisfied with telling us that a life of eternal bliss was reserved for the children of God, the Messiah also told us of what it consists. The blessed life is being with him in the glory of God his Father; the blessed life is beholding the glory he has in the bosom of the Father from the foundation of the world; the blessed life is having Jesus Christ in us as in his members, and having the eternal love which the Father shows for his Son include us also and shower us with the same gifts; the blessed life, in a word, is knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, but to know him after that manner which is called the clear sight, the seeing face to face, and openly, the sight which reforms us and perfects in us the image of God, according to the word of St. John: We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. This sight will produce an immense love, an unspeakable joy, and an endless triumph. An eternal Alleluia and an eternal Amen, with which the Heavenly Jerusalem resounds, will banish all sorrow and satisfy all desires; and nothing more remains but to praise the divine goodness.

With such new rewards, Jesus Christ also had to propose new ideas of virtue, practices more perfect and more pure. The end of religion, the soul of all virtues, and the sum of the Law is charity. But one may say that up to the time of Jesus Christ the perfection and results of this virtue were not fully known. Indeed, it is Jesus Christ who teaches us to place our delight in God alone. In order to set up the reign of charity and to disclose to us all the duties it implies, he tells us that we must love God even to the point of hating ourselves and that we must fight without respite the corrupting principle which we all have in our hearts. He tells us that we must love our neighbor to the point of extending such kindly feelings toward all men, including those who persecute us; he tells us that we must moderate our sensual desires to the point of cutting off our own members, that is, whatever has gained the strongest and most
intimate hold on our heart; he tells us that we must submit to the will of God to the point of rejoicing in the sufferings he sends us; he tells us that we must be humble even to the extent of loving insults for the glory of God and believing that no injury can make us as vile in the sight of men as we are in the sight of God through our sins. Upon this foundation of charity he perfects every state of human life. Through this, marriage is reduced to its primitive form; conjugal love is no longer shared <thus ending polygamy>; so sacred a bond knows no end but death, and children no longer see their mother put away, to have a stepmother substituted in her place. Celibacy is set forth to us as an imitation of the life of the angels, which is solely occupied with God and the chaste delights of his love. Superiors learn that they are the servants of others and should be devoted to their welfare; inferiors acknowledge God's order in the lawful powers, even when they abuse their authority. This thought sweetens the pains of subservience, and under the hardest masters obedience is no longer a hardship to the true Christian.

To these precepts he adds advice for attaining outstanding perfection: renounce all pleasure; live within the body as if without a body; forsake everything; give everything to the poor in order to possess God alone; live on little or almost nothing, and look for that little from the hand of Divine Providence.

But the most characteristic law of the Gospel is that of bearing one's cross. The Cross is the true test of faith, the true foundation of hope, the perfect refinement of charity, in a word, the road to Heaven. Jesus Christ died upon the Cross; he bore his Cross all his lifetime; it is to the Cross he wants us to follow him, and he sets eternal life at that price. The first to whom he specifically promises the repose of the future world is a companion of the Cross: Today, says he, shalt thou be with me in Paradise. As soon as he was on the Cross, the veil that covered the sanctuary was rent from top to bottom, and Heaven was opened to the souls of the saints. It was after the Cross and the horrors of his passion that he appeared to his apostles, a glorious conqueror of death, so that they might understand that it was by the Cross he was to enter into his glory and that he would show no other way to his children.

Thus, in the person of Jesus Christ, the world was given the image
of consummate virtue, which has nothing and expects nothing upon earth; which men reward only by continual persecutions; which unceasingly does them good; and upon which its own good deeds bring down the supreme punishment. Jesus Christ dies without finding either gratitude in those he serves, fidelity in his friends, or equity in his judges. His innocence, though acknowledged, does not save him; his Father himself, in whom alone he had placed his hope, withdraws all signs of his protection: the Just One is delivered up to his enemies, and he dies forsaken by both God and man.

But it was necessary to let the upright man see that in the greatest extremities he needs neither human consolation nor even any tangible sign of divine help: let him but love and trust, resting assured that God is mindful of him though he gives no token of it, and that eternal bliss is in store for him.

The wisest of philosophers, striving after the idea of virtue, found that if, of all the wicked, the most wicked was he who could so well cloak his wickedness as to pass for a good man and by that means enjoy all the credit virtue can bestow, so, by the same token, the most virtuous would unquestionably be he whose virtue, by its perfection, draws the envy of all men upon him, so that he has nothing on his side but his conscience and sees himself exposed to all manner of injuries, even to the point of being nailed to the Cross, while his virtue is unable to afford him the feeble assistance of exempting him from such a punishment. Does it not seem that God put this wonderful idea of virtue into a philosopher's mind only to have it realized in his Son's person and to show that the just man has another glory, another rest, in short, another happiness than can possibly be attained upon earth?

To establish this truth, and to show it so visibly exemplified in himself at the expense of his own life, was the greatest work a man could possibly perform; and so great did God judge it to be that he reserved it for the long-promised Messiah, for that man whom he made the same person with his only Son.

Indeed, what greater accomplishment could be reserved for a God coming into the world? And what could he there perform more worthy of himself than to show virtue in all its purity and proclaim that eternal bliss to which the greatest sorrows lead?
But when we begin to contemplate the highest and most profound aspects of the mystery of the Cross, what human mind will be able to understand it? There virtues are shown us which the Man-God alone was capable of practicing. Who else could, like him, take the place of all the ancient sacrificial offerings, abolish them by substituting for them a victim of infinite dignity and merit, and establish that henceforth he alone could be offered unto God? Such is the religious act which Jesus Christ performs on the Cross. Could the eternal Father have found among either angels or men an obedience equal to that of his well-beloved Son, who, since nothing can take away his life, lays it down voluntarily to please him? How can I describe the perfect conformity of all his desires with the divine will, or the love by which he keeps himself united with God, who was in him reconciling the world unto himself? In this incomprehensible union he includes all mankind, he reconciles Heaven with earth, he ardently plunges into that ocean of blood in which he was to be baptized with all his followers, and allows to burst forth from his wounds the fire of divine love which was to kindle the whole earth. But behold what passes all understanding: the justice observed by this God-Man, who allows himself to be condemned by the world so that the world may stand eternally condemned by the enormous iniquity of that judgment. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out, as Jesus Christ himself announces. Hell, which had subdued the world, is now going to lose it: by attacking the innocent, it shall be obliged to release the guilty whom it held captive: the woeful obligation by which we were delivered over to rebel angels, is wiped out: Jesus Christ has nailed it to his Cross, there to be blotted out by his blood. Hell robbed of its prey, groans: the Cross is an instrument of triumph for our Savior; and the hostile powers, trembling, follow the victor’s chariot. But a greater triumph presents itself to our eyes: divine justice is itself overcome; the sinner, its due victim, is snatched from its hands. The sinner has found a guarantor capable of paying an infinite price for him. Jesus Christ eternally binds to himself the elect for whom he sacrifices himself: they are his members and his body; henceforth the eternal Father can only see them through the body of Christ; and thus he extends toward them the infinite love with which he loves his
Son. It is his Son himself who requests this of him: he will not be separated from the men he has redeemed: Father, says he, I will that they also be with me; they shall be filled with my spirit; they shall enjoy my glory; they shall be partakers with me of my very throne.

For us who have been granted such a favor, nothing but shouts of joy can express our gratitude. "O marvel!" cries a great philosopher and martyr <Justin Martyr>. "O incomprehensible exchange, and amazing stratagem of divine wisdom!" One only is smitten, and all are delivered. God smites his innocent son for the sake of guilty men and pardons guilty men for his innocent son's sake. The just pays what he does not owe, and acquires sinners of what they do owe; for what could better cover our sins than his justice? How could the rebellion of servants be better expiated than by the obedience of the son? The iniquity of many is hidden in one just person, and the justice of one alone causes many to be justified. What, then, may we not claim? He who loved us, when as yet we were sinners, so as even to lay down his life for us, what will he refuse us, now that he has reconciled and justified us by his blood? Everything is ours through Jesus Christ; holiness, life, glory, bliss: the kingdom of the Son of God is our inheritance; there is nothing beyond our reach, provided only we not debase ourselves.

While Jesus Christ crowns our desires and exceeds our hopes, he finishes God's work, begun under the patriarchs and through the Law of Moses.

Then God was pleased to make himself known in tangible ways: he showed himself generous in temporal promises; gracious in showering upon his children such good things as are pleasing to the senses; powerful in delivering them from the hands of their enemies; faithful in bringing them into the land promised to their fathers; just by the rewards and punishments which he sent them, clearly according to their deeds.

All these wonders paved the way for the truths which Jesus Christ had come to teach. If God is so good as to give us what our senses require, he is even more willing to give us what is requisite for our mind, which is made after his own image. If he is so tender and bountiful toward his children, shall he confine his love and bounty to the few years that constitute the term of our life? Shall he give to
those he loves only a shadow of bliss, only a land fruitful in grain and oil? Shall there not be a country where he will abundantly dispense the true blessings?

There shall be, without doubt; and Jesus Christ comes to show it to us. For, indeed, the Almighty would have performed works unworthy of him if his generosity were limited to the grandeur displayed to our weak senses. Whatever is not eternal corresponds neither to the majesty of an eternal God nor to the hopes of man to whom he has made known his eternity; and this unalterable fidelity to those who serve him shall never have an adequate object until it includes something immortal and permanent.

It was therefore necessary that at last Jesus Christ should open to us the heavens, in order to reveal to our faith that lasting city, where we are to be gathered after this life. He shows us that if God takes for his eternal title the name of God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is because those holy men still live in his sight. God is not the God of the dead. It is not worthy of him to act as men do and accompany his friends only to the grave, leaving them no hope beyond it; and he would be ashamed to call himself so emphatically the God of Abraham had he not founded in Heaven an eternal city, where Abraham and his children might live in bliss.

Thus it is that the truths about the future life are unfolded to us by Jesus Christ. He shows them to us even in the Law. The true Promised Land is the heavenly kingdom. It was for that blessed country that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob pined. Palestine did not deserve to be a limit for all their wishes or the sole object of the long-continued expectation of our fathers.

The Egypt which we must leave, the wilderness through which we must pass, the Babylon from whose prisons we must escape to reach our native country or to return to it are the world with its pleasures and its vanities; there we are truly captive and wandering, seduced by sin and its lusts; we must shake off this yoke in order to find in Jerusalem and in the city of our God the true liberty and a sanctuary not made with hands, where the glory of the God of Israel may appear to us.

By this doctrine of Jesus Christ the secret of God is made known to us: the Law is wholly spiritual; its promises introduce us to those
of the Gospel and serve as its foundation. One and the same light appears through the whole: it arises under the patriarchs and grows brighter under Moses and the prophets; but Jesus Christ, greater than the patriarchs, with more authority than Moses, more enlightened than all the prophets, displays it to us in its fullness.

To that Christ, that Man-God, that man who holds upon earth, as St. Augustine says, the place of truth and shows it personally dwelling among us—to him, I say, it was reserved to show us the whole truth, that is, the truth of the mysteries, of the virtues, and of the rewards which God has prepared for those he loves.

It was for such greatness that the Jews were to look in their Messiah. There is nothing so great as to carry within oneself and to disclose to men the whole truth, which sustains them, directs them, and purifies their eyes until they are able to see God.

When the time had come to show men the truth in its fullness, it was also appointed that it should be proclaimed throughout the whole earth and to the end of time. God gave Moses only one people and one determinate time. All ages and all nations are given to Jesus Christ. His elect are everywhere, and his church, extended throughout the universe, shall never cease to bring them forth. Go ye therefore, says he, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Chapter 20

The Descent of the Holy Spirit. The Establishment of the Church. God's Judgments upon the Jews and Gentiles

In order to propagate such exalted truths in all places and all ages and to enforce such pure practices in the face of corruption, a more than human virtue is required. For this reason Jesus Christ promises to send the Holy Spirit to strengthen his apostles and forever to animate the body of the Church.
That power of the Holy Spirit, in order to be all the more striking, was to appear in weakness. *And I send*, says Jesus Christ to his apostles, *the promise of my Father* (that is, the Holy Spirit) *upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, and undertake nothing until ye be endued with power from on high.*

In conformity with this order, they remain shut up for forty days: the Holy Spirit descends at the appointed time; fiery tongues lighting upon Christ’s disciples mark the efficacy of their word; their preaching begins; the apostles bear witness to Jesus Christ; they are ready to suffer the worst in order to assert that they have seen him risen from the dead; miracles follow their words; at two sermons of St. Peter’s 8,000 Jews are converted; and while they are bewailing their error, they are washed in the blood they had shed.

Thus the Church is founded in Jerusalem and among the Jews, notwithstanding the lack of belief of most of the nation. The disciples of Jesus Christ show the world a charity, a power, and a meekness with which no society before had ever been blessed. Persecution arises; faith increases; the children of God learn increasingly to desire nothing but Heaven; the Jews, by their obstinate wickedness, draw God’s vengeance upon themselves and hasten the dreadful calamities with which they were threatened; their situation and affairs grow worse. While God continues to set apart a great number of them whom he ranks among his elect, St. Peter is sent to baptize Cornelius, the Roman centurion. He learns, first by a heavenly vision and afterward by experience, that the Gentiles are called to the knowledge of God. Jesus Christ, who desired to convert them, speaks from on high to St. Paul, who was to be their teacher; and by a miracle until then unheard-of, in an instant, from a persecutor he makes him not only a defender but also a zealous preacher of the faith; he shows him the profound secret of the calling of the Gentiles through the reprobation of the ungrateful Jews, who render themselves increasingly unworthy of the Gospel. St. Paul stretches forth his hands to the Gentiles; he treats with a wonderful power these important words: *That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.* He proves them by citing Moses and the prophets and calls the idolaters to the knowledge of God, in the name of Jesus Christ risen from the
dead. They are converted in multitudes. St. Paul shows that their call is a result of grace, which no longer makes any distinction between Jew and Gentile. The Jews are carried away by fury and jealousy; they form terrible plots against St. Paul, enraged chiefly at his preaching to the Gentiles and his bringing them to the true God; at last they deliver him up to the Romans, as they had delivered Jesus Christ. The whole empire rises against the infant Church; and Nero, persecutor of all mankind, was the first persecutor of the faithful. That tyrant causes St. Peter and St. Paul to be put to death. Rome is consecrated by their blood; and the martyrdom of St. Peter, prince of the apostles, establishes in the imperial capital the principal seat of religion. Meanwhile, the time had come when divine vengeance was to break forth upon the impenitent Jews: disorder erupts among them; a false zeal blinds them and renders them odious to all men; their false prophets bewitch them with promises of an imaginary kingdom. Seduced by their impositions, they can no longer bear any lawful authority and set no bounds to their bold attempts. God lets them go their reprobate way. They revolt against the Romans and are overthrown by them; Titus himself, who destroys them, recognizes that he merely lends his hand “to God provoked against them.” Hadrian completes their extermination. They perish with all the signs of divine vengeance: driven out of their land, and slaves throughout the world, they no longer have a temple, a sacrifice, or a country, nor is there any organization of people to be seen in Judah.

God, however, had taken care to provide for the perpetuity of his worship: the Gentiles open their eyes and are united in spirit to the converted Jews. By this means they become part of the flock of Abraham; and, having become his children by faith, they inherit the promises that had been made to him. A new people is formed, and the new sacrifice, so much heralded by the prophets, begins to be offered over the whole earth.

Thus the ancient oracle of Jacob was fulfilled in every detail: Judah is multiplied from the beginning more than all his brethren; and having always preserved a certain preeminence, he at last receives the kingdom as hereditary. In the course of time God's people are reduced to his race alone and, being confined to his tribe,
take his name. In Judah is continued that great nation promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; in him are perpetuated the other promises: the worship of God, the Temple, the sacrifices, the possession of the Promised Land, which is no longer called anything but Judah. Notwithstanding their different conditions, the Jews still remain a regular body of people and a kingdom, subject to their own laws. Kings or magistrates and judges continue to rise among them until the Messiah comes; he comes, and the kingdom of Judah little by little falls into ruin. It is utterly destroyed, and the Jewish people are once and for all driven out of the land of their fathers. The Messiah becomes the expectation of the nations and reigns over a new people.

But in order to preserve the succession and continuity, this new people must be grafted, so to speak, upon the former, and, as St. Paul says, the wild olive tree onto the good olive tree, in order to partake of its root and fatness. And so it happened that the Church, established first among the Jews, at length received the Gentiles, in order to make with them one and the same tree, one and the same body, one and the same people, and to render them partakers of her grace and promises.

What befalls the unbelieving Jews afterward, under Vespasian and Titus, no longer relates to the history of God's people. It is only a chastising of rebels, who, by their infidelity toward the seed promised to Abraham and David, are no longer Jews or sons of Abraham other than in the flesh and who renounce the promise by which all nations were to be blessed.

Thus that last and dreadful desolation of the Jews is not a transmigration like that of Babylon; it is not a suspension of the government and condition of God's people or of the solemn service of religion: the new people, already formed and continued with the old in Jesus Christ, are not carried away; they increase and spread abroad without interruption, from Jerusalem, where they were to originate, to the far corners of the earth. The Gentiles incorporated with the Jews henceforth become the true Jews and the true kingdom of Judah, opposed to that schismatic Israel cut off from the people of God; they become the true kingdom of David through their obedience to the laws and Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of David.
After the establishment of this new kingdom, it is no wonder that everything decays in Judah. The second Temple was no longer of any use, since the Messiah had accomplished there what had been specified by the prophecies. That Temple had had its promised glory, when the Desired of Nations had come to it. The visible Jerusalem had done what remained for her to do, since the Church had been born there and was daily extending its branches over all the earth. Henceforth Judah means nothing to God or to religion, any more than do the Jews; and it is just that, in punishment of their hardness of heart, their remnants be dispersed over the whole world.

This was to be their fate at the time of the Messiah, according to Jacob, Daniel, Zechariah, and all their prophets. But as they are one day to return to that Messiah whom they have disowned, and as the God of Abraham has not yet exhausted his mercies toward that patriarch race, despite its faithlessness, he has found a means, unprecedented in the world, to preserve the Jews outside their country and in their ruin, even longer than the nations that have conquered them. We see no remains either of the ancient Assyrians, the ancient Medes, the ancient Persians, the ancient Greeks, or even of the ancient Romans. Every trace of them is lost, and they have blended with other nations. The Jews, who have been the prey of those ancient nations so celebrated in history, have survived them all; and God, by preserving them, keeps us in expectation of what he will still do for the unhappy remnant of a people once so highly favored. However, their obstinacy contributes to the salvation of the Gentiles and affords them the advantage of finding in trusted hands the Scriptures, which have foretold Jesus Christ and his mysteries. We see among other things in these Scriptures both the blindness and the misfortunes of the Jews, who so carefully preserve them. Thus we profit by their downfall; their infidelity is one of the foundations of our faith; they teach us to fear God and are a standing example of the judgments he executes upon his ungrateful children, so that we may learn never to glory in the favors shown to our fathers.

A mystery so wonderful and so useful for the instruction of mankind indeed deserves to be reflected upon. But we need no human discourses to understand it: the Holy Spirit has taken care to
explain it to us through the mouth of St. Paul; and I beseech you to listen to what that apostle wrote to the Romans upon this subject.

After having spoken of the small number of Jews who had received the Gospel and of the blindness of the rest, St. Paul enters into a profound reflection on what was to become of a people honored with so many favors, and he reveals to us at the same time the benefit we reap from their fall and the fruits which their conversion shall one day produce: Have the Jews fallen, says he, never to rise again? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles, so that the salvation of the Gentiles will serve as an example which will cause them to reflect seriously. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the Gentiles, who were converted in such great numbers, what grace we shall see when they return in great numbers! For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, Gentile, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree: boast not against the natural branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed, lest he also spare not thee.

Who would not tremble at hearing these words of the apostle? How can we not be frightened by the vengeance which for so many centuries has been visited so terribly upon the Jews, since St. Paul warns us on God's behalf that our ingratitude may bring like treatment on us? But let us hear the sequel of this great mystery. The apostle continues to speak to the converted Gentiles:

Behold therefore, says he, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God, who has cut them off, is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and wert
grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? Here the apostle rises above all he has been saying, and, sharing to the fullest God's counsels, continues: For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins.

This passage of Isaiah, which St. Paul cites here according to the Septuagint, as was his custom, because their translation was known over all the earth, is even stronger in the original and taken in its full context. For the prophet there foretells first of all the conversion of the Gentiles, in these words: So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. Then under the image of a flood which the spirit of the Lord driveth on, Isaiah sees from afar the persecutions that shall promote the growth of the Church. Lastly, the Holy Spirit informs him what shall become of the Jews and declares to him that the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is in thee, O prophet, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

Thus he shows us clearly that, after the conversion of the Gentiles, the Redeemer, whom Zion had disowned, whom the children of Jacob had rejected, shall turn toward them, shall blot out their transgressions, and shall restore to them the understanding of the prophecies, which they had lost so long, so that it may be handed down successively to all generations and not be forgotten until the end of the world and as long as it will please God to make the world last after this marvelous event.

Thus the Jews shall return one day, and they shall return, never again to go astray; but they shall not return until both the East and the West, that is, the whole world, shall have been filled with the fear and knowledge of God.
The Holy Spirit shows St. Paul that this happy return of the Jews shall result from the love with which God loved their fathers. Thus he finishes his reasoning: *As concerning the Gospel*, says he, which we now preach to you, *the Jews are enemies for your sakes*; if God has cast them out, it was, O Gentiles, in order to call you; *but as touching the election*, by which they were chosen from the time of the Covenant sworn to Abraham, *they are beloved for the fathers' sakes*. *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as you in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews*: God having been pleased to choose you in their stead, *even so have the Jews also now not believed that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy*. For *God hath concluded them all in unbelief*, that he might have mercy upon all and that all might know the need they have of his grace. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and how his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever."

This is what St. Paul says concerning the election of the Jews, their fall, and their return, and, finally, concerning the conversion of the Gentiles, who are called to take their place and to bring them back at the end of time to the blessing promised to their fathers, that is to say, to the Christ whom they have denied. That great apostle shows us grace passing from one people to another, so as to keep all nations in fear of losing it; and he shows us its invincible power, in that, after having converted the idolaters, it reserves, as its last work, the overcoming of the Jewish hardness of heart and perfidy.

Because of this profound counsel of God, the Jews still subsist among the nations, where they are scattered and captive; but they subsist with all the signs of their reprobation, having visibly lost through their infidelity the promises made to their fathers; banished from the Promised Land, not even having any land to cultivate; slaves wherever they are, without honor, without liberty, without identity as a people.

They fell into this state thirty-eight years after they crucified Jesus Christ and after spending, in the persecution of his disciples, the
time that had been allowed them to recognize their fault. But while the ancient people is cast out for its unbelief, the new people is steadily increasing among the Gentiles; the Covenant formerly made with Abraham is extended, according to the promise, to all the nations of the world who had forgotten God; the Christian Church calls all men to him; and, calm during several centuries, amid unheard-of persecutions, it shows them that they must not expect their happiness upon earth.

This, Monseigneur, was the worthiest fruit of the knowledge of God, and the result of that great blessing which the world was to be given through Jesus Christ. It continued daily to spread from family to family, from people to people: men opened their eyes increasingly to perceive the blindness into which idolatry had plunged them; and despite all the power of Rome, the Christians, without revolt, without raising any disturbance, and only by suffering all manner of inhumanities, changed the face of the world and spread all over the globe.

The unheard-of suddenness with which this great change was brought about is a visible miracle. Jesus Christ had foretold that his Gospel should soon be preached throughout the earth: that wonder was to happen immediately after his death; and he had said that *when he should be lifted up from the earth*, that is, when he should be nailed to the Cross, he would *draw all things to himself*. His apostles had not yet finished their mission when St. Paul was already telling the Romans that *their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world*. He said to the Colossians that the Gospel was heard in *all the creation that is under heaven*: that it was preached, that it *brought forth fruit, that it was growing in the whole world*. An established tradition informs us that St. Thomas carried it to the Indies, and the other apostles into other distant countries. But we have no need of history to confirm this truth: the result itself speaks, and we can see sufficiently how fittingly St. Paul applies to the apostles that passage of the psalmist, *Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the earth*. Under the disciples of the apostles there was hardly any country, however remote or unknown, where the Gospel had not penetrated. A hundred years after Jesus Christ, St. Justin already included among
the faithful a great many savage nations, and even those vagabond people that wandered up and down in chariots, without having any fixed abode. It was by no means a vain exaggeration; it was a certain and acknowledged fact, which he advanced in the presence of emperors and in the face of all the world. St. Irenaeus comes a little later, and we see the number of churches increase. Their unity was admirable; what was believed in Gaul, in Spain, and in Germany, was believed in Egypt and in the East; and <St. Irenaeus wrote>, "as there was but one sun in the whole world, the same light of truth shone in the whole world, the same light of truth shone in the whole Church, from one end of the earth to the other."

If we proceed only a little farther, we shall be astonished at the progress we see. In the middle of the third century, Tertullian and Origen include in the Church whole nations who, a little before, were not counted as part of it. Those whom Origen omitted, and who were the most remote of the known world, are included shortly thereafter by Arnobius. What could the world have seen that it should surrender so rapidly to Jesus Christ? If it saw miracles, God had a visible hand in the work; and if it was possible that it had seen none, "would it not be a new miracle," greater and more incredible than those which men will not believe, "to have converted the world without a miracle," to have made so many ignorant people understand such high mysteries, to have inspired so many of the learned with a humble submission, "and to have persuaded unbelievers of so many incredible things?"

But the miracle of miracles, if I may use that term, is that, along with faith in mysteries, the most eminent virtues and the most painful practices spread over all the earth. The disciples of Jesus Christ followed him in the most difficult paths. To endure all things for the truth was an ordinary exercise among his children; and in order to imitate their Savior, they embraced torments with greater ardor than others did pleasures. It is impossible to enumerate the instances of the rich who made themselves poor to relieve the poor; or of the poor who preferred poverty to riches; or of the virgins who imitated upon earth the life of angels; or of the charitable pastors who made themselves all things to all men, always ready to give to their flocks not only their time and labor but their very lives. How
can I describe their penance and mortification? Judges do not exercise justice more severely on a criminal than did penitent sinners upon themselves. Even more, with an incredible strictness the innocent punished in themselves that strong propensity we have to sin. The life of St. John the Baptist, which seemed so surprising to the Jews, became common among the faithful; the wilderness was peopled with his imitators; and there came to be so many hermits that the more perfect of them were obliged to seek more profound solitudes, so eager were people to flee the world, and so greatly did they relish the contemplative life.

Such were the precious fruits the Gospel was to bring forth. The Church is as rich in examples as in precepts, and the holiness of its doctrine became manifest when it produced countless saints. God, knowing that the strongest virtues are born of suffering, founded it by martyrdom and kept it 300 years in that state, without allowing it a single moment’s respite.

Having made it clear by such a long experience that he did not need human help or earthly powers to establish his Church, he at length called the emperors to the Church and made the great Constantine a declared protector of Christianity. From that time on kings came into the Church from every quarter, and all that was written in the prophecies concerning its future glory was accomplished before the eyes of the whole earth.

But if the Church has been invincible in the face of attempts from without, it was no less so in the face of internal divisions. The heresies so often foretold by Jesus Christ and his apostles did come to pass; and the faith, already persecuted by the emperors, suffered at the same time a more dangerous persecution from the heretics. But this persecution never was more violent than at the time when persecution by the heathens ceased. Now Hell exerted its utmost efforts to destroy by its own hand that Church which the attacks of its declared enemies had strengthened.

Scarcely had it begun to breathe, thanks to the peace which Constantine had given her, when Arius, that unfortunate priest, stirs up for it greater troubles than it had ever endured. Constantius, Constantine’s son, beguiled by the Arians, whose doctrine he espouses, harasses the Catholics throughout the whole world. He is a
new persecutor of Christianity—and all the more formidable, as it was in the name of Jesus Christ that he made war upon Jesus Christ himself. To crown its misfortunes, the Church, thus divided, falls into the hands of Julian the Apostate, who is determined to destroy Christianity and finds no means more effectual than to foment the factions by which it was torn. After him comes Valens, as much attached to the Arians as Constantius but more violent. Other emperors protect other heresies with equal fury.

From all these experiences the Church learns that it has no less to suffer under Christian emperors than it had suffered under infidel emperors and that it must shed blood to defend not only the whole body of its doctrine but even every individual article. And, indeed, there was not one article of faith that it did not see attacked by its own children. A thousand sects and heresies springing forth from its own bosom rose up against it. But if it saw them all arise according to the predictions of Jesus Christ, it also saw all of them fall according to his promises, though often supported by emperors and by kings. Its true children were recognized, as St. Paul says, by this trial; the truth merely gained new strength whenever it was contested, and the Church remained unshakable.

Chapter 21

Particular Reflections on the Punishment of the Jews, and on the Corresponding Predictions of Jesus Christ

While I have endeavored to show you uninterruptedly the progression of the counsels of God in the perpetual endurance of his people, I have been obliged to hurry over numerous facts which merit profound reflection. Allow me, therefore, to return to them here, so that you will not miss such important things.

And firstly, Monseigneur, I must beg of you to consider with closer attention the fall of the Jews, whose every circumstance bears testimony to the Gospel. Those circumstances are explained to us by
infidel authors, by Jews, and by heathens, who, without perceiving the coherence of God's counsels, have related to us the important facts by which he has been pleased to manifest it.

We have Josephus, a Jewish author, a most accurate historian, and very well acquainted with the affairs of his nation, whose antiquities he has set forth in an admirable work. He described the last war, in which the nation perished, having been an eyewitness to everything and having held a high command in the service of his country.

The Jews also provide us with other very ancient authors whose testimonies you will see. They have ancient commentaries upon the books of the Scriptures, and, among others, the Chaldaic paraphrases, which they print with their bibles. They have their book which they name the Talmud, that is, Teaching, which they regard no less than the Scriptures themselves. It is a collection of treatises and maxims of their ancient teachers; and though the parts comprising that great work are not all of equal antiquity, the latest authors quoted in it lived during the first centuries of the Church. There, amid countless impertinent fables, which for the most part originate after the time of our Lord, we find some beautiful remnants of the ancient traditions of the Jewish people and proofs that might convince them.

And first, it is certain, as the Jews themselves admit, that divine vengeance never took a more terrible or more manifest form than in their final desolation.

It is an unwavering tradition, attested to in their Talmud and confirmed by all their rabbis, that forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, which comes to about the time of the death of Jesus Christ, strange things were continually happening in the Temple. Every day new prodigies were seen, so that a famous rabbi cried out one day: "O Temple, Temple! what is it that moves thee, and why dost thou make thyself afraid?"

What is more evident than that dreadful noise which was heard by the priests in the sanctuary on the day of Pentecost, and that clear voice which issued forth from the innermost part of that sacred place, Let us go hence, let us go hence? The holy angels, guardians of the Temple, loudly declared that they were forsaking it because
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God, who had established his dwelling there through so many centuries, had now rejected it.

Josephus and Tacitus himself have both related this prodigy. It was perceived only by the priests. But here is another prodigy, which was visible to the eyes of all the people, and the like of which had never been seen by any other people. "Four years before the war was declared, a peasant," says Josephus, "began to cry out: A voice is gone out from the East, a voice is gone out from the West, a voice is gone out from the four winds: a voice against the bridegrooms and against the brides, a voice against all the people." From that time he ceased neither night nor day, crying, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" He redoubled his cries on feast days. No other words came out of his mouth; those who pitied him, those who cursed him, those who gave him the necessities of life, heard nothing from him but that terrible sentence, "Woe to Jerusalem!" He was seized, examined, and condemned to be whipped by the magistrates; at every question and every lash, he answered, without ever once complaining, "Woe to Jerusalem!" Being dismissed as a madman, he ran up and down the whole country, incessantly repeating his sad prediction. For seven years he continued to cry in this manner, without stopping yet without weakening in voice. At the time of the last siege of Jerusalem, he shut himself up in the city, walking tirelessly around the walls and crying with all his might, "Woe to the Temple! Woe to the city! Woe to all the people!" At last he added, "Woe to myself!" and at the very instant was killed by a stone shot from a war machine.

Does it not seem, Monseigneur, that divine vengeance had, as it were, become visible in this man, who lived only to pronounce its decrees; that it had filled him with its power so that he might match the woes of the people with his cries? Would it not appear that he was in the end to perish as a result of the vengeance he had so long announced, in order to render it the more perceptible and striking by being, not only its prophet and witness, but even its victim?

This prophet of the woes of Jerusalem was named Jesus. It seemed as if the name of Jesus, a name of salvation and peace, was to prove a fatal omen to the Jews, who had despised it in the person of our Savior; and since those ungrateful wretches had rejected one Jesus, who proclaimed to them grace, mercy, and life, God sent them
another Jesus, who had nothing to proclaim to them but irre-
mediable calamities and the unavoidable decree of their approach-
ing ruin.

Let us penetrate a little deeper into the judgments of God, under
the guidance of his Scriptures. Jerusalem and its Temple were twice
destroyed, once by Nebuchadrezzar, a second time by Titus. But,
each time, God’s justice declared itself by the same methods, though
more plainly in the latter case.

In order better to understand this order of the counsels of God, let
us state before anything else this truth, which has so often been
established in the sacred pages: that one of the most terrible results
of divine vengeance is that, in punishing our past sins, it turns us
over to our outcast senses, so that we prove deaf to all its wise
admonitions, blind to the ways of salvation which are pointed out to
us, ready to believe everything that tends to undo us if only it flatters
us, and foolhardy enough to attempt anything without measuring
our strength against that of the enemies we provoke.

Thus Jerusalem and its princes perished the first time at the
hands of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon. Feeble, and always
defeated by that victorious king, they had often discovered that they
could make but vain efforts against him and had been obliged to
swear fealty to him. The prophet Jeremiah declared to them on
God’s behalf that God himself had delivered them up to that prince
and that their only salvation lay in submitting to the yoke. He spoke
to Zedekiah, king of Judah, and to all his people, saying, *Bend down
your necks under the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, and
you shall live. Why will you die? Why should this city be given up to
desolation?* They did not heed his warning. While Nebuchadrezzar
kept them closely blockaded by the prodigious fortifications with
which he had surrounded their city, they permitted themselves to be
deluded by their false prophets, who filled their minds with imagi-
nary victories and told them in God’s name, although God had not
sent them: *I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. You will
wear this yoke only two more years: and then you will see that prince
forced to return to you the sacred vessels which he took from the
Temple.* The people, seduced by these promises, endured hunger
and thirst and the greatest suffering and persisted so long in their
insensate boldness that there was no more mercy for them. The city
was overthrown, the Temple was burned, and everything was destroyed.

By these signs the Jews knew that the hand of God was upon them. But in order that divine vengeance might be as manifest in the final destruction of Jerusalem as it had been in the first, the same seduction, the same temerity, and the same hardness of heart appeared in both.

Although their rebellion had brought the might of Rome down upon them, and though they rashly shook a yoke under which the whole world had bent, Titus was unwilling to destroy them. On the contrary, he had several offers of pardon made to them, not only in the beginning of the war but even when they could no longer escape his grasp. He had already raised around Jerusalem a long high wall, fortified with towers and redoubts as strong as the city itself, when he sent them Josephus—their fellow citizen, one of their captains, one of their priests—who had been captured in that war while defending his country. What did he not say to move them! By how many forcible arguments did he invite them to return to submission? He showed them Heaven and earth in league against them, their inevitable destruction in case of resistance, and, at the same time, their safety in accepting Titus’ clemency. “Save,” said he, “the Holy City, save yourselves, save that Temple, the wonder of the world, which the Romans revere, and which Titus is loath to destroy.” But how could he save people so obstinately determined to be lost? Seded by their false prophets, they did not listen to these wise appeals. They were reduced to the last extremity; famine killed more than the war, and mothers ate their own children. Titus, touched by their calamities, took his gods as witnesses that he was not the cause of their destruction. During these miseries, they gave credence to the false predictions which promised them the empire of the world. Even more, when the city was taken and already on fire in every quarter, those foolish people still believed the false prophets who assured them that the day of salvation had come, so they might hold out to the last and that there might be no mercy for them. Indeed, they were massacred to the last person, the city was utterly demolished; and except for some ruined towers which Titus left as a monument to posterity, there remained not a stone upon a stone.

Thus you see that the same vengeance which had once manifested
itself under Zedekiah breaks upon Jerusalem. Titus is no less sent by
God than was Nebuchadrezzar; the Jews perish in the same manner.
In Jerusalem we see the same rebellion, the same famine, the same
drastic measures, the same ways of safety open, the same seduction,
the same hardness of heart, the same fall; and so that every
circumstance might exactly tally, the second Temple is burned
under Titus in the same month, and on the same day of the month,
that the first had been burnt under Nebuchadrezzar.

There are, however, some memorable differences between the two
overthrows of Jerusalem and the Jews, but in the latter overthrow all
of these serve to show a more rigorous and more evident justice.
Nebuchadrezzar had the Temple set on fire; Titus did everything he
could to save it, though his counselors showed him that, as long as it
stood, the Jews, who held their destiny inseparable from it, would
never cease to be rebels. But the fatal day had come; it was the tenth
of August, which formerly had seen Solomon’s Temple burned to
the ground. Notwithstanding Titus’ prohibitions, read aloud to both
Romans and Jews, and notwithstanding the natural inclination
of the soldiers, which should have led them rather to plunder than to
burn up so much wealth, a soldier—prompted, says Josephus, “by
divine inspiration”—had his companions hold him up to a window
until he had set fire to that august Temple. Titus flies to the scene,
Titus commands them to hurry and extinguish the spreading flames.
The fire spreads throughout in an instant, and that admirable
building is reduced to ashes.

But if the stubbornness of the Jews under Zedekiah was the most
terrible result and the surest sign of divine vengeance, what shall we
say of the blindness which appeared at the time of Titus? In the first
ruin of Jerusalem, the Jews at least agreed among themselves; in the
last, Jerusalem, besieged by the Romans, was torn by three opposing
factions. Though the hatred they all bore the Romans went to the
point of fury, these three factions were no less cruelly exasperated
with one another; the external conflicts shed less Jewish blood than
the internal ones. The moment they had finished attacking the
foreign enemy, the citizens resumed their internal war; violence and
robbery reigned through the whole city. The city was dying, it was
but one great field covered with dead bodies; and yet the leaders of
the factions fought for its control. Was this not an image of Hell,
where the damned hate one another no less than they hate the devils, their common enemies, and where there is nothing but pride, confusion, and rage?

Let us then admit, Monseigneur, that the justice which God carried out upon the Jews through Nebuchadrezzar was but a shadow of the justice of which Titus was the minister. What city has ever lost 1,100,000 men in seven months, and that in one single siege? That many Jews fell in the last siege of Jerusalem. The Jews had suffered nothing like it from the Chaldaeans. Under them their Captivity lasted only 70 years; but for the last 1,700 years they have been slaves throughout the world, nor do they yet experience any mitigation of their slavery.

We need no longer wonder that Titus, victorious after the capture of Jerusalem, would not accept the congratulations of neighboring nations or the crowns they sent him in honor of his victory. So many memorable circumstances, the very evident wrath of God, and God's hand, which Titus still saw before his eyes, kept him profoundly awed; and this made him say, as you heard, that he was not the conqueror but only the weak instrument of divine vengeance.

He did not know the whole secret; the hour had not yet come when the emperors were to acknowledge Jesus Christ. It was the time of the humiliation and persecution of the Church. Therefore, Titus, enlightened enough to know that Judaea was perishing as a clear result of God's justice, did not know what crime God had wanted to punish so terribly. It was the most heinous of all crimes, a crime until then unheard-of, namely, deicide, which also resulted in a vengeance such as the world had never seen.

But if we open our eyes a bit and consider the course of things, neither that crime of the Jews nor its punishment can remain unintelligible for us.

Let us remember only what Jesus Christ had foretold. He had foretold the utter ruin of Jerusalem and of the Temple. *There shall not be left here*, says he, *one stone upon another*. He had foretold the manner in which the ungrateful city would be besieged and the dreadful circumvallation that was to encompass it. He had foretold that terrible hunger which was to distress its inhabitants; nor had he forgotten the false prophets by whom they were to be seduced. He had warned the Jews that the time of their calamity was at hand; he
had given sure signs, which were to mark the precise hour of it. He had explained to them the long series of crimes which were to draw such punishments upon them. In a word, he had traced the whole history of the siege and of the desolation of Jerusalem.

And note also, Monseigneur, that he made all these predictions toward the time of his Passion, so that they might better know the cause of their miseries. His Passion was approaching when he said to them: Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias whom ye slew between the Temple and the altar. Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Such is the history of the Jews. They persecuted their Messiah, both in his person and in that of his followers; they stirred up the whole world against his disciples and allowed them no rest in any city; they armed the Romans and emperors against the infant Church; they stoned St. Stephen, killed the two Jameses, whose holiness rendered them venerable even among them; they executed St. Peter and St. Paul by the sword and by the hands of the Gentiles. They had to perish. So much blood, mingled with that of the prophets whom they have massacred, cries out to God for vengeance. Their houses and their city shall be desolate. Their desolation shall be commensurate with their crime: Jesus Christ forewarns them of it. The time is at hand: This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled; and again, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be done, that is, that the men then living were to witness these things.

But let us hear the continuation of our Savior's predictions. As he made his entry into Jerusalem some days before his death, touched with the calamities that death was to bring upon that wretched city, he wept over it: Ah! says he, unhappy city. If thou hadst known, at
least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace to make thee repent! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.

This was indicating clearly enough both the manner of the siege and the final results of the vengeance. But Jesus must not go to his execution without proclaiming to Jerusalem how much it would be punished one day for the unworthy treatment it was giving him. As he went to Calvary, bearing his Cross upon his shoulders, there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But he stopped, turned to them, and said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say. Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If the innocent, if the just suffer so rigorous a punishment, what are the guilty to expect?

Did Jeremiah ever lament more bitterly the destruction of the Jews? What stronger expressions could the Savior use to make them understand their misery and despair and that dreadful famine, fatal to the children and fatal to mothers, who saw their breasts dry up, who had no longer anything but tears to give their children, and who ate the fruit of their own wombs?

Chapter 22

Two Memorable Predictions of Our Lord Explained, and Their Fulfillment Proven by History

Such are the predictions Christ made to all the people. Those he made privately to his disciples deserve still greater attention. They
are contained in that long and admirable discourse in which he unites the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. This relationship is not without mystery, and here is its meaning.

Jerusalem, the favored city which the Lord had chosen so long as it continued to keep the Covenant and to believe in the promises, was the symbol of the Church and of Heaven, where God makes himself visible to his children. For this reason the prophets frequently join in the same discourse matters concerning Jerusalem with those concerning the Church and heavenly glory. This is one of the secrets of the prophecies and one of the keys to their meaning. But Jerusalem, cast off and ungrateful toward its Savior, was to be the image of Hell. Its perfidious inhabitants were to represent the damned; and the terrible judgment which Jesus Christ was to bring upon them was an image of the judgment he shall bring upon the whole world, when at the end of time he shall come in majesty to judge the quick and the dead. It is a custom in the Scriptures, and one of the means used for imprinting mysteries upon the mind, to interweave symbol with truth for our instruction. Thus our Lord has interwoven the history of Jerusalem destroyed with that of the end of the world, as is the case in the discourses to which we are referring.

Let us not, however, imagine that these subjects are so intermingled that we cannot discern what belongs to either. Jesus Christ has set them apart by certain characteristics which I could easily specify if need be. But it is enough to explain to you things having to do with the desolation of Jerusalem and the Jews.

When the apostles (and this was also at the time of the Passion), who had gathered about their master, showed him the Temple and surrounding buildings, admiring its stones, its style, its beauty, its solidity, he said to them, See ye not these great buildings? Verily I say to you there shall not be left here one stone upon another. Terrified by these words, they ask him the time set for this terrible event. He, who did not wish them to be caught in Jerusalem when it should be sacked (for he wanted the pillage of that city to be a symbol of the final separation of the good from the wicked), began to relate to them all the calamities as they were to happen.

First, he shows them famines and pestilences and earthquakes;
and history bears testimony that these things had never been more frequent nor more remarkable than they were in those times. He adds that everywhere in the world there would be *wars, and rumors of wars*: that *nation shall rise against nation*, and that all the earth should be in a state of disturbance. Could he more accurately describe to us the last years of Nero, when the whole Roman Empire, that is to say, the whole world, so peaceful ever since Augustus’ victory and under the emperors, began to totter? At that time the Gauls, the Spaniards, all the kingdoms which composed the empire were suddenly aroused; four emperors set themselves up almost at the same time against Nero and against one another; the pretorian cohorts, the armies of Syria, Germany, and all the rest that were spread over both East and West, attacked one another and, under the leadership of their generals, crossed the world from one end to the other in order to decide their quarrels by savage battles. These are great evils, says the Son of God; *but the end is not yet*. The Jews shall suffer like the rest in that upheaval of the world; but soon after they shall endure more personal calamities, and *all these are the beginning of sorrow*.

He adds that his Church, constantly afflicted ever since its first establishment, would, during those times, suffer more violent persecution than ever. You have seen that Nero, in his last years, attempted to destroy the Christians and had St. Peter and St. Paul put to death. This persecution, aroused by the jealousy and violence of the Jews, hastened their destruction but did not yet mark their complete demise.

The coming of false Christs and false prophets seemed to be one step nearer utter ruin: for it is the usual fate of those who refuse to lend an ear to the truth to be hurried on to their destruction by spurious prophets. Jesus Christ does not conceal from his apostles that this misfortune would befall the Jews: *Many false prophets shall rise, and shall seduce many*; and again, *Beware of false Christs and of false prophets*.

Let it not be said that this was a thing easily guessed by one who knew the temper of the nation; for, on the contrary, I have shown you that the Jews, displeased with these seducers who had so often
caused their ruin, especially in the time of Zedekiah, had so entirely lost faith in them that they would no longer listen to them. More than 500 years had passed without any false prophet appearing in Jerusalem. But Hell, which inspires them, roused itself at the coming of Jesus Christ; and God, who keeps deceiving spirits under control as he pleases, now gave them free rein in order to send at the same time that punishment to the Jews and that trial to his faithful people. Never did so many false prophets appear as in the times following the death of our Lord. Especially about the time of the Jewish war, and during the reign of Nero, who began it, Josephus shows us an endless number of these impostors, who drew the people to the wilderness by vainglorious reputations and tricks of magic, promising them a speedy and miraculous deliverance. It is also for this reason that the wilderness was specified in our Lord’s predictions as one of the places that would hide those false deliverers who, as you have seen, would finally drag the people into utter ruin. You may believe that the name of Christ, without which there was no perfect deliverance for the Jews, was interwoven in those imaginary promises, and you will shortly find the reasons to convince you of this.

Judaea was not the only province exposed to those delusions. They were common throughout the whole empire. No other time in world history discloses a greater number of impostors who pretend to foretell things to come and deceive the people by their magic arts. A Simon Magus, an Elymas, an Apollonius of Tyana, and an endless number of other sorcerers, mentioned in both sacred and profane history, arose during that age, in which Hell seemed to exert its supreme efforts to support its tottering empire. And therefore Jesus Christ notes at this time, especially among the Jews, this amazing number of false prophets. Whoever will carefully consider Christ’s words will see that these impostors were to multiply both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem, but chiefly as that time approached, and that seduction, strengthened by false miracles and false doctrines, would then be so subtle and so powerful as to deceive the very elect, if possible.

I am not saying that at the end of the world something of like nature
and even more dangerous will happen again, since we have just seen that the events in Jerusalem are a clear symbol of the latter times; but it is certain that Jesus Christ has pointed to the seduction rampant about the time of the fall of Jerusalem as one of the tangible results of God’s wrath upon the Jews and as one of the signs of their destruction. The event has justified his prophecy; everything here is attested to by undeniable proofs. We read the prediction of their errors in the Gospel: we see its accomplishment in their histories, and particularly in that of Josephus.

After Jesus Christ had foretold these things in order to deliver his followers from the calamities with which Jerusalem was threatened, he comes to the imminent signs of the utter desolation of that city.

God does not always give such warnings to his elect. In the terrible punishments by which he makes whole nations feel his power, he often smites the just with the guilty: for he has better ways of distinguishing between them than those that are obvious to our senses. The same blows that bruise the straw separate the good grain; gold is refined in the same fire in which straw is consumed: and through the same chastisements by which the wicked are exterminated the faithful are purified. But in the desolation of Jerusalem, so that the image of the Last Judgment might be more manifest and divine vengeance upon unbelievers more marked, he willed that the Jews who had received the Gospel should not be overwhelmed with the rest; and Jesus Christ gave his disciples sure signs by which they might know when it was time to leave that damned city. He based his warnings, as was his custom, upon the ancient prophecies, of which he was the interpreter as well as the end; and alluding to the passage in which the final ruin of Jerusalem was so clearly shown to Daniel, he said, *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand),* or as St. Mark puts it, *standing where it ought not, then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains.* St. Luke relates the same thing in other words: *When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains.*
One Evangelist explains the other; and by comparing these passages, it is easy to understand that the abomination foretold by Daniel is to be identified with the army encompassing Jerusalem. The holy fathers understood it thus, and reason convinces us that it is so. The word abomination, in the language of the Bible, signifies "idol": and who does not know that the Roman armies bore on their banners the images of their gods and their Caesars, who were the most respected of all their gods. These banners were to the soldiers an object of worship; and because idols, according to God's commands, were never to appear in the Holy Land, the Roman banners were banished from it. And, therefore, we learn from histories that as long as the Romans retained any degree of respect for the Jews, they never displayed their banners in Judæa. It was on this account that Vitellius, when he passed through that province in order to carry the war into Arabia, caused his troops to march without banners; for the Jewish religion was still respected, and even the enemies of the Jews would by no means force that people to bear things so contrary to their law. But at the time of the last Jewish war, we may well believe that the Romans did not spare a people whom they wanted to exterminate. Accordingly, when Jerusalem was besieged, it was surrounded by as many idols as there were imperial banners; and the abomination had never been so apparent where it ought not, that is, in the Holy Land and around the Temple.

Is this, then, one may ask, that great sign which Jesus Christ was to give? Was it time to flee when Titus besieged Jerusalem and so closely blocked up the approaches to the city that there was no longer any possibility of escaping? Here lies the wonder of the prophecy. Jerusalem was besieged twice in those days: the first time by Cestius, governor of Syria in the 68th year of Our Lord; the second time by Titus, four years later, that is, in the year 72. In the last siege there was no possibility of flight; Titus waged the war too fiercely for that: he surprised the whole nation assembled in Jerusalem at the feast of Passover and did not allow a soul to escape; and that dreadful circumvallation which he drew around the city left its inhabitants no hope. But there was nothing like this in the siege of Cestius; he was encamped fifty furlongs, that is to say, six miles from Jerusalem. His army was spread all around but did not make
any entrenchments; and he conducted the war so negligently that he missed the opportunity of taking the city when terror, sedition, and even spies opened the gates to him. At this juncture a retreat was perfectly possible, and history specifically notes that a number of Jews did withdraw. That was, therefore, the moment to leave; and this was the signal the Son of God had given to his followers. He therefore made a very clear distinction between the two sieges: in one, the city should be encompassed with trenches and towers, there would be nothing but death for all who were shut up in it; in the other, it should be only compassed with armies, and invested rather than besieged, properly speaking; and it was then they were to flee to the mountains.

The Christians obeyed their master’s voice. Though there were thousands in Jerusalem and Judaea, we read neither in Josephus nor in any of the other histories that a single one was found in the city when it was captured. On the contrary, it is certain, from ecclesiastical history and all the memorials of our forefathers, that they retreated to the little city of Pella in a mountainous country near the wilderness, on the frontiers of Judaea and Arabia.

From this we may see how precisely they had been warned; and there is nothing more remarkable than that separation of the unbelieving Jews from the Jews converted to Christianity: the former having stayed in Jerusalem to undergo there the punishment of their infidelity; the latter having retreated, as Lot did from Sodom, into a little city where they beheld with trembling the results of divine vengeance, from which God had been pleased to preserve them.

Besides Jesus Christ’s predictions, there were predictions by many of his disciples, among others, those of St. Peter and St. Paul. As those two faithful witnesses of the risen Christ were dragged to execution, they announced their impending doom to the Jews who were delivering them to the Gentiles. They told them “that Jerusalem was going to be utterly destroyed; that they would perish by hunger and despair; that they would be forever banished from the land of their fathers and sent into exile throughout the whole earth; that the time was not far off when all those evils would befall them, for having insulted with such cruel mockings the well-beloved Son of God, who had declared himself to them by so many miracles.” Pious
antiquity has preserved for us this prediction of the apostles, which was to be so speedily fulfilled. St. Peter had made many other prophecies, partly through inspirations of his own, partly by way of explaining his master's words; and Phlegon, a heathen author, whose testimony Origen adduces, has recorded that everything that apostle had foretold was accomplished in every detail.

Thus nothing befalls the Jews that has not been prophesied to them. The cause of their misery is clearly pointed out to us in their contempt for Jesus Christ and his disciples. The time of grace was past, and their destruction was inevitable.

In vain, then, Monseigneur, did Titus desire to save Jerusalem and the Temple. Their sentence had gone forth from on high: not a stone was to be left upon a stone. But if one Roman emperor vainly attempted to prevent the demolition of the Temple, still more vainly did another Roman emperor attempt to rebuild it. Julian the Apostate, having declared war against Jesus Christ, thought himself powerful enough to nullify his predictions. In his plan to stir up enemies against the Christians on all sides, he stooped so low as to court the Jews, who were the outcasts of the world. He induced them to rebuild their Temple; he gave them immense sums of money and strengthened their hands with the power of the whole empire. But note the outcome, and see how God disconcerts haughty princes. The Church Fathers and ecclesiastical historians relate the event with one accord and justify their accounts by the monuments which still subsisted in their time. But the thing had to be vouched for by the heathens themselves. Ammianus Marcellinus, a Gentile by religion and a zealous defender of Julian, has related the fact in these terms: "While Alipius, assisted by the governor of the province, advanced construction with all his might, fearful balls of fire issued from the foundations, which had first been weakened by violent shocks; and the workmen, who often attempted to resume work, were burned on various occasions; the site became inaccessible, and the attempt ended."

Ecclesiastical writers, more exact in describing so memorable an event, add fire from Heaven to the fire from the earth. But in the end Jesus Christ's words remain unshaken. St. John Chrysostom cries out, "He built his church upon a rock, nothing has been able to
overthrow it: He overthrew the Temple, nothing has been able to rebuild it; none can pull down what God raises up; none can raise up what God pulls down."

Let us talk no more of Jerusalem or of the Temple, but let us cast our eyes on the people themselves, formerly the living temple of God and now the object of his hatred. The Jews are in a worse state than their Temple or their city. The spirit of truth no longer dwells among them: prophecy is extinguished among them; the promises on which they built their hopes are vanished; everything has been overthrown for these people, and there is not left one stone upon another.

And observe to what extent they are given up to sin. Jesus Christ had said to them: *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.* From that time the spirit of seduction has reigned so powerfully among them that they are still ready at any moment to be carried away by it. It was not enough that the false prophets had betrayed Jerusalem into the hands of Titus; the Jews were not yet banished from Judaea, and the love they had for Jerusalem had induced several of them to choose to dwell among its ruins. And now comes a false Christ, who comes to complete their destruction. Fifty years after Jerusalem was taken, within a hundred years after the death of our Lord, the infamous Barcochebas <Simon Bar Cochba>, a robber and a scoundrel, called himself the Star of Jacob foretold in the Book of Numbers, because his name signified "the son of a star," and claimed to be the Christ. Aqiba, who had the greatest authority among all the rabbis, and, after his example, all those whom the Jews called their wise men, joined his party, without the impostor giving them any other token of his mission than that Aqiba said the Christ could not now be far off. Throughout the Roman Empire the Jews revolted under the leadership of Barcochebas, who promised them a world empire. Hadrian killed 600,000 of them; the yoke of these unhappy wretches grew heavier, and they were banished from Judaea forever.

Who does not see that the spirit of seduction seized their hearts? *They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.* There is no imposture too gross to seduce them.
In our days, in the East, an impostor called himself the Christ, and all the Jews began to flock about him; we have seen them in Italy, in Holland, in Germany, and at Metz, preparing to sell and leave everything to follow him. They already were imagining that they were going to become masters of the world when they learned that their “Christ” had become a Turk and had forsaken the Law of Moses.

Chapter 23
Continuation of the Errors of the Jews and the Way They Explain the Prophecies

We should not be astonished that the Jews have gone astray in this manner or that the storm scattered them when they went off course. That course was marked out to them in their prophecies, particularly in those which pointed out the time of Christ. They let those precious moments slip by without profiting from them; therefore, we see them afterward prey to lies, so that they no longer know which way to steer.

Allow me a moment more to tell you of their further errors and all the steps they took to throw themselves back into the abyss. The paths on which people go astray always connect with the high road; and, by studying where the straying began, people can walk more securely in the right way.

We have seen, Monseigneur, that two prophecies pointed out the time of Christ to the Jews: that of Jacob and that of Daniel. They both fixed the downfall of the kingdom of Judah as the time Christ should come. But Daniel had explained that the total destruction of that kingdom was to result from Christ’s death; and Jacob told plainly that, during the decline of the kingdom of Judah, the Christ who should then come would be the expectation of the people; that is to say, he would be their deliverer and would build his new kingdom, not of one nation only, but of all the nations of the world. The words of the prophecy can have no other meaning, and it was
the unchanging tradition of the Jews that they were to be interpreted in that way.

Hence that opinion which prevailed among the ancient rabbis, and which is still to be seen in their Talmud, that at the time the Christ should come there would be no more magistracy: so that there was nothing of greater importance for ascertaining the time of their Messiah than to observe when they should fall into that unhappy state.

Indeed, they had begun well; and had they not been obsessed with the worldly grandeur which they wanted to find in the Messiah, in order to share it under his empire, they could not possibly have failed to recognize Jesus Christ. The foundation they had laid was sound; for as soon as the tyranny of the first Herod and the alteration of the Jewish republic, which happened in his time, had pointed out to them the moment of the decay marked in the prophecy, they did not doubt that the Christ was due and that they should soon see that new kingdom in which all nations were to be united.

One of the things they observed was that the power of life and death had been taken from them. This was a great change, as that privilege had hitherto always been left to them, no matter to what domination they were subject, even in Babylon during the Captivity. The history of Susannah makes this sufficiently clear, and it was an unchanging tradition among them. The kings of Persia, who reestablished them, allowed them that power by a specific decree, which we mentioned in its proper place; and we have also seen that the first Seleucids had increased rather than decreased their privileges. I need not refer again to the reign of the Maccabees, during which the Jews were made not only free but powerful and formidable to their enemies. Pompey, who weakened them in the manner we noted, content with the tribute he imposed upon them and with putting them in a state of readiness to assist any need of the Roman people, left them their prince with full power. It is well known that the Romans dealt with them in this fashion and never meddled with the internal government of countries, to which they left their natural sovereigns.

In short, the Jews agree that they lost that power of life and death
only forty years before the desolation of the second Temple; and it cannot be doubted that it was the first Herod who dealt this blow to their liberty. In order to avenge himself on the Sanhedrin, before whom he had been obliged personally to appear before he was king, and later, in order to obtain absolute authority for himself, he had attacked that assembly, which was, in a way, the senate founded by Moses; it was the perpetual council of the nation, in which the supreme jurisdiction was exercised. From that time forth that great body gradually lost its power, and very little of it remained when Jesus Christ came into the world. Things grew increasingly worse under Herod’s children, when the kingdom of Archelaus, of which Jerusalem was the capital, having been reduced to a Roman province, was governed by prefects sent by the emperors. In this unhappy state, the Jews maintained so little claim to the power of life and death that in order to put Jesus Christ to death, whom they wanted at any cost to destroy, they were obliged to have recourse to Pilate. When that weak governor told them that they might judge him themselves, they answered with one voice, *It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.* Likewise it was through Herod’s power that they slew St. James, the brother of St. John, and put St. Peter in prison. When they had decided upon the death of St. Paul, they delivered him into the hands of the Romans, as they had done with Jesus Christ; and the sacrilegious vow of their fanatical Zealots, who swore neither to eat nor drink until they had killed that holy apostle, sufficiently proves that they thought themselves deprived of the power of putting him to death judicially.

But if they stoned St. Stephen, it was in a tumult, in one of those seditious outbursts which the Romans had not always the power to restrain among those who then styled themselves the Zealots. It is, therefore, to be considered certain, both from those histories and from the consent of the Jews and the state of their affairs, that toward the times of our Lord, and especially when he began to exercise his ministry, they entirely lost all temporal authority. They could not behold that loss without calling to mind Jacob’s ancient oracle which foretold that at the time of the Messiah there would no longer be among them either power, authority, or magistracy. One of their most ancient authors notes this, and he rightly admits that
the scepter was no longer in Judaea, nor the authority in the princes of the people. The public power had been taken from them, the Sanhedrin had been degraded, and the members of that venerable body were no longer considered judges but only private teachers. Thus, according to their own account, it was the time in which the Christ should appear. As they saw this sure sign of the approach of that new king, whose empire was to extend over all peoples, they believed that he was really about to make his appearance. The rumor spread abroad throughout the country, and the whole East was persuaded that it would not be long before they would see those who would reign over all the earth come forth from Judaea.

Tacitus and Suetonius relate this rumor as based upon an unchanging opinion and an ancient oracle found in the sacred books of the Jewish people. Josephus recites the prophecy in the same terms and, like them, says that it was to be found in the Holy Books. The authority of these books, the predictions of which had been seen so visibly fulfilled upon so many occasions, was great throughout the East; and the Jews, more attentive than others in observing conjunctures which were chiefly marked for their instruction, acknowledged that this was the time of the Messiah, which Jacob had placed at the time of their decline. Thus their reflections on their condition were correct; and so far were they from mistaking the times of the Christ that they knew he was to come at the time he actually did. But, O the weakness of the human mind! O vanity, infallible source of blindness! The Savior’s humility hid from those proud spirits the true greatness for which they were to look in their Messiah. They wanted him to be a king like the kings of this world. Therefore, the flatterers of the first Herod—dazzled by the grandeur and magnificence of that prince, who, though a tyrant, nevertheless did enrich Judaea—said that Herod was himself that so-long-promised king. And this gave rise to the sect of the Herodians, so often mentioned in the Gospel and which the heathens also knew, since Persius and his annotator inform us that, even in Nero’s time, King Herod’s birthday was celebrated by his followers with the same solemnity as the Sabbath. Josephus fell into a similar error. Indeed, this man—“instructed,” as he says himself, “in the Jewish prophecies, as a priest and a descendant of the priestly race”—acknowl-
edged that the coming of the king promised by Jacob fitted the
times of Herod. He took great pains to show that the downfall of the
Jews began with the reign of that king. But as he saw nothing in his
nation that fulfilled the ambitious ideas it had conceived of its
Christ, he pushed the time of the prophecy a little farther forward
and, applying it to Vespasian, asserted that "this oracle of the
Scriptures signified that prince who was declared emperor in
Judaea."

Thus he twisted the Holy Scriptures to justify his flattery. In his
blindness he transferred to foreigners the hope of Jacob and Judah;
in Vespasian he sought the son of Abraham and David; and he
ascribed to an idolatrous prince the title of him whose light was to
bring the Gentiles out of idolatry.

The circumstances of the times favored him. But while he
ascribed to Vespasian what Jacob had said of the Christ, the Zealots
who defended Jerusalem arrogated it to themselves. It was on this
basis alone that they promised themselves a world empire, as
Josephus relates; they were more reasonable, however, than he, in
that they at least did not go outside the nation in order to find the
accomplishment of the promises made to their fathers.

How was it that they did not open their eyes to the rich fruit which
was from that time brought forth among the Gentiles by the
preaching of the Gospel, and to that new empire which Jesus Christ
was establishing throughout the world? What was more beautiful
than an empire in which piety reigned, in which the true God
triumphed over idolatry, in which eternal life was proclaimed to
infidel nations? And was not the empire of the Caesars itself but a
vain pomp in comparison with the empire of Jesus Christ? But this
empire was not brilliant enough in the eyes of the world.

How thoroughly must one be disillusioned with human grandeur
in order to know Jesus Christ! The Jews knew the times; the Jews saw
nations called to the God of Abraham, according to the oracle of
Jacob, by Jesus Christ and his disciples; and yet for all that they
disowned that Jesus, who was declared to them by so many signs.
And although both in his lifetime and after his death he confirmed
his mission by so many miracles, those blind people rejected him
because he had nothing in him but solid greatness, void of all
pageantry which strikes the senses, and came rather to condemn than to crown their blind ambition.

And yet, forced by the conjunctures and the circumstances of the time, in spite of their blindness, they sometimes seemed able to free themselves from their prejudices. At the time of our Lord’s coming, everything was so disposed for the appearance of the Messiah that they suspected St. John the Baptist might be the Christ. His austere, extraordinary, astonishing way of life struck them; and in the absence of worldly grandeur, they seemed willing at first to content themselves with the splendor of such a wonderful life. The simple and ordinary life of Jesus Christ shocked that gross and proud generation, who could be won over only by the senses and who, in addition, unable to make a sincere conversion, would admire only what they looked upon as inimitable. In this manner St. John the Baptist, whom they judged worthy of being the Christ, was not believed when he pointed out the true Christ; and Jesus Christ, who was to be imitated by his followers, appeared too humble to the Jews to be followed.

However, the impression they had received that the Christ was to appear at this time was so strong that it remained alive among them for almost a century. They believed that the accomplishment of the prophecies might have a certain latitude, that it was not always confined to one precise point of time; as a result, for nearly a hundred years there was nothing to be heard among them but false Christs, who secured a following, and false prophets, who proclaimed them. Former ages had seen nothing of the kind, and the Jews had not bandied the name of Christ, either when Judas Maccabaeus gained so many victories over their tyrant, or when his brother Simon freed them from the yoke of the Gentiles, or when the first Hrycanus made so many conquests. The times and other signs did not agree, nor was there, until the age of Jesus, the least talk of those Messiahs. In addition to the Jews, the Samaritans, who read Jacob’s prophecy in the Pentateuch made “Christs” of their own, and, shortly after Jesus Christ, they acknowledged their Dositheus. Simon Magus, from the same country, also boasted that he was the Son of God; and Menander, his disciple, styled himself the Savior of the world. In Jesus Christ’s lifetime, the Samaritan woman had
believed that the Messiah cometh—so undoubted was the belief in the nation, and among all those who read the ancient oracle of Jacob, that the Christ was to appear in those days.

When the time was so far past that there was no longer anything to expect and the Jews had found by experience that all the Christs they had followed, far from delivering them from their calamities, had only sunk them deeper into them, a long time passed without the appearance of any new Messiah among them; and Barcochebas was the last whom they acknowledged as such in those first ages of Christianity. But the old impression could not be utterly eradicated. Instead of believing that Christ had appeared—as they had in Hadrian's time—under the Antonines, his successors, they took it into their heads to say that their Messiah was in the world, although he had not yet made his appearance because he was waiting for the prophet Elijah, who was to come to anoint him. Such language was common among them in St. Justin's time, and we also find in their Talmud the teachings of one of their most ancient masters who said that "the Christ had come, as pointed out in the prophecies, but that he kept himself concealed somewhere in Rome among the poor beggars."

Such idle dreams could not find credence with the people; and the Jews, forced at last to confess that the Messiah had not come in the time they had had reason to expect him according to their ancient prophecies, fell into another abyss. They were on the verge of giving up hope in their Messiah, who had not appeared at the appointed time; and many followed a famous rabbi <Hillel>, whose words are still to be found preserved in the Talmud. This man, seeing the time so far past, concluded that "the Israelites had no other Messiah to expect, because he had been given them in the person of King Hezekiah."

It must be said that this opinion, far from prevailing among the Jews, was detested by them. But as they no longer know anything about the times signified in the prophecies and are at a loss which way to get out of this labyrinth, they have made an article of faith in the expression we read in the Talmud: "All the times that were fixed for the coming of the Messiah are past"; and they have pronounced with common agreement, "Cursed be they who shall compute the
times of the Messiah." Thus we see, in a storm which has driven the
ship too far off its course, the despairing pilot stop his reckoning
and go where chance carries him.

Ever since that time, all their studies have been to elude the
prophecies in which the time of the Christ was pointed out; they did
not care if they overthrew all the traditions of their fathers, provided
they could but deprive the Christians of those admirable prophecies;
and they have gone so far as to assert that Jacob's prophecy did not
refer to the Christ.

But their own ancient books show they are wrong. The Talmud
interprets that prophecy as referring to the Messiah, and their
Paraphrases explain it in the same way we do; and these are the most
authentic and most highly regarded commentaries extant among
them.

We find there, in specific terms, that the house and kingdom of
Judah, to which the whole posterity of Jacob and people of Israel
were one day to be reduced, should always produce "judges and
magistrates" until the coming of the Messiah, under whom would be
formed a kingdom made up of all nations.

This was the testimony which the most celebrated and approved
teachers of the Jews bore to them in the earliest ages of Christianity.
The ancient tradition, so firm and well established, could not be
abolished all at once; and although the Jews did not apply Jacob's
prophecy to Jesus Christ, they had not yet dared to deny that it
suited the Messiah. They did not reach that wild extravagance until
long after, namely, when, hard pressed by the Christians, they at last
perceived that their own tradition was against them.

As for Daniel's prophecy, in which the coming of the Christ was
limited to the period of 490 years, from the twentieth year of the
reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus: since that period reached to the
end of the fourth millennium of the world, it was also a very ancient
tradition among the Jews that the Messiah would appear toward the
end of that millennium and about 2,000 years after Abraham. An
Elijah, whose name is great among the Jews though he was not the
prophet, had taught this before the birth of Jesus Christ; and this
tradition is preserved in the Talmud. You have seen this fulfilled at
the coming of our Lord, since he actually appeared about 2,000
years after Abraham and toward the year of the world 4000. However, the Jews did not recognize him; and being disappointed in their expectation, they said that their sins had delayed the Messiah who was to come. But nevertheless, our dates are confirmed by their own admissions; and it is excessive blindness to render dependent upon men a period which God has fixed so precisely in Daniel.

It is also very embarrassing to them to find that the prophet puts the time of Christ before that of the destruction of Jerusalem, so that, the latter event having occurred, the former event must of necessity have occurred as well.

Josephus grossly erred on this point. He rightly enough computed the weeks which were to be followed by the desolation of the Jewish people; and, finding them fulfilled at the time that Titus laid siege to Jerusalem, he had no doubt but that the moment of the destruction of the city had come. But he did not take into account that this desolation was to be preceded by the coming of the Christ and by his death; so that he understood only half of the prophecy.

The Jews who came after him wanted to remedy this error. They have created for us an Agrippa descended from Herod, whom the Romans, they say, put to death shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem; and they would have it that this Agrippa, Christ by his title of king, is the Christ referred to in Daniel: a fresh proof of their blindness. For in addition to the fact that this Agrippa can be neither the Just nor the Holy One nor the end of the prophecies, as the Christ whom Daniel described must have been, and that the murder of that Agrippa, in which the Jews had no hand, could not be the cause of the desolation, as the death of Daniel’s Christ was to be, what the Jews say about it is all a fable. The Agrippa descended from Herod was always on the side of the Romans; he was always well treated by their emperors and reigned in a section of Judaea a long time after the taking of Jerusalem, as Josephus and other contemporaries show.

Thus everything the Jews devise to elude the prophecies serves merely to confute them. They themselves do not rely upon such gross fictions, and their best defense consists in that law they enacted to no longer compute the days until the coming of the Messiah. Thereby they willingly shut their eyes to the truth and renounce the
prophecies in which the Holy Spirit has himself numbered the years; but while they renounce them, they fulfill them and demonstrate the truth of what the prophecies say concerning their blindness and their fall.

Let them answer what they will to the prophecies; the desolation which these foretold has befallen them at the appointed time; the event speaks more forcefully than all their quibbles; and if the Christ did not come at that fateful conjuncture, the prophets in whom they trust have deceived them.

Chapter 24

Memorable Circumstances of the Fall of the Jews. Continuation of Their False Interpretations.

And in order to complete our proof, please note two circumstances that accompanied their fall and the coming of the Savior of the world: the first, that the succession of priests, uninterrupted and unalterable from the time of Aaron, came to an end at that time; and the other, that the distinction between tribes and families, always maintained until that time, was, by their own admission, also lost.

This distinction was necessary until the time of the Messiah. From Levi were to proceed the ministers of sacred things. From Aaron were to issue the priests and high priests. From Judah was to issue the Messiah himself. If the distinction among families had not lasted until the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of Jesus Christ, the Jewish sacrifices would have perished before then, and David would have been deprived of the glory of being acknowledged as father of the Messiah. Since the Messiah has come, since the new priesthood after the order of Melchizedek had begun in his person, since the new kingdom which was not of this world has appeared, we no longer need Aaron or Levi, Judah or David, or their families. Aaron is no longer needed in a time when sacrifices are to cease, according to Daniel. The house of David and of Judah fulfilled its
destiny once the Christ of God had come from it; and as if the Jews themselves renounced their hope, they forgot precisely at this time the succession of families, until then so carefully and religiously remembered.

Let us not omit one of the signs of the coming of the Messiah, and perhaps the foremost one, if we can rightly understand it, though it constitutes the scandal and horror of the Jews. It is the forgiveness of sins in the name of a suffering Savior, of a Savior humbled and obedient even unto death. Daniel had specified among his weeks the mysterious week which we have observed, in which the Christ was to be offered up, in which the Covenant was to be confirmed by his death, in which the ancient sacrifices were to lose their efficacy. If we put Daniel and Isaiah together, we shall come to the very bottom of so great a mystery; we shall see the Man of Sorrows, with the iniquity of us all upon him, laying down his life for sin, by whose stripes we are healed. Open your eyes, unbelievers! Is it not true that the remission of sins has been preached to you in the name of Jesus Christ crucified? Had anyone ever dreamed of such a mystery? Has anyone but Jesus Christ, either before or after him, ever gloried in washing away our sins by his blood? Would he have let himself be crucified merely to acquire a vain honor and to fulfill in himself so fateful a prophecy? One ought to be silent and adore in the Gospel a doctrine which no man could even conceive of if it were not true.

This point is extremely embarrassing to the Jews: they find in their Scriptures too many passages in which mention is made of the humiliations of their Messiah. What shall become, then, of those which refer to his glory and his triumphs? The natural explanation is that he will attain his triumphs by conflicts and his glory by suffering. Such an incredible idea! The Jews have preferred to postulate two Messiahs. We find in their Talmud and other books of similar antiquity that they expect one suffering Messiah and one Messiah full of glory: the one dead and risen again, the other always happy and victorious; the one, to whom are applicable all the passages where weakness is spoken of, the other, to whom apply all those texts where greatness is mentioned; one, in short, the son of Joseph (for they have not been able to deny him one of the characteristics of Jesus Christ, who was the reputed son of Joseph), and another, the son of David. They did not care to know that this
Messiah, the son of David, was, according to David himself, to drink of the torrent before he would lift up his head—meaning that he was to be afflicted before he was triumphant. The Son of David himself said: O Fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?

Moreover, if we understand that the Messiah is meant in that great passage where Isaiah describes for us in so lively a manner the Man of Sorrows wounded for our transgression and disfigured, as if a leper, we are also supported in this interpretation, as well as in all the rest, by the ancient tradition of the Jews; and in spite of their prejudices, the chapter so often cited in their Talmud teaches us that "this leper laden with the sins of the people shall be the Messiah." The Messiah's sorrows, which shall be caused by our sins, are noted in the same place and in the other books of the Jews. In them there is frequent mention of the entry, equally humble and glorious, that he was to make into Jerusalem, riding on an ass; and that celebrated prophecy of Zechariah is applied to him. What reason have the Jews to complain? Everything was set forth for them in precise terms by their prophets; their ancient tradition had preserved the natural explanation of those famous prophecies; and there is nothing more just than that reproach that is made to them by the Savior of the world: You hypocrites, ye can discern the faces of the sky, and say it will be fair or foul weather, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

Let us conclude, then, that the Jews have truly had reason to say that "all the conditions for the coming of the Messiah are past." Judah is no longer a kingdom or a people; other nations have confessed the Messiah who was to be sent. Jesus Christ has been shown to the Gentiles; at that sign, they have hastened to the God of Abraham, and the blessing of that patriarch has been spread over the whole earth. The Man of Sorrows has been preached and the forgiveness of sins proclaimed by his death. All the weeks of Daniel have elapsed; the desolation of the people and of the sanctuary, a just punishment of the death of Christ, has had its final fulfillment; in short, the Christ has appeared with all the characteristics which Jewish tradition recognized in him, and their incredulity can no longer be pardoned.
Therefore, from that time on we see indisputable signs of their censure. After Jesus Christ, they sank increasingly into ignorance and misery, from which only the very extreme degree of their calamities and the shame of having been so often a prey to error will deliver them, or rather the goodness of God, when the time appointed by his Providence for punishing their ingratitude and subduing their pride shall be accomplished.

Meanwhile, they remain the laughingstock of the nations and the object of their aversion; and their long bondage has not brought them to their senses, although it should be enough to convince them. For, after all, as St. Jerome tells them: "Why do you tarry, incredulous Jew? You committed numerous crimes during the time of the Judges; your idolatry made you the slave of all the neighboring nations, but God soon took pity on you and sent you saviors. You fell deeper into idolatry under your Kings; but the abominations you perpetrated under Ahaz and Manasseh were punished by only seventy years of captivity. Cyrus came and restored to you your country, your Temple, and your sacrifices. In the end you were crushed by Vespasianus and Titus. Fifty years later, Hadrian exterminated you altogether, and you have now been living in a state of oppression for 400 years." Thus spoke St. Jerome. His argument has become stronger since then, and 1,200 years have been added to the desolation of the Jewish people. Let us tell them, therefore, that their bondage has continued, not for 400 but for 1,600 years and that their yoke has not become any easier. Let us say: "What have you done, ungrateful people? Enslaved in every country and by every prince, you do not serve false gods. Why has God, who had chosen you, forgotten you; and what has become of his former mercy? What crime, what transgression greater than idolatry makes you to feel a punishment such as your idolatry never brought down upon you? You do not answer? You do not understand what makes God so inexorable? Remember, then, the word of your fathers: His blood be on us, and on our children; and also: We have no king but Caesar. If the Messiah shall not be your king, look well what you have chosen. Remain the slave of Caesar and the kings until the time when the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved."
Chapter 25

Special Thoughts about the Conversion of the Gentiles. Profound Counsel of God, Who Was Pleased to Convert Them by the Cross of Jesus Christ. Reasoning of St. Paul on This Manner of Converting Them

This conversion of the Gentiles was the second thing which was to happen at the time of the Messiah and the surest sign of his coming. We have seen how the prophets had clearly foretold it; and their promises were verified during the time of our Lord. What the philosophers never dared attempt, what neither the prophets nor the Jewish people, when they were most protected and most faithful, were able to bring about, twelve fishermen, sent by Jesus Christ and witnesses of his Resurrection, accomplished. The conversion of the world was to be the work neither of philosophers nor even of prophets: it was reserved for the Christ and was the fruit of his Cross.

It was indeed necessary that Christ and his apostles originate among the Jews and that the preaching of the Gospel should begin at Jerusalem. A mountain was to be established and exalted in the last days, according to Isaiah: and this was the Christian Church. And all nations shall flow into it, and many people shall go. The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly destroy. But Isaiah, who saw these things, at the same time also saw that out of Zion shall go forth law, which was to judge the Gentiles, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people. This made our Savior say that salvation is of the Jews. And it was fitting that the new light which was one day to enlighten the people plunged in idolatry should spread itself abroad through the whole world, from the place it had always been. It was in Jesus Christ, the son of David and Abraham, that all nations were to be blessed and sanctified. This we have often noted, but we have not yet observed the cause for which this suffering Jesus, this Jesus crucified and destroyed, was to be the sole
author of the conversion of the Gentiles and the sole conqueror of idolatry.

St. Paul has explained this mystery to us in the first chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, and we should study that beautiful passage in its full context. Christ sent me to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the Cross is, to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us that are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Doubtless, since it could not bring men out of their ignorance. But this is the reason St. Paul gives for this: for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, that is to say, the creatures he had so carefully directed did not recognize him, he took another direction, and it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, that is, by the mystery of the Cross, of which human wisdom can understand nothing.

New and admirable design of Divine Providence! God had placed man in the world, where, whichever way he turned his eyes, the wisdom of the Creator shone forth in the greatness, magnificence, and order of that glorious work. Man nevertheless failed to recognize God. The creatures, which were there to raise our minds higher, attracted our attention; blind and brutish man served these creatures, and, not satisfied with worshiping the works of God’s hands, he even worshiped the works of his own. Fables more ridiculous than those that are told to children constituted his religion; he forgot reason; but God wanted him to forget it in another manner. A work whose wisdom he understood did not affect him; now another work is presented to him, one in which he loses his ability to reason and which to him appears totally mad: namely, the Cross of Christ. It is not by reasoning that we understand this mystery but by bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, by casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.
And, indeed, what do we understand in this mystery, in which the Lord of glory is heaped with insults; in which divine wisdom is called folly; in which he who, secure in himself of his native majesty, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross? This makes all our thoughts become confused; and, as St. Paul said, nothing appears more foolish to those who are not enlightened from above.

Such was the remedy that God had in store for idolatry. He knew man’s mind and knew that it was not through reason that one could destroy an error which reason had not established. There are errors into which we fall through reasoning. But idolatry had come in by the opposite extreme, by stifling all reasoning, by granting pre-dominance to the senses, which sought to clothe everything with the qualities which strike the senses. Thus the Deity had become visible and vulgar. Men gave the Deity their own image and, what was even more shameful, their vices and passions. Reason had no share in so brutal an error. It was an inversion of good sense, a delirium, a frenzy. Arguing with a frenzied person or with a man who has lost his senses in the grip of a burning fever will only irritate him and make his indisposition incurable. You must go to the cause, set right his constitution, and calm the humors whose violence causes such extravagant symptoms. In the same manner, reasoning should not cure the delirium of idolatry. What have philosophers gained by their pompous discourses, their sublime style, their reasonings, so artfully framed? Did Plato with his eloquence, which was thought divine, overthrow one single altar where those monstrous divinities were worshiped? On the contrary, he and his disciples, and all the wise men of this world, made sacrifices to a lie. They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, since, contrary to their natural light, they worshiped creatures.

Was it not then with reason that St. Paul cried out, in our passage, Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Were they able at least to destroy the fables of idolatry? Did
they so much as suspect it their duty openly to oppose so many blasphemies and to suffer, I do not say the most severe punishment, but the smallest affront for the sake of truth? Far from that, they hold the truth of God in unrighteousness and held it as a maxim that in matters of religion the people must be followed: those people, whom they so greatly despised, were their guide in the most important matter of all, in which their superior lights seemed most needed. What purpose have you thus served, O philosophy! Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?, as St. Paul said. Has he not destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent?

Thus God has shown by experience that the overthrow of idolatry could not be the work of human reason alone. Far from entrusting it with the cure of such a malady, God completely overwhelmed reason by the mystery of the Cross; and, at the same time, he applied the remedy to the roots of the evil.

Idolatry, if we rightly understand it, had its source in that profound attachment we have for ourselves. This had made us contrive gods like ourselves, gods who in reality were but men, subject to similar passions, weaknesses, and vices, so that, under the name of deities, it was really their own thoughts, pleasures, and fancies that the Gentiles worshiped.

Jesus Christ leads us into other paths. His poverty, his ignominies, and his Cross make him an object shocking to our senses. We must forget ourselves, renounce everything, crucify everything, in order to follow him. Man, torn from himself and from everything of which his corruption made him fond, becomes capable of worshiping God and his eternal truth, whose rules he is henceforth willing to follow.

Then all idols perish and vanish away, both those which were worshiped upon the altars and those which each one served in his heart. The latter had set up the former: men worshiped Venus because they let themselves be dominated by sensuous love and were charmed with its power; Bacchus, the most wanton of all the gods, had altars because people abandoned themselves and sacrificed, so to speak, to the delight of their senses, more pleasing and intoxicating than wine. Jesus Christ, by the mystery of his Cross, comes to
imprint upon their hearts the love of suffering instead of the love of pleasure. The idols which were worshiped externally were scattered because those which were worshiped internally no longer existed: the pure of heart, says Christ himself, are made capable of seeing God; and man, far from making God like to himself, instead strives, as far as his weakness permits it, to become like God.

The mystery of Jesus Christ has shown us how the Deity could without diminution of its glory be united to our nature and be clothed in our infirmities. The Word is made flesh: He who, being in the form and nature of God, without losing what he was took upon him the form of a slave. Unalterable in himself, he unites with, he assumes, a foreign nature. O men, you wanted gods that should be, to tell the truth, merely men, and vicious men at that! This was too great a blindness. But here is a new object of worship for you: God and man together, but a man who has lost nothing of what he was by taking upon him what we are. The Deity remains immutable; and, as it cannot debase itself, it exalts what it unites with itself.

But further, what has God taken from us? Our vices and sins? God forbid: he took from man only what he made in man; and it is certain that he had made in him neither sin nor vice. He had made his nature; he assumed his nature. It may be said that he had made mortality with the infirmity that accompanies it, because, although it was not originally planned, it was the just punishment of sin and as such was the work of divine justice. Therefore, God did not disdain to take it upon himself; and, by taking upon himself the pain of sin without sin itself, he showed that he was not a guilty person punished but the Just One atoning for the sins of others.

As a result, instead of the vices which men attributed to their gods, all the virtues appeared in this God-man; and so that they might shine forth in the severest trials, they appeared amid the most horrible torments. Let us seek no other visible God after this: he alone is worthy of toppling all idols; and the victory he was to gain over them is linked to his Cross.

That is to say, it is linked to an apparent folly. For the Jews, St. Paul continues, require a sign by which God, moving all nature with splendor, as he did during the Exodus from Egypt, may set them
visibly above their enemies; and the Greeks, or the Gentiles, seek after wisdom and labored discourses, like those of their Plato and Socrates. But we, continues the apostle, preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, not a sign, and unto the Greeks foolishness, not wisdom, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. This is the final blow that was to be dealt to our conceited ignorance. The wisdom to which we are called is so sublime that to our wisdom it appears folly; and its rules are so exalted that the whole seems an aberration.

But if that divine wisdom is impenetrable to us in itself, it declares itself by its results. A power emanates from the Cross, and all the idols are shaken. We see them fall to the ground, though supported by the whole Roman power. It is not the wise, it is not the noble, it is not the mighty who have worked so great a miracle. God’s work has been pursued; and what he began by the humiliation of Jesus Christ, he has finished by the humiliation of his disciples. For see your calling, brethren, St. Paul concludes his admirable discourse; you see those whom God has called amongst you and of whom he has composed this Church, victorious over the world; there are not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. The apostles and their disciples, the outcasts of the world, mere nothings, if we look upon them with human eyes, have prevailed over all the emperors and the whole empire. Men had forgotten the Creation, and God has reenacted it by producing out of that nothingness his Church, which he has rendered all-powerful against error. With the idols he has laid low all human pride which would come to their defense; and he has performed this great work as he had created the universe, by the sole power of his word.
Chapter 26

DIVERSE FORMS OF IDOLATRY: THE SENSES, SELF-INTEREST, IGNORANCE, A FALSE VENERATION FOR ANTIQUITY, POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, AND HERESIES COME TO ITS AID. THE CHURCH TRIUMPHS OVER ALL

Idolatry appears to like weakness itself, and we can hardly conceive that so much strength should have been required to destroy it. But, on the contrary, its extravagance shows how difficult it was to conquer, and such great subversion of good sense sufficiently demonstrates how much the source was tainted. The world had grown old in idolatry and, infatuated with its idols, had become deaf to the voice of nature, which cried out against them. Think what power was needed to recall to man's memory the true God, so profoundly forgotten, and to rouse mankind from its amazing torpor!

All the senses, all the passions, all interests fought for idolatry. Idolatry was made for pleasure: diversions, spectacles, and even lewdness itself were incorporated into the divine worship. Festivals were nothing but games, and there was no aspect of man's life from which modesty was more industriously banished than from the mysteries of religion. How could minds so corrupted be trained for the regularity of true religion, which is chaste, severe, hostile to the senses, and solely intent on invisible joys? St. Paul spoke to Felix, governor of Judaea, of justice, chastity and the judgment to come; Felix, being terrified, answered: Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. Such a way of speaking was disturbing to a man who wanted to enjoy, without scruple and at any cost, the good things of this world.

Would you like to see how idolatry aroused self-interest, that powerful spring which sets human affairs in motion? When idolatry began to fall into discredit throughout Asia as a result of St. Paul's preaching, the workmen who earned their living by making little silver temples of Diana of Ephesus assembled, and the leading man
among them showed them that their livelihood was likely to cease: *So that not only, says he, this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth.*

How powerful is self-interest, and how bold when it can cloak itself with the pretext of religion! Nothing more was needed to stir up the workmen. They came out together like so many madmen, crying out, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians,* and dragging St. Paul’s companions to the theater, where the whole city had gathered. Then the cries were redoubled, and for two hours the public square rang with these words, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.* St. Paul and his companions were with difficulty rescued from the hands of the people by the magistrates, who feared that greater disorders would occur in the uproar. To the self-interest of private persons join the self-interest of the priests who would be overthrown with their gods; to that join the self-interest of the cities which this false religion was making famous, as in the case of Ephesus, which owed to its temple its privileges and the visits of the foreigners who had made it wealthy; combine these various interests, and see what storm must arise against the infant Church. Should we then be surprised to see the apostles so often beaten, stoned, and left for dead in the midst of the mob? But a greater interest is about to move a greater machine: the interest of the state is about to arouse the Roman senate, people, and emperors.

For many years the senate’s decrees had already prohibited foreign religions. The emperors had adopted the same policy; and in that great discussion about reforming abuses of the government, one of the chief regulations that Maecenas proposed to Augustus was the preventing of innovations in religion, which never failed to occasion dangerous commotions in a state. This was perfectly true, for what agitates men’s minds more violently and carries them to stranger excesses? But God was determined to show that the establishment of the true religion stirred up no such troubles; and this is one of the wonders which demonstrate that he had a hand in the work. For is it not astonishing that in the 300 long years that the Church had to suffer all the cruelties which the rage of persecutors could invent, in
all the seditions and civil wars, all the conspiracies against the person of emperors, not one single Christian, good or bad, was ever implicated? The Christians defy their greatest enemies to name one; indeed, there never was one, so great was the veneration which the Christian doctrine inspired for the public powers, and so deep was the impression made on the minds of all by these words of the Son of God: *Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.*

That beautiful distinction conveyed so clear a light into their minds that the Christians never ceased to revere the image of God in princes, even when these were persecutors of the truth. This principle of submission to lawful authority shines so brightly in all their apologies that even today they inspire the reader with the love of public order; and this submission to authority shows that the Christians expected the establishment of Christianity to come from God alone. Men so steeled against the fear of death, who filled the whole empire and all the armies, never once forgot themselves during so many centuries of suffering; they refused to become involved, not only in seditious actions, but even in the smallest murmur of complaint. The hand of God was in the work, and no other hand but his could have restrained spirits provoked by so many injuries.

Indeed, it was hard for them to be treated as public enemies and enemies of the emperors when they breathed nothing but obedience and when their most ardent wishes were for the safety of the princes and the state. But Roman policy felt attacked in its foundations when its gods were shunned. Rome boasted of being a holy city by its very foundation, consecrated from the beginning by divine auspices and dedicated by its founder to the god of war. It almost believed Jupiter more present in the Capitol than in the heavens. It thought it owed its victories to its religion. In this manner Rome had overcome both nations and their gods, for in those days they reasoned that the Roman gods must be masters of other gods, as the Romans were masters of other men. When Rome subdued Judaea, it included the God of the Jews among the gods it had vanquished. To desire to establish his reign was to sap the foundations of the empire; it was to hate the victories and power of the Roman people. Thus the
Christians, being hostile to the gods, were looked upon at the same time as hostile to the republic. The emperors took more pains to exterminate them than to exterminate the Parthians, Marcomanni, or Dacians. Christianity overthrown appeared in their inscriptions with as much pomp as the Sarmatae defeated. But they were wrong when they boasted of having destroyed a religion which was growing under fire and sword. In vain were calumnies added to cruelty. Men who practiced superhuman virtues were accused of vices which are shocking to human nature. Those whose chastity was their delight were accused of incest. Those who did all the good in their power to their persecutors were accused of eating their own children. But despite public hatred, the force of truth drew favorable reports from the mouths of their enemies. Everyone knows what Pliny the Younger wrote to Trajan concerning the good behavior of the Christians. They were justified but were not exempted from the severest punishment; for this last stroke was needed to complete in them the image of Jesus Christ crucified, and like him they must go to the Cross with a public declaration of their innocence.

Nor did idolatry depend entirely on violence. Although its basis was essentially brutal ignorance and a total depravity of the human mind, it tried to make some show of argument. How often it attempted to disguise itself, and how many different forms it took in order to cover its shame! Sometimes it affected reverence for the Deity, saying that whatever is divine is unknown; the Deity alone knows itself; it is not for us to discuss such high matters; therefore, we must believe our forefathers, and everyone ought to follow the religion which he finds established in his country. In accordance with these maxims, errors as vulgar as they were impious covered the whole earth and were without remedy; and the voice of nature, which proclaimed the true God, was stifled.

There were grounds for thinking that the weakness of our erring reason needed some authority to bring it back to its first principle and that we must learn true religion from antiquity. And so you have seen its unshaken continuity from the beginning of the world. But of what antiquity could paganism boast when it could not read its own histories without finding in them the origin, not only of its religion, but even of its gods? Varro and Cicero, not to mention other
authors, have sufficiently shown this. Or should we have recourse to those countless thousands of years which the Egyptians filled with confused and impertinent fables in order to establish the antiquity of which they boasted? Yet even there could be seen the birth and death of the Egyptian divinities, and those people could not make themselves ancient without pointing out the beginning of their gods.

And here is another form of idolatry. This new form of idolatry would have men worship everything that passed for divine. Roman policy, which so strictly prohibited foreign religions, allowed the worshiping of the gods of the barbarians, provided it had adopted them. In this manner it endeavored to appear equitable toward all gods as well as toward all men. It sometimes offered incense to the God of the Jews with the rest. We find a letter of Julian the Apostate in which he promises the Jews he will rebuild the Holy City and sacrifice with them to God, the Creator of the universe. We have seen that the heathens were very willing to worship the true God but not the true God alone; and it was not the fault of the emperors that Jesus Christ himself, whose disciples they were persecuting, had no altars among the Romans.

Could the Romans ever think of honoring as God him whom their magistrates had condemned to the most infamous punishment and whom several of their authors have heaped with reproaches? The answer is obvious, and we should not be astonished at it.

First of all, let us make a distinction between the assertions of blind hatred and positive facts ascertained by proof. It is certain that the Romans, though they condemned Jesus Christ, never accused him of any one particular crime. This made Pilate condemn him reluctantly, overcome by the clamors and threats of the Jews. But what is much more wonderful, the Jews themselves, at whose insistence he was crucified, have preserved in their ancient books no memory of any one deed that might cast the least blemish upon his life, much less any that should have made him deserve the supreme punishment. This clearly confirms what we read in the Gospel, that our Lord’s whole crime was to call himself the Christ, the Son of God.

Indeed, Tacitus gives us an account of Jesus Christ’s suffering under Pontius Pilate, during the reign of Tiberius; but he does not
mention one crime for which he should have deserved death, except that of being the creator of a sect convicted of hating mankind or of being hateful to it. Such was the crime of Jesus Christ and the Christians; and their greatest enemies could never accuse them in any but vague terms, without ever producing one positive fact that could be laid to their charge.

It is true that in the final persecution, and 300 years after Jesus Christ, the heathens, being quite at a loss how to brand either him or his disciples, published forged acts of Pilate, which they claimed showed the crimes for which our Savior had been crucified. But since no mention was made of those acts in all the preceding centuries, and since we find no reference to them under either Nero or Domitian, who reigned at the beginning of Christianity and were extremely hostile to it, it is quite clear that these accusations were invented. The Romans had so few certain proofs against Jesus Christ that his enemies were obliged to invent them.

This, then, is the first fact: the irreproachable innocence of Jesus Christ. Let us add a second, the acknowledged holiness of his life and doctrine. One of the greatest Roman emperors, namely, Alexander Severus, admired our Lord and had some sentences of his Gospel inscribed on public buildings, as well as in his own palace. The same emperor commended, and proposed as a pattern, the saintly caution with which the Christians ordained ministers of sacred things. But this is not all: in his palace there was a sort of chapel, where he sacrificed every morning. There he had established the images of "holy souls," among which he included, besides Orpheus, Jesus Christ and Abraham. He had another chapel (or whatever you please to call it in translating the Latin word lararium) of less dignity than the former, in which were to be seen the images of Achilles and some other great men; but Jesus Christ was placed in the foremost rank. A pagan <Lampridius> recorded this, and as a witness he cites an author of Alexander's own time. Here, then, are two witnesses of this one fact; and here is another fact, which is no less surprising.

Although Porphyry, by abjuring Christianity, had declared himself hostile to it, nevertheless, in a book entitled Philosophy by Oracles, he admits that some of them were very favorable to the holiness of Jesus Christ.
God forbid that we should learn from deceitful oracles the glory of the Son of God, who silenced them by his birth. Those oracles quoted by Porphyry are mere inventions of men; but it is good to know what the pagans put into the mouths of their gods concerning our Lord. Porphyry, then, assures us that there were oracles in which Jesus Christ is called "a pious man, and worthy of immortality"; the Christians, on the contrary, are termed "impure and deluded people." He afterwards quotes the oracle of the goddess Hecate, where she speaks of Jesus Christ as "of a man eminent for his piety, whose body, indeed, yielded to torments, but whose soul is in Heaven with the blessed souls." "This soul," said Porphyry's goddess, "by a kind of fatality, has instilled error into the souls to whom destiny has not allotted the gifts of the gods and the knowledge of the great Jupiter; therefore they are enemies to the gods. But take care not to blame him," she continues, referring to Jesus Christ, "and only pity the error of those whose unhappy fate I have related to you." These are pompous expressions, entirely void of meaning; but they do prove that the glory of our Lord forced praises from his enemies.

In addition to the innocence and holiness of Jesus Christ, there is still a third fact, which is no less important: his miracles. It is certain that the Jews never denied them; and in their Talmud we find some of those which his disciples worked in his name. However, in order to blacken them, they said he performed them by incantations which he had learned in Egypt, or even by the name of God, that unknown and ineffable name whose power, according to the Jews, can do everything and which Jesus Christ had discovered, none knows how, in the sanctuary; or else, they say, because he was one of those prophets, pointed out by Moses, whose deceitful miracles were to turn the people to idolatry. Jesus Christ, the conqueror of idols, whose Gospel has caused one God alone to be acknowledged through all the earth, does not need to be vindicated of this reproach; true prophets preached his divinity no less than he did himself; and the testimony of the Jews indicates that Jesus Christ worked his miracles in order to prove his mission.

Moreover, when they reproach him for having performed miracles by the power of magic, they would do well to consider that Moses was accused of the same crime. This was the ancient opinion of the Egyptians, who, astonished at the wonders God had worked in their
country through that great man, had included him among the chief magicians. We can still find this opinion in Pliny and Apuleius, where Moses is named with Jannes and Mambres, those celebrated enchanters of Egypt to whom St. Paul refers and whom Moses had abashed by his miracles. But the answer of the Jews was easy. The delusions of magicians never had a lasting effect, nor do they tend to establish, as Moses did, the worship of the true God and holiness of life; and, furthermore, God always knows how to gain mastery and to perform works which defy imitation by adverse power. These very arguments set Jesus Christ above so vain an accusation, which, therefore, as we have already observed, serves only to prove that his miracles are incontrovertible.

Indeed, they are so incontrovertible that the Gentiles could not disallow them any more than the Jews could. Celsus, the great enemy of the Christians, who attacked them from the very beginning with all the cleverness imaginable, searching with infinite pains for everything that might harm them, did not deny all our Lord’s miracles. Rather than do so, he says, with the Jews, that Jesus Christ had learned the secrets of the Egyptians, that is to say, magic, and that he wanted to be considered divine through the wonders that he worked by the power of that damnable art. It was for the same reason that the Christians were considered magicians; and we have a passage of Julian the Apostate which treats our Lord’s miracles with contempt but does not call them into question. Volusien, in his epistle to St. Augustine, does the same thing; and this way of talking was common among the heathens.

We therefore need no longer be astonished if they, who were accustomed to deify any men in whom anything extraordinary appeared, should be willing to rank Jesus Christ among their divinities. Tiberius, on the basis of the accounts he received from Judaea, proposed to the senate that divine honors be bestowed upon Jesus Christ. This is not a fact advanced at random, for Tertullian relates it in his Apologeticus as something public and generally known. He presented this apology to the senate in the name of the Church, which would not have chosen to weaken so good a cause by assertions so easy to refute. But if we want the testimony of a pagan author, Lampridius will tell us that “Hadrian had reared temples to
Jesus Christ" (which were still to be seen at the time he wrote) and that Alexander Severus, after first worshiping Jesus in private, wanted to have altars publicly erected to him and commanded that our Lord should be included among the gods.

It would certainly be unjust to believe nothing concerning Jesus Christ except accounts by those not included among his disciples, for this would be to expect belief from unbelievers or care and exactness from those who, concerned with other matters, thought little of religion. But it is nevertheless true that the glory of Jesus Christ shone with such irresistible brightness that the world could not keep from bearing witness to him; and I can bring you none more authentic than that of so many emperors.

I confess, however, that they had ulterior motives. There was an element of politics in the honors they paid to Jesus Christ. They claimed that, eventually, religions would become united and that the gods of all sects would in the end be worshiped in common. The Christians did not believe in this mixed worship and were as scornful of such leniency as they were of the harshness of Roman policy. But God willed that another principle should make the pagans reject those temples which the emperors destined for Jesus Christ. The priests serving the idols, as we learn from the pagan author already so often quoted <Lampridius>, declared to the Emperor Hadrian that "if he consecrated those temples built for the use of the Christians, all the other temples would be forsaken, and everyone would embrace the Christian religion." Even idolatry felt in our religion a victorious power, against which the false gods could not stand; and thus idolatry proved the truth of that saying of the apostle, What concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?

Thus by the power of the Cross the pagan religion, overwhelmed by its own deeds, was falling into ruin, and the unity of God was becoming so evident that at length even idolatry seemed to draw near to it. Idolatry held that the divine nature, so great and so extensive, could not be expressed by one name or under one form and that Jupiter, Mars, Juno, and the rest of the gods were really but one and the same god, whose infinite virtues were explained and represented by so many different words. Then, when it was necessary
to deal with the impure histories of the gods—their infamous genealogies, their unchaste loves, and their festivals and mysteries, which had no other foundation than those extravagant fables—all religion was turned into allegory. It was the world or the sun that proved to be the one god; it was the stars, the air, fire, water, the earth, and their various combinations that were concealed under the names of the gods and in their loves. Weak and pitiful evasion! For not only were the fables scandalous and all the allegories dull and forced; in the end, all they amounted to was that this one god was considered to be the universe with all its parts; so that the foundation of religion was nature, and the creature was still worshiped instead of the Creator.

These weak excuses for idolatry, though drawn from Stoic philosophy, did not quite satisfy the philosophers. Celsus and Porphyry sought fresh aid in the doctrine of Plato and Pythagoras; and here is how they reconciled the unity of God with the multiplicity of the popular deities. There was, they said, but one supreme god; but he was so great that he did not concern himself with small matters. Contented with having made the heavens and the stars, he had not deigned to put a hand to this lower world but had left it to be framed by his subordinates; and man, though born to know him, was not a work worthy of his hands because he was mortal. Thus God was inaccessible to our nature; he had his dwelling too high to behold us; the celestial spirits who had made us were to be our mediators with him; and, therefore, we were to worship them.

I am not interested in refuting the dreams of the Platonists, which will indeed fall of themselves. The mystery of Jesus Christ destroyed their very foundation. That mystery taught men that God, who had made them after his own image, was careful not to despise them; that, if they needed a mediator, it was not on account of their nature, which God had made as he had done all the rest, but on account of their sin, for which they alone were responsible. Moreover, that mystery taught them that their nature removed them so little from God that God did not disdain to unite himself to them by becoming man and to give them for a mediator, not those celestial spirits whom the philosophers called demons and the Scriptures called angels, but a man who, adding God's power to our nature, would be a remedy for our weakness.
But if the pride of the Platonists could not stoop to the humiliations of the Word made flesh, should they not at least have understood that man, though a little lower than the angels, was still, like them, capable of possessing God? Should they not have understood that man was a brother of the angels rather than their servant and that he was not to worship them but to worship with them, in the spirit of fellowship, him who had made both angels and men after his own likeness? Therefore, sacrificing to any other than God was not only extremely sordid but was also of little profit for mankind; and nothing was more blind than paganism, which, instead of reserving that supreme worship for God, paid it to so many demons.

Here it was that idolatry, which seemed at bay, showed how weak it really was. Toward the end of the persecutions, Porphyry, hard-pressed by the Christians, was forced to say that sacrifice was not the supreme worship; and see how far he carried his extravagance. That most high God, he said, accepted no sacrifice: whatever is material is impure in his eyes and may not be offered to him. Speech itself ought not to be employed in his worship because the voice is a corporal thing: we should worship him in silence and thought only. Any other worship is unworthy of so exalted a majesty.

Thus God was too great to be praised. It was unlawful to express, as best we can, our thoughts about his greatness. Sacrifice, though it is but a way of declaring our profound dependence, and is an acknowledgement of his sovereignty, was not for him. Porphyry clearly asserted this; and what else was this but to abolish religion and to leave entirely without worship him who was acknowledged the God of gods?

But what, then, were those sacrifices which the Gentiles offered in all the temples? Porphyry had found out the secret. There were, he said, some unclean, deceitful, mischievous spirits, who, out of extravagant pride, wanted to pass for gods and be worshiped as such by men. They must be appeased, for fear they would hurt us. Some, more gay and jovial, allowed themselves to be won over by spectacles and games; the more gloomy humor of others required the odors of burning grease and delighted in bloody sacrifices. Why refute such absurdities? After all, the Christians were winning their cause. It remained certain that all the gods to whom the Gentiles sacrificed
were evil spirits, whose pride made them claim divinity; so that idolatry, viewed in itself, appeared only the result of brutish ignorance; but, traced to its source, idolatry was a device conducted from afar and carried to the last excess by malicious spirits. This is what the Christians had always asserted; this is what was taught in the Gospel; this is what was sung by the psalmist: All the gods of the Gentiles are devils; but the Lord made the heavens.

And yet, Monseigneur, how strangely blind mankind is! Even in such dire straits, and refuted by itself, idolatry persisted. All that was needed was to clothe it with a specious appearance and to explain it in pleasant-sounding words in order to give it admission to the minds of men. Porphyry was admired. Iamblichus, his follower, passed for a divine man because he had the art of wrapping up his master's sentiments in terms seemingly mysterious, though in reality they meant nothing. Julian the Apostate, cunning as he was, was taken in by these appearances, as the pagans themselves relate. The pagan philosophers misled the world with their boasted enchantments, true or false, their mistaken austerity, their ridiculous abstinence, which went so far as to make it a crime to eat the flesh of animals, their superstitious purifications, and, finally, their contemplation, which evaporated into vain thoughts, and their words, as weak and meaningless as they seemed sublime. But I have not yet reached the heart of the matter. Men were offended by the sanctity of Christian ways, the contempt of pleasure which it demanded, and, even more, the humility which formed the very core of Christianity; and if we understand it rightly, pride, sensuality, and licentiousness were the only supports of idolatry.

The Church was constantly weakening it by her teachings and even more by her patience. But those wicked spirits, who had never ceased to deceive men and who had plunged them into idolatry, did not forget their malice. They stirred up in the Church those heresies which you have seen. Men given to curiosity, and as a result vain and turbulent, wanted to make a name for themselves among the faithful and could not be content with that sober and temperate wisdom which the apostle so highly recommended to Christians. They delved too deeply into the mysteries, which they thought they could fathom with our weak notions. These new philosophers blended human
reason with faith and undertook to lessen the difficulties of Chris-
tianity, since they were unable to digest all the foolishness which the
world found in the Gospel. Thus all the articles of our faith were
attacked successively and almost methodically. The Creation, the
Law of Moses as the necessary foundation of ours, the divinity of
Jesus Christ, his Incarnation, his grace, his sacraments, in short
everything, gave rise to scandalous division. Celsus and others
reproached us for them. Idolatry seemed to triumph. It considered
Christianity as a new sect of philosophy that was sharing the fate of
the rest and, like them, could be divided into several other sects.
The Church appeared to them merely a human achievement, ready
to fall of itself. Men concluded that, in matters of religion, they
should not be more subtle than their ancestors or attempt to change
the world.

In this confusion of sects which boasted of being Christian, God
did not fail his Church. He knew how to preserve for it a badge of
authority which none of the heresies could assume. It was catholic
and universal; it included all ages and was spreading in every
direction. It was apostolic; the continuity, succession, the throne of
unity, the original authority, belonged to it. All those who left it had
formerly acknowledged it and could not disguise the nature of their
novelty or that of their rebellion. The heathens themselves looked
upon it as the stalk, the whole from which the parts had broken off,
the still-living trunk, which the lopped-off branches had left quite
whole.

Celsus, who reproached Christians for their division into so many
schismatical churches, whose rise he was observing, noted one
church distinct from all the rest and always the strongest, which he
called, for that reason, "the great Church." "There are some," said
he, "among the Christians, who do not acknowledge the Creator, or
the traditions of the Jews" (meaning the Marcionites); "but," he
continued, "the great Church accepts them." In the disturbance
caused by Paul of Samosata, Emperor Aurelian easily recognized the
true Christian Church, to which "the house of the Church" be-
longed, be it the place of prayer or the house of the bishop. He
awarded it to those "who were in communion with the bishops of
Italy and Rome," because he saw that the bulk of Christianity had
always belonged to that persuasion. When Emperor Constantius interfered with the entire Church, the confusion into which he threw it by protecting the Arians could not prevent Ammianus Marcellinus, though a pagan, from acknowledging that this emperor was straying from the right way of the Christian religion, plain and precise of itself, in both his dogmas and his practice. For the true Church had a majesty and an uprightness which heresies could neither imitate nor obscure; on the contrary, they unwittingly bore testimony to the Catholic Church. Constantius, who persecuted St. Athanasius, the defender of the ancient faith, "earnestly wished," says Ammianus Marcellinus, "to have him condemned by the authority which the bishop of Rome had over the rest." By seeking the aid of that authority, he made the very pagans realize what was lacking in his sect, and he honored the Church from which the Arians had seceded. Thus the Gentiles came to know the Catholic Church. If anyone asked them where it held its assemblies and who its bishops were, they never made a mistake. As for the heresies: do what they would, they could never get rid of the names of their authors. The Sabellians, Paulianists, Arians, Pelagians, and the rest were in vain offended at the name that was given them. Despite their preferences, the world would speak naturally and named each sect after him to whom it owed its rise. As for the great Church, the Catholic and apostolic Church: it was never possible to give it any other author than Jesus Christ himself, or to specify the most important of its pastors without going back to the apostles, or to give it any other name than that which it assumed. Thus, no matter what the heretics did, it was not in their power to conceal the Church from the pagans. It opened its arms to them everywhere on earth; and they flocked into it from every quarter. Some were perhaps lost in the by-ways; but the Catholic Church was always the highway taken by most of those who sought Jesus Christ; and experience has shown that the Church was given the task of gathering in the Gentiles. It was the Church, therefore, that the infidel emperors assaulted with all their might. Origen informs us that few heretics suffered for the faith. St. Justin, more ancient than he, has observed that the persecution spared the Marcionites and other heretics. The pagans persecuted none but the Church, which they saw spreading through-
out the whole earth, and acknowledged it alone as the Church of Jesus Christ. What if some branches were plucked off? Its good sap was not lost for all that; it shot up in other places, and pruning off some superfluous wood only improved its fruit. In fact, if we study the history of the Church, we shall find that, whenever any heresy caused it losses, it repaired them both by expanding externally and by growing in light and piety internally, while we see the cut-off branches withering in remote corners. The works of men have perished, despite the power of Hell which supported them; but the work of God has persisted, and the Church has triumphed over idolatry and all errors.

Chapter 27

General Considerations on the Continuity of Religion and on the Relationship among the Various Books of the Scriptures

This Church, constantly attacked and never vanquished, is a perpetual miracle and a shining testimony to the immutability of God's counsels. Amid the agitation of human affairs, it stands steadfast, with an invincible power, so that, by an uninterrupted continuity of more than 1,700 years, we trace it back to Jesus Christ, in whom it takes up the succession of the ancient people and finds itself united to the prophets and patriarchs.

Thus the many astonishing miracles which the ancient Hebrews saw with their own eyes serve even to this day to confirm our faith. That great God, who worked them in order to show his unity and omnipotence—how could he more authentically preserve the memory of them than by leaving in the hands of an entire great nation the records which prove them, drawn up chronologically? And this we still have in the books of the Old Testament, that is, in the most ancient books in the world; in the books which are the only ones of antiquity in which the knowledge of the true God is taught and his worship established; in the books which the Jewish people have
always kept so religiously [and still keeps inviolably throughout the world.

After that, should one believe the extravagant fables of the pagan writers on the origin of so noble and so ancient a nation? We have noted elsewhere that the history of its birth and its empire ends where Greek history begins, so that we may not look to that source for anything which might cast light on the history of the Hebrews. It is a fact that the Jews and their religion were but little known to the Greeks until after the sacred books of the Jews had been translated into Greek and until the Jews themselves were scattered in the Greek cities, that is to say, 200 or 300 years before Jesus Christ. The ignorance of things divine at that time was so deep among the Gentiles that their most able writers could not even understand which God the Jews worshiped. Even the most unbiased writers among the Gentiles thought the Jews held the clouds and the sky as their God, since the Jews often raised their eyes to heaven, to the place where God's almighty power was most loudly proclaimed and where he had established his throne. Moreover, the Jewish religion was so unusual and so different from all the others—the laws, the sabbath, the holy days, and the whole way of life of that people were so distinctive—that they soon attracted the jealousy and the hatred of those among whom they lived. They were looked upon as a nation which condemned all the others. The fact that they were forbidden to have dealings with the Gentiles on so many matters made them both scorned and hated, to an equal degree. The close bond that united them, the relationships they all maintained so carefully with the seat of their religion—with Jerusalem, its Temple, its priests, and the gifts they sent there from all parts of the world—drew suspicion upon them. All this, added to the ancient hatred of the Egyptians for a nation so ill-treated by their kings and delivered from their tyranny by so many miracles, gave rise to unheard-of tales concerning the origin of the Jewish nation, which everyone sought to explain according to his own fancy. All this also led to wild interpretations of their ceremonies, which were so individual and which looked so odd to anyone unacquainted with their meaning and their origin. Greece, as we know, was clever at deceiving and amusing herself. From this came the fables found in Justin, Tacitus, Diodorus Siculus, and their
contemporaries who seemed interested in matters pertaining to the Jews. Yet, it is as clear as day that these writings were based on vague rumors across a long succession of intervening centuries and that their authors had no knowledge of either the laws of the Jews, or their religion, or their philosophy, and no understanding of their books, which they had perhaps never even opened.

However, despite such ignorance and calumny, it remains certain that the Jewish people are the only people who from their origin have known God, the Creator of heaven and earth; consequently they are the only people who must have been the depositary of the divine secrets. They also have preserved these secrets with a religious care that is unparalleled. The books which the Egyptians and other nations called sacred are long since lost, and all that is left of them are a few confused memories in the ancient histories. The sacred books of the Romans, in which Numa, the author of their religion, described its mysteries, have perished at the hands of the Romans themselves; and the senate caused them to be burned, as apt to overthrow religion. These same Romans in the end allowed the destruction of the Sibyline Books, which were so long revered among them as prophetic and which they wanted people to believe contained the decrees of the immortal gods concerning their empire; and yet they never exhibited a single volume to the public, not so much as one single oracle. The Jews have been the only people whose sacred writings were venerated the more profoundly, the more they were known. Of all the ancient nations, they are the one nation that has preserved the primitive monuments of their religion, though these monuments abound with proofs of their unfaithfulness and of the unfaithfulness of their ancestors. And even to this day these same people remain on earth to show all the nations among whom they have been scattered both the continuity of religion and the miracles and predictions which render it unshakable.

When Jesus Christ came, and when, sent by his Father to fulfill the promises of the Law, he corroborated his mission and that of his disciples by new miracles, these miracles were written down with the same accuracy. The records of them were made public throughout the earth; the circumstances of time, persons, and places made the inquiry easy to anyone solicitous about the salvation of his soul. The
world learned, the world believed; and anyone who has given even a little thought to the ancient monuments of the Church must confess that nothing was ever put together with more deliberation and knowledge.

But as for the relationship between the books of the two Testaments, there is one difference to be considered, which is that the books of the ancient people were composed at different times. The times of Moses are not those of Joshua and the Judges nor those of the Kings; the times when the people were brought out of Egypt and received the Law are not those in which they conquered the Promised Land or those when they were reestablished in it by visible miracles. To convince the incredulity of a people wholly slaves to their senses, God took a long stretch of centuries, in which he spread out his miracles and his prophets so that he might frequently renew the tangible proofs by which he bore witness to his sacred truths. In the New Testament he followed another method. After Jesus Christ, he is not willing to reveal anything new to his Church. In him is perfection and fullness; and all the sacred books composed in the New Covenant were written during the time of the apostles.

This is to say that the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of those whom Jesus Christ himself was pleased to choose as witnesses to his Resurrection, was sufficient for the Christian Church. Whatever came afterward might edify it, but it considered only what the apostles wrote, or what they confirmed by their authority, to have been inspired by God.

But despite this difference between the books of the two Testaments, God has always followed that admirable order of causing things to be written at the time they happened or when the memory of them was fresh. In this manner, those who knew them wrote them; those who knew them received books which bore witness to them; both left them to their descendants as a precious inheritance; and pious posterity has preserved them.

Thus the body of the Holy Scriptures was formed, both the Old and the New Testament—Scriptures which from the very beginning were looked upon as true in every particular, as given by God himself, and which were therefore preserved with such religious care that it was believed no one could alter a single letter of them without the greatest impiety.
And thus the Scriptures have been transmitted to us, always holy, sacred, inviolable—the Old Testament preserved by the unchanging tradition of the Jewish nation, and the New Testament by the tradition of the Christian people, which is confirmed by the blood and martyrdom of those who wrote the sacred books as well as those who received them. St. Augustine and the other Church Fathers ask upon what authority we ascribe profane books to certain times and authors. Everyone immediately answers that books are distinguished by the different relationships they have to the laws, customs, histories of a certain time, by the very style which permeates the character of particular ages and authors, and, over and above all that, by general belief and unchanging tradition. All these things concur to establish the sacred books, to ascertain their times and their authors; and all the religious care to preserve them entire has served only to consolidate the tradition that preserves them for us.

Therefore, this tradition has always been acknowledged, not only by the orthodox, but also by heretics and even by the infidels. Throughout the East, and afterward throughout the world, Moses has always been considered the lawgiver of the Jews and author of the books they ascribe to him. The Samaritans, who received them from the ten separated tribes, have preserved them as religiously as the Jews. Their tradition and their history are certain; one needs only to review a few passages of the first part of this volume to have an idea of their entire history.

Two such diametrically opposed nations did not take these books from each other; both received them from their common origin in the times of Solomon and David. The ancient Hebrew writing, which the Samaritans still use, demonstrates sufficiently that they did not follow Ezra, who changed the form of the letters. Thus the Pentateuch of the Samaritans and that of the Jews are two complete originals, independent of each other. The perfect conformity to be seen in the substance of the two texts proves the candor of both nations. They are faithful witnesses who agree without collusion or, to put it better, who agree in spite of their enmities and whom only age-old tradition on both sides has united in the same thought.

Those, therefore, who have thought fit to say, though without any reason, that those books were lost, or had never been, or were recovered, or composed anew, or altered by Ezra are refuted not only
by Ezra himself but also by the Pentateuch, which is to be found even to this day in the hands of the Samaritans in the form in which it was read in the early centuries by Eusebius of Caesarea, St. Jerome, and other ecclesiastical writers—in the form in which those people had preserved it from their origin. Such a small sect seems to have subsisted so long for no other reason but to bear this testimony to the antiquity of Moses.

The authors who wrote the four Gospels receive a testimony no less certain from the unanimous consent of the faithful, the heathens, and the heretics. That great number of different nations who received and translated those sacred books as soon as they were written all agree as to their dates and authors. The heathens did not contradict this tradition. Neither Celsus, who attacked those sacred books almost at the beginning of Christianity, nor Julian the Apostate, though he can be charged with neither ignorance nor omission of anything that might have discredited them, nor any other pagan ever suspected their being spurious; on the contrary, they all attributed them to the same authors as the Christians. The heretics, though overwhelmed by the authority of those books, did not dare say that they were not the genuine compositions of our Lord's disciples. However, some of those heretics had seen the beginnings of the Church and had witnessed the writing of the books of the Gospel. So any fraud, if fraud there could have been, would have been too closely watched to have any chance for success. It is true that after the death of the apostles, and when the Church had already spread over all the earth, Marcion and Mani, certainly the most daring and ignorant of all heretics—despite the tradition coming directly from the apostles and continued by their disciples and by the bishops to whom they had left their pulpits and the care of the peoples, a tradition unanimously received by the whole Christian Church—had the boldness to assert that three of the Gospels were spurious and that the Gospel of St. Luke, which they preferred to the rest—though no one knows why, since it had come by the same channel—had been tampered with. But what proofs did they bring for their assertions? None but mere visionary dreams, not one positive fact. The only reason they gave was that what was
contrary to their sentiments must necessarily have been invented by others than the apostles; and all the proofs they urged were their own opinions, which others questioned. Moreover, these opinions were so extravagant and so clearly preposterous that it is still amazing that they could ever enter into the human mind. But surely, if they questioned the Church's good faith, they must have had in their hands some originals different from those of the Church or some valid proof. When challenged to produce them, both they and their disciples remained dumb and by their silence left an undoubted proof that in the second century of Christianity, when they wrote, there was not so much as an indication of falsity or the smallest shred of evidence that could be opposed to the traditions of the Church.

How can I describe the agreement among the books of the Scriptures and the admirable testimony all the ages of the people of God bear to one another? The era of the second Temple presupposes that of the first and carries us back to Solomon. Peace came only after struggles, and the conquests of God's people take us back to the Judges, to Joshua, and to the Exodus from Egypt. Seeing a whole people leave a kingdom where they were foreigners, we recall how they had come to be there. The twelve patriarchs immediately appear, and a people who always had considered themselves one family lead us naturally to Abraham, their ancestor. If these people were wiser and less prone to idolatry after the return from Babylon, this was the natural result of a stern chastisement, which their former offenses had brought down upon them. If these people boast of having seen, over several centuries, miracles which other nations never saw, they may likewise boast of having had the knowledge of God, with which no other nation was blessed. What is the meaning of circumcision, the Feast of Tabernacles, Passover, and the other holy days, celebrated in the nation from time immemorial, if not the things we find specified in the book of Moses? Here we have a people set apart from all others by so special a religion and such distinctive customs, preserving from their origin so coherent and exalted a doctrine, based on the Creation and on faith in Providence, and such a vivid memory of a long chain of events so necessarily linked
together, ceremonies so well regulated and customs so universal, that their like is not found anywhere. That such a people should have been without a history to explain their origin and without a law to prescribe their customs during the thousand years in which they existed as a state; and that Ezra should have been the first to give them all at once, under the name of Moses, not only the history of their antiquities, but also the Law which shaped their morality, when that people, who had become captive, saw their ancient monarchy utterly overthrown—what more incredible fiction could possibly have been invented? And can we give credence to such fables without adding ignorance to blasphemy?

To lose such a Law, once it has been received, a people must either be exterminated or by various vicissitudes must come to have only a confused notion of their origin, religion, and customs. If this misfortune happened to the Jews, and if the Law so well known under Zedekiah was lost sixty years later, despite the care of an Ezekiel, a Jeremiah, a Baruch, a Daniel, who had constant recourse to that Law as the sole foundation of the religion and the civil government of their people; if, I say, that Law was lost despite these great men, not to mention others, and during the time when the Law had its martyrs, as the persecutions of Daniel and the three children show; if, however, despite all this that holy Law was lost in so short a time and remained so utterly forgotten that Ezra could restore it as he pleased, this was not the only book he had to write. At the same time he had to work up all the prophets, old and new, that is to say, those who had written both before and during the Captivity; those whom the people had seen write, as well as those whose memory they preserved; and not only the prophets, but also the books of Solomon, the Psalms of David, and all the historical books; for in the whole history hardly one single major fact can be found or, in all the other books, one single chapter which, separated from Moses, such as we have him, can subsist for a moment. Everything speaks of Moses, everything is founded upon Moses; and it had to be so, since Moses and his Law and the history he wrote were in fact the whole foundation of public and private behavior in the Jewish nation. It would indeed be a marvelous exploit for Ezra, and quite a new thing
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in the world, to make so many men of different character and style speak at the same time with Moses, and each in a uniform and consistent manner; and all at once to make a whole nation believe that those were the ancient books they had ever revered, and the new ones they had just seen composed, as if they had never heard of anything in their lives, and as if the knowledge of the present as well as of the past were suddenly abolished. We must believe such miracles if we refuse to believe the miracles of the Almighty or to receive the consistent testimony of a whole great people that they had seen them with their own eyes.

But if that people returned from Babylon into the land of their fathers so new and so ignorant that they hardly remembered what they had been, and if they received without question whatever Ezra thought fit to give them, why do we see in the book which Ezra wrote and in that of Nehemiah, his contemporary, all that is said there of the sacred books? Who could have listened to them speaking of the Law of Moses in so many places, and publicly at that, as of a thing known to everybody and which everybody had in their hands? [Would they have dared to regulate by these sacred books the holy days, the sacrifices, the ceremonies, the shape of the rebuilt altar, marriages, civil government—in short, everything—while saying unceasingly that everything was done as it is written in the Law of Moses, the man of God?

Ezra is mentioned in that book as a ready scribe in the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel, and it is in accordance with the Law, which he had in his hands, that Artaxerxes commands him to visit, to regulate, and to reform the people in all things. Thus one sees that even the Gentiles knew the Law of Moses as the Law which all the people and all their teachers had always considered as their rule. The priests and Levites were sent out to the cities, and their functions and their rank were regulated as it was written in the Law of Moses. If the people do penance, it is for transgressions committed against this Law. If they renew the Covenant with God and have it signed by their princes, Levites, and priests, it is on the basis of the same Law, which for that purpose was read aloud, distinctly and plainly, morning and night, for several days, to all the
people assembled for that purpose, as the Law of their fathers; both men and women listened to these readings and recognized the Law they had been taught from infancy. How could Ezra read to a great nation a book he had just forged or accommodated to his fancy without anyone noticing the least error or change? The entire history of the past centuries was presented from the Book of Genesis to the time in which they were living. The people, who had so often shaken off the yoke of that Law, permit this heavy burden to be placed on their shoulders without protesting or resisting, convinced by experience that their contempt of the Law had brought down upon them the evils that afflicted them. Usury was restrained in accordance with the text of the Law, the words of the Law were quoted; marriages entered upon unlawfully were annulled, without objection from anyone. Had the Law been lost in the past or at least forgotten, would the whole nation have acted in accordance with the Law, as if they had always had it before them? How could that whole nation listen to Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, who prophesied at that time and who, like the other prophets, their predecessors, preached to them the Law of Moses which God commanded unto him in Horeb, and that as a thing known and in force in the nation from the beginning?\[*\]

And how can it be said at the same time, namely, upon the return of the people, that all the people admired the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the seventy years of the Captivity? How did that Jeremiah whom Ezra had just forged, along with all the other prophets, suddenly gain credence? By what new artifice was it possible to persuade a whole nation, and even the old men who had seen that prophet, that they had always expected the miraculous deliverance he had announced to them in his writings? But we would even have to assume more: Ezra and Nehemiah would not have written the history of their own time; someone else would have done it in their name, and those who forged all the other books of the Old Testament would have been so favored by posterity that other counterfeiters would have made them the real authors, in order to make their imposture seem more likely.

*Passage added in third edition to replace: "How does it happen that all the people acted naturally as a result of that law, as if they had always had it?"
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One doubtless will be ashamed of so many wild absurdities; and, instead of saying that Ezra produced, all at once, so many books so distinct from one another by the nature of their style and times, they will perhaps say that he inserted those miracles and predictions that gain them the reputation of being divine. This error is even more obvious than the former, since those predictions and miracles are so interspersed through all the books, so forcefully inculcated, and so often repeated, in so many different ways, with so much skill and such a great variety of emphatic symbols—in a word, they form so much a part of the whole that if one even opens those sacred books he must see that it would be easier to rewrite them entirely, from scratch so to speak, than to insert the things which unbelievers are so upset at finding in them. But even if we granted them everything they ask, the miraculous and the divine form so much of the substance of those books that some strains of that kind would still be found, despite all their endeavors to the contrary. Grant that Ezra, if they will, afterwards added predictions of things that had already come to pass in his time; but who added those that were accomplished later, as you have so often seen, [for instance under Antiochus and the Maccabees?] Did God, perhaps, bestow the gift of prophecy upon Ezra, so that Ezra’s imposture might be the more plausible? And would we rather have a forger as a prophet than Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Daniel? Or else, did every age bring forth a successful forger, whom the whole people believed; and did new impostors, out of admirable zeal for religion, continually add to the sacred books, even after the canon had been closed and after the books had been dispersed with the Jews all over the earth and translated into many foreign languages? Would not this way of establishing religion have been the most effective for sapping its foundations? Does a whole people then so easily allow to be altered what, rightly or wrongly, it believes divine? Can anyone hope to persuade the Christians, or even the Turks, to add a single chapter to the Gospel or to the Koran? But perhaps the Jews were more tractable than other people, or less religious in preserving their sacred books? What monstrous opinions we would have to hold if we wanted to shake off the yoke of divine authority and govern our beliefs, as well as our morality, by our wayward reason alone!
Chapter 28

The Difficulties Urged against the Scriptures Are Easily Overcome by Men of Common Sense and Good Faith

Let it not be said that the discussion of these points is troublesome: for, if that were so, we ought either to submit to the authority of the Church and the tradition of so many centuries or else push the inquiry to the utmost and not think that we can get off by saying that this requires more time than we are willing to give to our salvation. But on the whole, without painstakingly going through all the books of the two Testaments, we need to read only the Book of Psalms, where so many ancient songs of God's people are collected, to see, in the most divine poetry that ever was, immortal monuments of the history of Moses, of the Judges, and of the Kings, imprinted by song and rhythm upon the memory of men. And as for the New Testament, St. Paul's Epistles alone, so lively, so original, so expressive of the times, the issues, and the trends of those days, and generally of so distinctive a style; those Epistles, I say, received by the churches to whom they were addressed and passed on to the other churches, might be enough to convince well-disposed minds that everything is genuine and original in the Scriptures which the apostles have left us.

Thus they support one another with invincible force. The Acts of the Apostles merely continue the Gospel; their Epistles necessarily imply it. But so that they all may agree, the Acts, Epistles, and Gospels everywhere refer back to the ancient books of the Jews. St. Paul and the other apostles are continually quoting what Moses said, what he wrote, what the prophets said and wrote after Moses. Jesus Christ takes as his authority the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms—witnesses which all attest to the same truth. If he wishes to explain his mysteries, he begins with Moses and the prophets; and when he tells the Jews that Moses wrote of me, he uses as a foundation what was most undoubted among them and carries them back to the very source of their traditions.
Let us see, however, the objections raised against so widely recognized an authority and against the assent of so many centuries; for since in our days men have been bold enough to publish books against the Scriptures in all kinds of languages, we must not hide what they say against its antiquity. What, then, do they say in support of the spuriousness of the Pentateuch, and what are their objections to a tradition of 3,000 years' standing, supported by its own strength and by the steady continuity of things? Nothing coherent, nothing positive, nothing important: quibbles about numbers, places, or names; and observations which on any other subject would at most be considered vain curiosities, incapable of striking at the root of things, are here urged as deciding the most serious issue that ever was in question.

There are, they say, difficulties in the history of the Scriptures. No doubt there are some; and they would not be there if the book were less ancient; or if it had been trumped up, as some are bold enough to assert, by a cunning, artful man; or if people had been less religious in passing it on in the form they received it but had taken the liberty to correct whatever caused them any trouble. There are difficulties arising from the length of time, during which places have changed their names or situation, dates are forgotten, genealogies are no longer known; there are difficulties because it is no longer possible to correct mistakes which the slightest negligence in copying so easily introduces into such things or because facts which escaped the memories of men leave some parts of history obscure. But, after all, does this obscurity hurt the continuity of the book or its essential purpose? By no means: everything there is coherent; and what remains obscure serves only to show in the holy books a more venerable antiquity.

But there are alterations in the text; the ancient versions do not agree; in several places there are variations in the Hebrew text; and the text of the Samaritans, besides the word they are accused of having intentionally changed in favor of their temple of Gerizim, also differs in other places from that of the Jews. And what are we supposed to conclude from this? That the Jews of Ezra forged the Pentateuch at their return from the Captivity? We should conclude just the contrary. The differences found in the Samaritan text serve
only to confirm what we have already established, that their text is independent from that of the Jews. It cannot be imagined that those schisms borrowed anything from the Jews or from Ezra; on the contrary, we have seen that it was purely from spite for the Jews and Ezra, and from hatred for both the first and second Temple, that they hatched their chimaera of Gerizim. Who then does not see that they would have pointed out the impostures of the Jews rather than followed them? Those rebels, who despised Ezra and all the prophets of the Jews, as well as their Temple and Solomon, who had built it, as well as David, who had selected its site—what did they revere in their Pentateuch if not an antiquity superior, not only to that of Ezra and the prophets, but even to that of Solomon and David, in a word, the antiquity of Moses, on which the two nations agree? How indisputable, therefore, is the authority of Moses and the Pentateuch, which all objections do but corroborate?

Why are there diversities in texts and translations? Indeed, why else but as a result of the antiquity of the book itself, which has passed through the hands of so many copyists for so many centuries, since the language in which it is written has ceased to be common? But laying aside vain disputes, let us attack the difficulty at its roots. Tell me if it is not true that, from all the translations and from any text whatever, there will still result the same laws, the same miracles, the same predictions, the same course of history, the same body of doctrine, and, in short, the same substance. After this, what harm is there in the diversities of texts? What more did we need than this unalterable stock of sacred books, and what more could we require of Divine Providence? And as for the translations, is it a sign of spuriousness or innovation that the language of Scriptures is so ancient that we have lost its delicate shades of meaning and find ourselves unable to convey all its elegance or strength with the utmost strictness? Is not this rather a proof of the greatest antiquity? And if one must pay attention to minor points, I would like to know whether, in the many places which pose problems, anything has ever been settled by reason or conjecture. The world has accepted the authenticity of the copies; and since tradition has never permitted any changes in the holy teachings, it has judged that other faults, if any remained, would serve only to prove that no one has ever innovated out of his own imagination.
But lastly, and here lies the main point of the objections, are not some things added to the text of Moses, and how is it that we find his death at the end of the book which is ascribed to him? Why be surprised that those who continued his history added his blessed end to his other deeds, in order to make one body of the whole? As for the other additions, let us see what they are. Is there any new law or ceremony, any doctrine, miracle, or prediction? None are even dreamed of. There is not the slightest suspicion or the least sign of any. That would have meant adding to God's work. The Law had forbidden this, and the scandal it would have occasioned would have been horrid. What then? Men have perhaps continued a genealogy begun; they have perhaps explained the name of a town changed by time; in the instance of the manna with which the people were fed for forty years, they may have noted the time when that heavenly food ceased, and this fact, later written in another book (<Joshua>), may have remained as an annotation in that of Moses, as an admitted and public fact, of which all the people were witnesses. Four or five such notations made by Joshua, Samuel, or some other prophet of like antiquity, because they concerned only well-known facts, and facts which evidently raised no difficulty, naturally became a part of the text, and the same tradition brought them to us along with the rest. So everything is immediately invalidated? Ezra is accused as a falsifier, although the Samaritan text, where those notations are found, shows us that they are not only older than Ezra but are even older than the schism of the ten tribes. No matter, these critics say; all the blame must fall upon Ezra. If those notations were of an earlier date, the Pentateuch would be even more ancient than required; and we could not sufficiently revere the antiquity of a book, the very notes of which were of such a great age. Therefore, Ezra did everything? Ezra forgot that he was making Moses speak and had him write stupidly, as if the things that happened only after his death had already occurred? A whole work is judged spurious because of this single passage; the authority of so many centuries and public faith no longer are taken into account. Thus they overlook the evident fact that those remarks which they seize upon are a fresh proof of the sincerity and fidelity, not only of those who made them, but also of those who transcribed them. Was the authority, I will not say of a divine book but rather of any book
whatever, ever decided on such flimsy grounds? But the truth is that the Scriptures are a book which is mankind's enemy; it would like to force men to submit their understanding to God and to curb their unruly passions; it, therefore, must perish, be sacrificed to libertinism.

Moreover, do not imagine that impiety necessarily involves all the absurdities you have seen. If, contrary to the testimony of mankind and contrary to all the rules of good sense, impiety strives to deprive the Pentateuch and the prophesies of their authors who have always been accepted and to challenge their dates, it is because the dates are the most important aspect, for two reasons. First, because if books filled with so many miraculous facts, described with utmost detail and put forward as not only public but even present, if these books, I say, could have been refuted, they would have carried their condemnation along with them, and, instead of supporting themselves by their own weight, they would have fallen of themselves long ago. Second, because once their dates are fixed, we can no longer strike out the infallible mark of divine inspiration which they bear stamped upon them in the great number and long series of memorable predictions with which they are filled.

It is in order to evade these miracles and these predictions that unbelievers have fallen into all the absurdities that have surprised you. But let them not think that they can escape from God; he has reserved for his Scriptures a sign of divinity that is proof against all attacks. This sign is the relationship between the two Testaments. It is at least agreed that the entire Old Testament was written before the New. Here there is no new Ezra to induce the Jews to make up or falsify their Scriptures in favor of the Christians whom they persecuted. Nothing more is required. The relationship between the two Testaments proves both of them to be divine. Both have the same design and both the same result: the former prepares the way to the perfection which the latter plainly exhibits; the former lays the foundation and the latter finishes the structure; in a word, the former foretells what the latter shows fulfilled.

Thus all ages are united, and an eternal scheme of Divine Providence is revealed to us. The tradition of the Jews and that of the
Christians together constitute but one and the same continuity of religion, and the Scriptures of the two Testaments therefore make but one and the same body and one and the same book.

Chapter 29

[Easy Way to Go Back to the Source of Religion and to Find the Truth through Its Origins*]

The above conclusions will be obvious to anyone willing to give them his attention. But since all minds are not equally able to follow connected reasoning, let us take the weaker ones by the hand and lead them gently to the origin of religion.

On the one hand, let them consider the Christian institutions and, on the other, those of the Jews; let them look for their source, beginning with our institutions, which are more familiar to them; let them observe attentively the laws which regulate our morality; let them read our Scriptures, that is, the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse; let them examine our sacraments, our sacrifice, our worship, and, among the sacraments, baptism, where they see the consecration of the Christian under the specific invocation of the Holy Trinity; the Holy Eucharist, a sacrament established to perpetuate the memory of Christ's death and of the forgiveness of sins connected with it. To all these things let them add ecclesiastical government, the Christian Church in general, the individual churches, the bishops, the priests, and the deacons appointed to govern these churches. Things that are so new, so singular, so universal, no doubt have an origin. But what origin can one ascribe to them other than Jesus Christ and his disciples? Indeed, by going back by degrees and from century to century or, better still, from year to year, one finds them at the time of Christ and not beyond, and one finds that here is the beginning of not only

*This entire chapter was added in the third edition.
these institutions but even the very name "Christian." If we have a baptism, a Holy Eucharist under the circumstances we have seen, it is Jesus Christ who is the author of them; it is he who left his disciples these signs of their calling, these memorials of his works, these instruments of his grace. Our sacred books had all been written by the time of the apostles, neither sooner nor later; it is in the person of the apostles that we find the origin of the episcopacy. If among our bishops there is a primate, a primacy is also evident among the apostles; and he who is the first among us is recognized from the beginning of Christianity as the successor of him who was the first under Jesus Christ himself, namely, Peter. I boldly state these facts—even the last one—as certain, because neither this fact nor the others can ever be contested in good faith, as can easily be shown by the very persons who, from ignorance or from a spirit of contradiction, have quibbled most about it.

This, then, is the origin of the Christian institutions. Using the same method, we shall go back to the origin of the Jewish institutions. As we have found Jesus Christ at the origin of the Christian institutions, without any possibility of going beyond him, so here, in the same way and for the same reasons, we shall be obliged to end with Moses or with the origins indicated to us by Moses.

Like ourselves, the Jews had, and still have in part, their laws, their observances, their sacred rites, their scriptures, their government, their priests, their priesthood, the services of their Temple. The priesthood was established in the family of Aaron, brother of Moses. From Aaron and his children comes the honor of the priestly families. Each family recognized its branch, and everything came from Aaron as the main trunk; there was no way to go beyond him. Neither could the Passover nor the holy days be any more recent. During Passover everything recalled the night when the people had been freed from the slavery of Egypt and when everything was prepared for their departure. Pentecost commemorated, to the very day, the time when the Law had been given, namely, the fiftieth day after the departure from Egypt. The same number of days also separated the two solemn holy days. The Tabernacles, or the tents of green foliage in which, from time immemorial, the people dwelt,
every year, for seven whole days and nights, were the image of the
long encampment during the forty years in the desert. Among the
Jews every holy day, sacred rite, and ceremony had been instituted
or confirmed by Moses and still bore, so to speak, the name and the
character of this great lawgiver.

These religious observances were not all of equal antiquity. Circumcision, the prohibition against eating blood, the Sabbath
itself, were more ancient than Moses and the Written Law, as is
evident from Exodus; but the people knew all those dates, and
Moses had indicated them. Circumcision dated back to Abraham,
to the origin of the nation, to the promise of the Covenant. The
prohibition against eating blood dated back to Noah and the Flood;
the weekly return of the Sabbath took them back to the Creation of
the world and to the seventh day blessed by God, on which he
finished this great work. Thus, all the great events which could be
used to instruct the faithful had their memorial among the Jews;
and those ancient observances, together with those established by
Moses, contained for God's people all the religion of the past
centuries.

Some of these observances no longer exist among the Jewish
people. Their Temple is no more, and with the Temple the sacrifices
and even the priesthood of the Law ceased. No descendants of
Aaron are known among the Jews at present, and all the families are
intermingled. But, as all these observances and families were still in
existence when Jesus Christ came, and as he constantly referred
back to Moses, no further evidence is required to remain convinced
that such a well-established thing went back very far, if not to the
very origin of the nation.

However, let us not stop there. Let us go back further and look at
all the dates which might pose problems. First, one must go back at
least as far as Ezra. Jesus Christ appeared in the second Temple,
and the Temple was rebuilt certainly during the time of Ezra. Jesus
Christ quoted only those books which the Jews had included in their
canon; but, in accordance with the unchanging tradition of the
nation, this canon had been closed and, as it were, sealed ever since
the time of Ezra, and the Jews added nothing to it afterwards. On
this point there is no argument. Here, then, is a double date, an
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ePOCH, IF YOU WISH TO CALL IT SO, OF GREAT IMPORTANCE FOR THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH NATION AND, IN PARTICULAR, FOR THAT OF THEIR SCRIPTURES. BUT IT APPEARS AS CLEAR AS DAYLIGHT TO US THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO STOP THERE, SINCE EVEN THERE EVERYTHING POINTS TO ANOTHER ORIGIN. MOSES IS UNIVERSALLY NAMED AS THE ONE Whose BOOKS—REVERED BY ALL THE PEOPLE, BY ALL THE PROPHETS, BY THOSE WHO WERE LIVING THEN AS WELL AS BY THEIR PREDECESSORS—CONSTITUTED THE ONLY FOUNDATION OF THE JEWISH RELIGION. AT THIS POINT LET US NOT CONSIDER THESE PROPHETS AS INSPIRED MEN BUT ONLY AS MEN WHO APPEARED AT VARIOUS TIMES AND UNDER DIFFERENT KINGS AND WHO WERE LOOKED UPON AS THE INTERPRETERS OF RELIGION. THEIR VERY SUCCESSION, ADDED TO THAT OF THE KINGS WHOSE HISTORY IS CONNECTED WITH THEIRS, LEADS US CLEARLY TO THE MAIN SOURCE, TO MOSES. MALACHI, HAGGAI, ZECARIAH, EZRA, ALL OF WHOM CONSIDERED THE LAW OF MOSES AS ESTABLISHED FROM TIME IMMORAL, ARE CLOSE TO THE TIME OF DANIEL, IN WHICH IT IS EVIDENT THAT THIS LAW WAS NO LESS RECOGNIZED. DANIEL IS CLOSE TO THE TIME OF JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL, WHERE NOTHING BUT MOSES IS ENCOUNTERED: THE COVENANT MADE UNDER HIM, THE COMMANDMENTS HE LEFT, THE THREATS AND PUNISHMENTS FOR TRANSGRESSORS. THEY ALL SPEAK OF THIS LAW AS A LAW THEY HAD KNOWN FROM THEIR INFANCY; AND NOT ONLY DO THEY SHOW THAT IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE, BUT THEY ALSO PERFORM NO ACTION, SPEAK NO WORD, WHICH DID NOT BEAR SOME HIDDEN RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW.

JEREMIAH TAKES US TO THE TIME OF KING JOSIAH, UNDER WHOM HE BEGAN TO PROPHESY. THE MOSAIC LAW WAS, THEREFORE, AS WELL KNOWN AND AS FAMOUS THEN AS THE WRITINGS OF THIS PROPHET, WHICH THE ENTIRE PEOPLE READ WITH THEIR OWN EYES, AND AS HIS PROPHECIES, WHICH EVERYONE HEARD WITH HIS OWN EARS. INDEED, IN WHAT MANNER IS THIS KING'S PIETY COMMENDABLE IN BIBLICAL HISTORY IF NOT FROM THE FACT THAT, FROM HIS CHILDHOOD ON, HE DESTROYED ALL THE TEMPLES AND ALTARS FORBIDDEN BY THAT LAW; THAT HE OBSERVED WITH PARTICULAR CARE THE HOLY DAYS RECOMMENDED BY THIS LAW, FOR INSTANCE, THAT OF THE PASSOVER, WITH ALL THE OBSERVANCES WHICH ARE STILL MINUTELY DESCRIBED IN THE LAW; FINALLY, THAT HE HAD TREMBLED WITH HIS ENTIRE NATION AT THE SIGHT OF THE TRANSGRESSIONS WHICH THEY AND THEIR FATHERS HAD COMMITTED AGAINST THAT LAW AND AGAINST GOD, THE AUTHOR OF THAT LAW. NOR IS THIS ALL. HEZEKIAH, HIS GRANDFATHER, HAD CELEBRATED THE FEAST OF PASSOVER WITH THE SAME SOLEMNITY, WITH THE SAME CEREMONIES, AND
with the same effort to follow the Law of Moses. Along with the other prophets, Isaiah continued to preach the Law, not only during the reign of Hezekiah, but also for a long time during the reigns of his predecessors. It was by the power of this Law that Azariah, Hezekiah's great-grandfather, having become a leper, was not only driven out of the Temple but was also segregated from the people with all the precautions prescribed by this Law. An instance so memorable in the case of a king—and so great a king—proves that the Law was too present and too well known by all the people to be a law which did not date from an earlier time. It is just as easy to go back through Amaziah, Jehoshaphat, Asa, Rehoboam, to Rehoboam's father, Solomon, who recommends so emphatically the Law of his fathers in these words of the Book of Proverbs: My son, keep thy father's commandment and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee: and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs and instruction are the way of life. In these words Solomon is merely repeating what his father David had sung: The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. And what is all this but the repetition and performance of what the Law itself said: And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and then when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And some would claim that the Law which was so familiar to all, and so firmly in the hands of the people, could come by hidden ways or might be forgotten, or that it was an illusion by which they had made all the people believe that this was the Law of their fathers, without indisputable evidence from the past to support it!
And finally, since we have come to David and Solomon, their most memorable work, the work whose memory has never vanished in the nation, was the Temple. But, after all, what did these two great kings accomplish when they planned and built this incomparable edifice? What did they do but execute the Law of Moses, which decreed the selection of a site where the whole nation could worship, where the sacrifices prescribed by Moses could be offered, where the Ark, which he had constructed in the desert, could be sheltered, and in which, finally, they erected, on a large scale, the Tabernacle constructed by order of Moses as a model for the future Temple; so that Moses and his Law remained constantly alive; and the tradition of that celebrated lawgiver goes back from reign to reign, and almost from year to year, to Moses himself.

We must admit that the Mosaic tradition is too clear and too persistent to allow the least suspicion of falsehood and that the periods making up this succession are too closely connected to leave room for the least crack or gap where forgery could be inserted. But why mention forgery here? A person with any degree of common sense would not even think of it. Everything is fulfilled, everything is governed, everything is, as it were, enlightened by the Law and books of Moses. They cannot have been forgotten for a single moment; and nothing could be less plausible than imagining that the copy of the Law and books of Moses which was found in the Temple by Hilkiah, the high priest, in the eighteenth year of Josiah, and brought to this prince, was the only copy extant at that time. For who would have destroyed the other copies? What would have become of the books of Hosea, of Isaiah, of Amos, of Micah, and the others, who wrote immediately before that time? What would have become of all those who had followed them in carrying out devotions? Where would Jeremiah have become familiar with the Scriptures—he who began to prophesy before this discovery, and as early as the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah? The prophets complained that the people transgressed against the Law of Moses but not that they had lost the very volumes which contained it. We do not read that Ahaz, or Manasseh, or Haman, or any of those impious kings who preceded Josiah ever attempted to suppress these
books. Such an undertaking would have proved as foolish and impossible as it would have been impious; and the memory of such an attempt would never be blotted out. And even if they had attempted to suppress this divine book within the kingdom of Judah, their power did not extend to the territory of the kingdom of Israel, where the book was preserved. It is evident, therefore, that the book which the high priest sent to Josiah could not have been anything but a more correct and more authentic copy made under the preceding kings and deposited in the Temple; or, rather, let us say it without hesitation, the original of Moses, which this wise lawgiver had ordered put in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord, their God, that it may be there for a witness against them. This is what the words of sacred history imply: In the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses. And in whatever way one interprets these words, it is very certain that nothing was more capable of arousing these sleeping people and of reviving their zeal at the reading of the Law, perhaps too much neglected at that time, than an original of such importance left in the sanctuary at the command of Moses, to serve as evidence against the revolts and the transgressions of the people. Nor would one have to imagine the most impossible thing in the world, namely, that God's Law was forgotten or that only one copy of it was left. On the contrary, it is clear that the discovery of this book teaches the people nothing new and only rouses them to lend a more attentive ear to a voice already familiar to them. For this reason the king says: Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.

After this it will not be necessary to go to the trouble of examining in detail everything that has been imagined by unbelievers, by false scholars and false critics, about the spuriousness of the books of Moses. The same impossibilities encountered at the time of Ezra would exist at any other time as well. In like manner, the Jewish people always showed an invincible repugnance at accepting some-
thing they had never before heard of as ancient and as having come from Moses, and at accepting as familiar and established something just recently put into their hands.

We also must remember the ten lost tribes, a thing that cannot be insisted upon too much. This is the most memorable date in the history of the nation, since it is then that a new kingdom was formed and that the kingdom of David and Solomon was divided into two. But, since the books of Moses remained with the two opposing parties as a common heritage, they must, therefore, have come from the fathers common to them before the separation; therefore, they came from Solomon, from David, from Samuel, who had anointed him, from Eli, under whom Samuel, still a child, had learned to worship God and observe the Law—that Law which David praised in his Psalms, sung by everybody, and which was praised by Solomon in his Proverbs, which were in the hands of everybody. In this manner, no matter how far we go back, we always find the Law of Moses established, praised, and universally acknowledged; and we cannot stop until we come to Moses himself, just as, with respect to the Christian archives, we can stop only when we come to Jesus Christ and the apostles.

But what will we find there, what will we find at these two fixed points of Moses and Jesus Christ, if not, as we have seen, visible and incontestable miracles attesting to the mission of the one and the other? On the one hand, the plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the Law given on Mount Sinai, the earth opening up, and all the other marvels which the people themselves witnessed; on the other hand, countless sick people healed, dead persons raised to life again, the Resurrection of Christ himself, attested by those who saw it, and who asserted it to the point of death. This, certainly, was all one might wish for establishing the truth of the fact, since God himself—I do not hesitate to state it—could do nothing more evident to establish the certainty of the fact than to reduce it to the testimony of the senses, nor could he give a stronger proof for establishing witnesses’ sincerity than that of cruel death.

Having traced back the origin of both, that is, that of the Jews and that of the Christians, we find that it is most certainly miraculous and divine. To complete this work, it was necessary to
show the connection between the two institutions which are so clearly from God. For, there must be a connection between all his works. Everything must fit into one and the same design, and Christian Law, which came last, must be connected with Mosaic Law. This also cannot be denied. There is no doubt that the Jews waited for a Messiah and still wait for one; and the predictions, of which they are the bearers, do not permit us to doubt that this Christ, promised to the Jews, is the one in whom we believe.]

Chapter 30

The Predictions Reduced to Three Palpable Facts.
Parable of the Son of God Connecting These Facts

And because the discussion of individual predictions, though in itself full of light, depends greatly on facts that not everybody can equally understand, God has chosen some which he has made plain to the most ignorant. Those eminent, those striking facts, of which the whole world is witness, are the facts which I have hitherto endeavored to trace for you; namely, the desolation of the Jews and the conversion of the Gentiles, which happened simultaneously and both precisely at the time when the Gospel was preached and Jesus Christ appeared.

These three things, united chronologically, were even more united in the order of God’s counsels. You have seen them go on together in the ancient prophecies; but Jesus Christ, the faithful interpreter of the prophecies and of the will of his Father, has explained that connection even more clearly in his Gospel. He does it in the Parable of the Vineyard, so familiar to the prophets. The head of the family had planted that vineyard, that is to say, the true religion founded upon his Covenant; and he rented it out to workers, that is, to the Jews. In order to gather its fruits, he sends, at various times, his servants, who are the prophets. Those wicked workers put them to death. His goodness prompts him to send to them at last his own son. They treat him even worse than the servants. At last he takes his
vineyard from them and gives it to other laborers: he takes from
them the grace of his Covenant in order to give it to the Gentiles.
These three things were, therefore, to concur: the sending of the
Son of God, the censure of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles.
No other comment is needed on the parable, which the event has
interpreted.
You have seen that the Jews confess that the kingdom of Judah
and the condition of their realm began to decline in the days of
Herod and when Jesus Christ came into the world. But if the
alterations they made in God's Law drew upon them so visible a
decrease of their power, their utter desolation, which persists to the
present day, must have been the punishment of a greater crime.
That crime is visibly their failure to recognize their Messiah, who
had come to instruct and deliver them. Therefore, ever since that
time a yoke of iron has been upon their shoulders; and they
undoubtedly would sink under it, if God were not preserving them
so that one day they might serve the Messiah whom they have
crucified.
This, then, is a sure and public fact, the total overthrow of the
Jewish state in the time of Jesus Christ. The conversion of the
Gentiles, which was to happen in the same period, is equally sure.
At the same time that the ancient worship is destroyed in Jerusalem
with the Temple, idolatry is attacked on all sides; and nations which
for so many thousands of years had forgotten their Creator rouse
themselves from their prolonged torpor.
And, so that everything may tally, the spiritual promises are
unfolded by the preaching of the Gospel at the time when the Jewish
people, who had received only temporal promises and who, clearly
censured for their incredulity, are living in bondage throughout the
earth, can expect no more human greatness. Now Heaven is
promised to those who suffer for justice's sake; the mysteries of a
future state are preached; and true happiness is exhibited far from
this abode, where death reigns, where sin and all evils abound.
If we fail to discover here a plan which is always consistent and
always continued, if we fail to see one and the same order of the
counsels of God, who has been preparing since the beginning of the
world what he is finishing in the fullness of time, and who, under
various conditions, but as an unchanging inheritance, perpetuates, in the sight of the whole world, the holy society by whom he wishes to be served—we deserve to see nothing and to be delivered up to our own hardness of heart, which is the most just and most severe of all punishments.

And so that this continuity of God's people may be clear to the most undiscerning, God renders it evident and palpable by facts of which no man can be unaware unless he willfully shuts his eyes to the truth. The Messiah is expected by the Hebrews; he comes and calls the Gentiles, as had been foretold of him. The people who acknowledge him as having come are incorporated with the people who expected him; without a moment's interruption, this people is spread abroad over all the earth and is continually augmented by Gentiles; and that Church which Jesus Christ built upon a rock, despite all the efforts of Hell, has never been overthrown.

Chapter 31

Continuity of the Catholic Church. Her Clear Victory over All Sects

What consolation to the children of God! But what assurance that they are right when they see that from Innocent XI, who today so worthily occupies the prime see of the Church, they can go back without interruption to St. Peter, appointed prince of the apostles by Jesus Christ; and from there, continuing with the high priests who served under the Law, they can reach back to Aaron and Moses and, from there, to the patriarchs and to the origin of the world! What continuity, what tradition, what a wonderful sequence of events! If our mind, naturally uncertain and, as a result of its uncertainties, the victim of its own reasonings, needs to be given definite ideas and reasons for action by some sure authority in matters pertaining to salvation, what greater authority can there be than that of the Catholic Church, which centers in itself all the authority of past ages and the ancient traditions of mankind back to its origins?
Thus the society which Jesus Christ, awaited through all the previous centuries, at last built upon the rock, the society over which St. Peter and his successors are, by his orders, to preside, is justified by its own continuity and bears in its eternal duration the sign of God's hand.

No heresy, no sect, no other society but God's Church alone has ever been able to achieve this succession. False religions have imitated the Church in a great many things, and especially by saying, like it, that God had founded them; but in their mouth this assertion is but an empty boast. For if God created mankind, if, having created men in his own image, he never scorned to teach them the means of serving and pleasing him, any sect which does not show its succession from the beginning of the world does not come from God.

Here all the societies and sects which men have established within or without Christianity fall down at the feet of Christianity. For instance, the false prophet of the Arabians might well call himself sent by God, and, after deceiving nations most supremely ignorant, he might take advantage of the divisions in his neighborhood to extend, by force of arms, a wholly sensual religion; but he neither dared to imply that he had been expected, nor indeed could he claim, either for his person or for his religion, a real or apparent connection with past centuries. The expedient he used to evade this was new. For fear that people would be inclined to search the Christian Scriptures for evidence of his mission like that which Jesus Christ found in the Jewish Scriptures, he claimed that both Christians and Jews had falsified their books. His ignorant followers took his word for it, 600 years after Jesus Christ; and he announced himself, not only without any previous evidence, but even without either himself or his adherents daring to imply or to promise any visible miracle that might have authorized his mission. In like manner the heresiarchs who founded new sects among the Christians made belief <in their dogmas> easier by denying the mysteries that surpass the senses. They dazzled men by their eloquence and by a show of piety, moved them by their passions, won them over by their interests, allured them by novelty and
libertinism, whether of the mind or even of the senses. In a word, they easily deceived either themselves or others, for nothing is more natural to man; but they could not boast of having wrought even a single miracle in public, nor could they reduce their religion to sure facts of which their followers were witnesses. They always had to contend with one unfortunate circumstance, which they were never able to palliate, namely, that of their newness. It is always obvious to the eyes of the world that they and the sect they established broke off from that great body and that ancient Church which Jesus Christ founded, where the apostles and their successors held the chief places, in which all sects have found them established. The very moment of the separation is always so apparent that the heretics themselves are not able to disown it and do not even dare attempt to say that they come from the original source through a continuity that has never known interruption. This is the inevitable weakness of all the sects that men have set up. No one can change past centuries, or give himself predecessors, or pretend he found them in possession. The Catholic Church alone fills all preceding centuries with a continuity that cannot be disputed. The Law is the forerunner of the Gospel; Moses and the patriarchs are intimately connected with Jesus Christ. To be awaited, to come, to be acknowledged by a posterity as lasting as the world: this is the character of the Messiah in whom we believe: Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today.

Thus, besides the advantage which the Church of Christ has of being the only one founded upon miraculous and divine events that were written about openly, and without fear of being refuted, at the very time they happened, there is also in favor of those who did not live during those times an everlasting miracle which confirms the truth of all the rest, and that is the continuity of the religion which is always victorious over the errors that have striven to destroy it. To this you may likewise add another consequence, namely, the visible progression of a continual chastisement of the Jews who have not received the Christ promised to their fathers.

They nevertheless continue to await him, and their constantly disappointed expectation is part of their punishment. They are waiting for him and show, by doing so, that he has always been
waited for. Condemned by their own books, they establish the truth
of religion; they bear, so to speak, its whole history written upon
their forehead. At one glance we see what they have been, why they
are as we see them, and for what they are destined.

Thus, four or five authentic facts, clearer than the light of the
sun, show our religion to be as ancient as the world. They
consequently demonstrate that it has no other author than him who
laid the foundations of the universe, who, holding all things in the
hollow of his hand, was alone able to begin and carry out a design
which encompasses all centuries.

We must therefore no longer be surprised, as we usually are, that
God proposes that we believe so many things so worthy of him and at
the same time so impenetrable to human understanding; we should
instead by surprised that, since faith is built upon so sure and so
clear an authority, there should still be any blind and incredulous
persons in the world.

Our unruly passions, our fondness for our senses, and our
unconquerable pride are the causes for it: we would rather run any
risk than restrain ourselves; we would rather continue in our
ignorance than admit it; we would rather gratify a vain curiosity and
indulge in our minds the liberty of thinking what we please, than
bend under the yoke of divine authority.

Thus it is that there are so many unbelievers, and God permits it
to be so for the instruction of his children: without the blind,
without the savages, without the infidels that remain in the very
bosom of Christianity, we should not sufficiently realize the deep
corruption of our nature or the abyss of misery from which Jesus
Christ has delivered us. If his sacred truth were not contradicted, we
should not see the miracle that makes it stand fast amid so much
contradiction, and we should at length forget that we are saved by
grace. Now the incredulity of some humbles others, and the rebels
who oppose God’s designs brilliantly show his power, by which,
independently of anything else, he fulfills the promises he has made
to his Church.

Why, then, do we delay our submission? Do we wait until God
shall work new miracles; until he renders them useless by continuing
them; until he accustoms our eyes to them, as they are accustomed
to the course of the sun and all the other wonders of nature? Or do we wait until the unbelievers and the obstinate are silent; until good men and libertines bear equal testimony to the truth; until everybody with one accord prefers it to his passion, and until false learning, admired merely for its novelty, ceases to delude mankind? Is it not enough that we see that one cannot fight religion without betraying, by enormous aberrations, that one's mind is upset and that one holds out only through presumption or ignorance? Shall not the Church, victorious over centuries and errors, be able to overcome in our minds the pitiful arguments brought against it; and shall not the divine promises which we daily see accomplished in it, have power to exalt us above the senses?

And let no one tell us that those promises still hang in suspense and that, since they extend to the end of the world, only at the end of the world shall we be able to boast of having seen their fulfillment. For, on the contrary, what is past assures us of what is to come. So many ancient predictions, so visibly fulfilled, prove to us that there is nothing that shall not be fulfilled and that the Church, against whom the gates of Hell, according to the promise of the Son of God, never can prevail, shall stand fast until the consummation of all things, since Jesus Christ, who is truthful in all things, has set no other limits to its duration.

The same promises guarantee us life in the future. God, who has shown himself so faithful in fulfilling what concerns the present century, will be no less so in accomplishing what concerns future centuries, for which all we see is but a preparation; and the Church shall always be immovable and invincible upon earth until its children be gathered in, and it be transported entire into Heaven, which is its true dwelling place.

For those who shall be excluded from that heavenly city, eternal severity is reserved; and after having lost through their own fault a blissful eternity, nothing shall remain for them but an eternity of woe.

Thus the counsels of God end in an immutable state; his promises and his threats are equally certain; and what he carries out in time guarantees what he commands us to hope or fear in eternity.

This is what you learn from the continuity of religion outlined
before your eyes. Through time it leads you to eternity. You see an unchanging order in all God's designs and a visible sign of his power in the perpetual duration of his people. You admit that the Church has an everlasting trunk from which none can separate without being lost and that those who are united to this root bring forth works worthy of their faith and secure for themselves eternal life.

Thus, Monseigneur, study carefully this continuity of the Church, which so clearly guarantees you all of God's promises. Whatever breaks this chain, whatever breaks away from this continuity, whatever starts up of itself and does not come about by virtue of the promises made to the Church from the beginning of the world, ought to be abhorrent to you. Employ all your might to recall into this unity whatever has strayed from it, and to cause men to hearken to the Church, through whom the Holy Spirit pronounces its oracles.

The glory of your ancestors lies not only in never having forsaken the Church but in having always upheld it and in thereby having merited being called its eldest sons, which is doubtless the most glorious of all their titles.

I need not speak to you of Clovis, Charlemagne, or St. Louis. Consider only the time in which you live and the father of whom God has caused you to be born. A king so great in everything gains distinction more by his faith than by his other admirable qualities. He protects religion at home and abroad and to the uttermost ends of the world. His laws are one of the strongest bulwarks of the Church. His authority, revered as much for his personal merit as for the majesty of his sceptre, is never better supported than when it defends God's cause. Blasphemy is heard no longer; impiety trembles before him: he is the king pointed at by Solomon who scatters away all evil with his eyes. If he attacks heresy in so many ways, and even more than any of his predecessors did, it is not that he fears for his throne: everything is quiet at his feet, and his military might is dreaded over the whole earth; it is rather because he loves his people, and, seeing that he has been elevated by God's hand to a power that nothing in the universe can equal, he knows no more glorious way to use it than to employ it for healing the wounds of the Church.
Imitate, then, Monseigneur, so noble an example, and hand it down to your descendants. Recommend to their care the Church even more than that great empire which your ancestors have governed for so many centuries. Let your august house, the leading house in the world, be the leader in maintaining the rights of God and in extending throughout the universe the reign of Jesus Christ, who causes it to reign with so much glory.
PART THREE

The Empires
Chapter 1

The Overthrow of Empires is Ordained by Providence and Serves to Keep Princes in Humility

Though nothing is comparable to that continuity of the true Church which I have outlined for you, the sequence of empires which I must now recreate before your eyes is almost as profitable—and that not only to great princes like you, [but to any individual who contemplates the secrets of divine Providence in these great issues].

First of all, most of these empires are by necessity linked with the history of God’s people. God used the Assyrians and the Babylonians to chastise his people; he used the Persians to restore it, Alexander and his first successors to protect it, Antiochus the Illustrious and his successors to test it, and the Romans to protect its liberty from the kings of Syria, whose only thought was to destroy it. The Jews continued until Jesus Christ under the power of these same Romans. When they failed to recognize him and crucified him, the Romans unwittingly lent their hand to divine vengeance and exterminated this ungrateful people. God, who had at that time resolved to assemble the new people, made up of all nations, first united lands and oceans under this empire. The commerce of so many different peoples hitherto unknown to one another and henceforth united under Roman domination was one of the most powerful means Providence used for spreading the Gospel. If, for 300 years, the Roman Empire persecuted the new people which came into being everywhere within its compass, this persecution confirmed the Christian Church and showed its glory, as well as its faith and its forbearance, for all to see. Finally, the Roman Empire yielded; having found a power more invincible than its own, it peacefully

*For the use of brackets, see the Editorial Note at the front of the book.
accepted the Church it had combatted for so long and with such cruelty. The emperors used their power to enforce obedience to the Church; and Rome became the head of the spiritual empire Jesus Christ wanted to spread throughout the world.

When the time came in which Roman power was to fall and when that great empire, which had in vain hoped for eternal duration, was to suffer the fate of all the others, Rome, having fallen prey to the barbarians, preserved its ancient majesty through religion. There the nations which invaded the Roman Empire gradually learned that Christian piety which softened their barbarous ways. Their kings, who, each in his own nation, took the place of the emperor, found no title more glorious than that of Protector of the Church.

But this is the place to reveal to you God’s secret judgments on the Roman Empire and on Rome itself. This mystery was revealed by the Holy Spirit to St. John, and this great man—apostle, evangelist, and prophet—has explained it in the Apocalypse. Having grown old in the worship of idols, Rome had great difficulties in parting with idol worship, even under the Christian emperors; and the senate made it a point of honor to defend the gods of Romulus, to whom it attributed all the victories of the ancient republic. The emperors were tired of the deputations sent by that great body, which demanded the restoration of its idols and which felt that to break Rome of its old superstitions was to insult the Roman name. Thus this legislative body, composed of all that was great in the empire, and immense numbers of people, including almost all the most powerful in Rome, could not be made to see the error of their ways, either through the preaching of the Gospel, or by the very visible fulfillment of the ancient prophecies, or by the conversion of almost all the rest of the empire, or even by the conversion of the princes, all of whose decrees authorized the establishment of Christianity. On the contrary, they continued to heap opprobrium on the Church of Jesus Christ, still accusing it, as their fathers had done, of causing all the misfortunes of the empire, and were always ready to renew the former persecutions unless they were restrained by the emperors. This was still the state of things in the fourth century of the Church, and a hundred years after Constantine, when God finally remembered the many bloodthirsty decrees of the senate against the faithful, as well as the furious shouts with which all the Roman
people, in their thirst for Christian blood, had so often filled the amphitheater. Therefore he handed over to the barbarians the city *drunken with the blood of the martyrs*, to use the words of St. John. God sent it the terrible chastisement he had brought down on Babylon, and Rome is even called by that name. The new Babylon, following in the footsteps of the old, equally swelled with its victories, triumphant in luxury and wealth, tainted with idolatry, and bent on persecuting God’s people, also falls from great heights, and St. John praises its downfall. The glory of its conquests, which it had attributed to its gods, is taken away; Rome falls prey to the barbarians, is taken three and four times, pillaged, sacked, destroyed. The sword of the barbarians spares only the Christians. A new, Christian Rome rises from the ashes of the first; and the victory of Jesus Christ over the Roman gods is completed only after the flood of barbarians, when these gods are not only destroyed but forgotten.

In this manner the empires of the world have served religion and the preservation of God’s people; and for this reason the same God who inspired his prophets to predict the various situations of his people also inspired them to predict the succession of empires. You have seen the places where Nebuchadrezzar is singled out as the one who was to come in order to punish the haughty nations, and especially the Jewish people, for their ingratitude toward their author. You have heard Cyrus mentioned, 200 years before his birth, as the one who was to restore God’s people and to chastise the pride of Babylon. The fall of Nineveh was predicted just as clearly. In his admirable visions, Daniel has placed before you in an instant the passing of the empires of Babylon, of the Medes, the Persians, and of Alexander and the Greeks. These prophecies included the blasphemies and cruelties of an Antiochus the Great as well as the victories of God’s people over this violent persecutor. The successive fall of these famous empires is shown there, and the new empire which Jesus Christ was to establish is marked so specifically by its own characteristics that it is impossible not to recognize it. It is the empire of the saints of the Highest; it is the empire of the Son of Man: and this empire shall stand when all the others fall, since it alone is promised eternal duration.

God’s judgment on the greatest of the world’s empires, namely, the Roman Empire, is not hidden from us. You have just heard it
from the mouth of St. John. Rome itself has felt God's hand and, like the others, has been an example of his justice. But its fate has been more fortunate than that of other cities. Purged from any remaining idolatry by the disasters it suffered, Rome continues to exist only through Christianity, which it brings to the whole world. Thus all the great empires we have seen on this earth have contributed in various ways to the welfare of religion and to the glory of God, as God himself has told us through his prophets.

Very often you read in the prophets' writings that kings in great numbers will join the Church and will protect and nurture it; and you should realize that these words designate emperors and other Christian princes. Since your royal ancestors have distinguished themselves more than any others by protecting and increasing the Church of God, I shall not hesitate to assure you that, among all the kings, they have most clearly been designated in these striking prophecies.

According to his plan, then, God used the various empires to chastise, to test, to increase, or to protect his people. Wishing to be known as the author of this admirable plan, he revealed its secret to his prophets and inspired them to predict what he had resolved to accomplish. Therefore, since the empires are a part of God's plans for the people he had chosen, their fate is included in the oracles of the Holy Spirit predicting the successive situations of his faithful.

As you become increasingly accustomed to studying the great things of this world and to reducing them to their fundamentals, you will stand in ever greater admiration before these plans of Providence. It is important that you gain a general understanding of them early, so that this understanding will become increasingly clear in your mind. It is also important that you learn to relate human affairs to the decisions of that eternal wisdom from which they flow.

God does not daily proclaim his will through his prophets when a king or a monarchy is to be exalted or destroyed by him. But what he has done so often in the great empires of which we have spoken gives us so many famous examples of what he does in all the others; and this teaches kings two fundamental truths: the first, that it is he who creates kingdoms in order to give them to whom he pleases, and the second, that he knows how to make them serve, at such times and in such sequence as he decides, the plans he has for his people.
Chapter 2: Causes of Changes in Empires

This fact must keep all princes in complete dependence and make them always mindful of God’s orders, so that they can lend a hand to his plans for his greater glory whenever he gives them the opportunity to do so.

But even from a merely human point of view, it is extremely useful, especially for princes, to contemplate this passing of empires, since the arrogance which so often attends their eminent position is greatly dampened by this sight. For if men learn moderation when they see the death of kings, how much more will it strike them to see even the death of kingdoms! And what can teach us a more beautiful lesson of the vanity of human greatness?

Thus, when you see passing before your eyes, as in an instant, not only kings and emperors, but the very empires which once filled the whole world with terror; when you see the old and the new Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans successively standing before you and then each falling, as it were, upon the others, their fearful uproar makes you feel that permanence is not for men and that change and unrest are the proper lot of human affairs.

Chapter 2

Changes in Empires Have Particular Causes Which It Behooves Princes to Study

But this spectacle will be more useful and interesting if you reflect not only upon the rise and fall of empires but also upon the causes of their progress and their decadence.

For the God who causes the universe to be linked together and who, though all-powerful in himself, willed, for the sake of order, that the parts of the great whole be dependent on one another—the same God also willed that the course of human affairs should have its own continuity and its own proportions. By this I mean to say that men and nations have had qualities proportioned to the heights they were destined to reach and that, with the exception of certain great
reversals by which God wished to demonstrate the power of his hand, no change has occurred without causes originating in preceding centuries.

And since there is something in every event to prepare it, to motivate its beginning, and to determine its success, the true science of history consists in uncovering for each age the hidden tendencies which have prepared the way for great changes and the important combinations of circumstances which have brought them about.

It is, indeed, not enough to look only at what is before our eyes, that is, to consider the great events which suddenly decide the fate of empires. If we truly wish to understand human affairs, we must begin further back; we must also observe the inclinations and ways or, to put it more succinctly, the character of the dominating nations in general, and of princes in particular, as well as that of the outstanding men, who, because of the important role they were given to perform in the world, have contributed for good or evil to the change in empires and the fate of nations.

I tried to prepare you for these important reflections in Part I of this Discourse, in which you were able to observe the character of nations and of the great men who led them. The events which came to fruition later have been shown to you; but in order to keep your attention focused on the links connecting the world's great events, which I wanted to make you understand above all, I omitted many details whose consequences have been less considerable. But since we were so interested in consequences that we passed over many things too quickly to be able to give them the reflection they deserve, you must now consider these with more particular attention and accustom your mind to connecting effects with their most remote causes. In this manner you will learn what is so necessary for you to know, namely, that by looking at unrelated occurrences we might think that fortune alone decides the rise and fall of empires, but that in reality, taking everything into consideration, the situation is rather akin to gambling, where the most skillful player wins in the long run.

And indeed, in that cruel game where nations vie for domination and power, it is those who have had the most far-reaching plans, have been the most diligent, have persevered the longest in great efforts and, finally, have known best how to press on or to restrain
themselves according to the situation who have, in the end, gained the upper hand and have been able to use fortune itself for their ends.

Therefore, you must never tire of examining the causes of great changes, since nothing will ever teach you as much. Above all, you must look for them in the passing of the great empires, where they are more tangible because of the greatness of the events.

Chapter 3

The Scythians, The Ethiopians, and the Egyptians

I do not intend to include here among the great empires those of Bacchus or Hercules, both of them famous conquerors of India and the East. Their histories are in no way authentic, and their conquests were in no way consistent. So we must leave it to the poets to praise them; and they have indeed used them as the greatest theme for their fables.

Nor shall I speak of the empire which a certain Madyas, mentioned in Herodotus (who in some ways resembles the Indathyrses of Megasthenes and the Tanaus of Justin), established for a short time in Asia Major. The Scythians, who went to war under this prince, engaged in races rather than conquests. It was only by chance, and by pursuing the Cimmerii, that they entered Media, defeated the Medes, and took from them the region of Asia in which they had established their rule. The new conquerors reigned there for only twenty-eight years. They lost that country because of their impiety, rapaciousness, and brutality; and Cyaxares, the son of Phraortes, from whom they had conquered it, drove them out. This was done by skill rather than by force. Reduced to one corner of his kingdom, which the conquerors had neglected or perhaps had been unable to force, he patiently waited until the brutal conquerors became so hateful to the populace that it freed itself from their rule by revolt.

We also find in Strabo, who takes him from the same Megas-
thenes, one Tearchus, king of Ethiopia; and he must be the Tirhakah of the Scriptures, whose arms were feared at the time of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. This prince advanced as far as the Pillars of Hercules, apparently along the coast of Africa, and passed over into Europe. But what can I say about a man who is mentioned by the historians in only a few short words and whose domination was extremely short lived?

According to Herodotus, the Ethiopians, whose king he was, were the most handsome and well built of men. Their minds were quick and firm, but they did very little to improve them, since they placed all their confidence in their robust bodies and strong arms. Their kingship was elective, and they placed the tallest and strongest on the throne. Their attitude is illustrated by an incident related to us by Herodotus. When Cambyses, in order to take them by surprise, sent them ambassadors and the customary Persian presents, such as crimson dye, golden bracelets, and mixtures of perfumes, they mocked these presents, which they considered useless for their life, as well as the ambassadors, whom they took for what they were, namely, spies. But their king also wanted to give a present after his own fashion to the king of Persia. So he picked up a bow which a Persian could hardly have held, let alone shot, drew it taut in the presence of the ambassadors, and told them, "This advice the king of Ethiopia gives to the king of Persia: When the Persians are able to use a bow of this size and this strength as easily as I have just done, let them come to attack the Ethiopians, and let them bring more troops than Cambyses has. Meanwhile, let them thank the gods, who have not filled the hearts of the Ethiopians with the desire to extend beyond their country."

Thereupon, he slackened the bow and gave it to the ambassadors. We do not know how such a war would have ended. Angered by this reply, Cambyses marched on Ethiopia like a man out of his senses, without order, without supplies, without discipline; and he saw his army perish amid the sands for lack of food before he ever came close to the enemy.

Yet these nations of Ethiopia were neither so just as they claimed, nor so self-contained in their country. Their neighbors, the Egyptians, had often felt their strength. There is nothing consistent in the plans of these savage and uncivilized nations. Though Nature often
bestows on them the rudiments of noble feelings, they never come to anything. Thus there is very little here for us to learn and imitate. Let us say no more about it, and let us proceed to more civilized peoples.

The Egyptians were the first among whom the rules of government were known. This stately and serious nation was the first to recognize the true aim of politics, which is to make life easier and to make the people happy. The unfluctuating temperature of the country is the reason why their minds were firm and stable. Since virtue is the foundation of the entire society, they cultivated it with the greatest care. Their most outstanding virtue was gratitude. Their reputation as the most grateful of men also shows that they were the most sociable. Kind deeds are the chords of public and private harmony. He who recognizes favors likes to do favors; and when ingratitude is banished, the pleasure of doing good deeds remains so pure that it is impossible not to enjoy it. Their laws were simple, full of equity, and made for unanimity among the citizens. A man who could save another man under attack and failed to do so was punished as severely as the assassin. If he was unable to help the unfortunate victim, he was at least obliged to denounce the perpetrator of the crime; and there were penalties for those who failed in this duty. Thus the citizens looked out for one another, and the whole body politic was united against evildoers. No one was permitted to be useless to the state, and the law assigned to everyone his function, which was handed down from father to son. No one was permitted to exercise two functions or to change professions; but then, also, all professions were honored. Some functions and some persons had to be more important, just as the body must have eyes. Their brilliance does not lead us to despise the feet or the lower parts of the body. In the same manner, the priests and soldiers of Egypt were given special indications of honor. But all occupations, even the lowliest, were held in esteem, and nobody felt that he could with impunity scorn any type of work that was useful to the community. Therefore, all the arts were brought to perfection, since honor attended all of them, and since everyone did best what he had done all his life and had practiced exclusively from childhood on.

But there was one occupation which had to be common to all; this
was the study of the laws and of wisdom. Ignorance of religion and of the laws of the realm was not tolerated on any social level. As for the rest, each of the professions was assigned to a particular area. This did not lead to inconvenience in a country of small dimensions; and where everything was so well ordered, idlers had no place to hide.

While the laws were very good, it was even better that everyone was brought up to observe them. A new custom was extremely rare among the Egyptians: everything was always done in the same manner, and the exactitude with which small things were preserved was also the safeguard of the great. Therefore, no people has kept its customs and its laws for a longer time. The judicial procedure served to foster this attitude. Thirty judges taken from the principal towns composed the body which judged the whole kingdom. It was understood that these positions were occupied by the most honorable and most serious men of the country. The prince assigned to them certain revenues so that, free from domestic strain, they could give all of their time to the enforcement of the law. They derived no profit from a law case, and it had not yet occurred to anyone to use justice for a livelihood. In order to avoid trickery, cases were handled in writing by this assembly. It shunned the false eloquence which dazzles the mind and stirs the passions. The truth could not be exposed in too dry a fashion. The president of the senate always wore a collar of gold and precious stones from which hung an eyeless figure called Truth. By donning it, he gave the signal to begin the session. With it he touched the party who had won his case, and the decision was indicated in this manner. One of the Egyptians' best techniques for preserving their ancient maxims was to surround them with certain ceremonies, which impressed them on people's minds. These ceremonies were thoughtfully followed, and the serious cast of mind of the Egyptians did not permit them to degenerate into empty formulas. Those who had no lawsuits and whose life was innocent could escape examination by that severe tribunal. But there was in Egypt a very unusual kind of inquest, from which no one was exempt. When we die, it is a consolation to leave our name in esteem among men; and of all the worldly goods, this is the only one death cannot take away. But in Egypt it was not
permitted to praise all the dead indiscriminately. As soon as a man was dead, he was brought to trial. The public prosecutor was heard. If he proved that the conduct of the deceased had been bad, his memory was condemned and he was denied a burial place. The people admired the power of the law, which extended beyond death; and everyone, touched by this example, was fearful of dishonoring his memory and his family. If the deceased was not convicted of any misdeeds, he was entombed with full honors. His eulogy was spoken, but it did not mention his birth. All of Egypt was noble; and, furthermore, the Egyptians appreciated only such praise as they deserved by their own merit.

Everyone knows how carefully the Egyptians preserved dead bodies. The mummies can still be seen. Thus their gratitude toward their parents was everlasting. When children saw the bodies of their ancestors, they remembered their publicly recognized virtue and endeavored to love the laws they had left to them.

In order to prevent borrowing, the source of idleness, fraud, and chicanery, a decree of King Asychnis (<Sasychis, according to Diodorus>) permitted borrowing if the borrower deposited his father’s body as security. It was both impious and shameful not to redeem so precious a deposit as soon as possible; and a man who died before he had performed this duty was denied a burial place.

The monarchy was hereditary, but the kings, more than any others, were under the obligation of living according to the law. There were special laws for them, which one of the kings had collected, and these were included in the sacred books. It was not that kings were questioned in any way or that anybody had the right to constrain them; on the contrary, they were respected as much as the gods. But ancient custom had regulated everything, and it did not occur to them to live differently than their ancestors. Therefore, they willingly accepted not only the fact that the quality of their meat and the quantity of what they were to eat and drink were prescribed to them (for this was the usual way in Egypt, where everyone was sober, and where the very air of the country made for frugality), but also the fact that all their daily activities were established in advance. Upon awakening at dawn, when the mind is clearest and the thoughts purest, they read their letters in order to gain a better
and more truthful understanding of the problems they had to
decide. As soon as they were dressed, they went to the temple to
sacrifice. There, surrounded by all of their court, and with the
victims at the altar, they listened to a very instructive prayer, in
which the priest prayed that the gods give the prince all the royal
virtues, so that he might be pious toward the gods, kind to men,
moderate, just, magnanimous, sincere, and truthful; also liberal,
master of himself, and given to meting out punishment below, and
rewards above, the just deserts. Then the priest spoke of the faults
kings can commit; but he always assumed that this happened
because of treacherous advice or ignorance and therefore heaped
imprecations on the ministers who gave bad advice or failed to tell
the truth. This was the way in which kings were given instruction. It
was believed that reproaches would only exasperate them and that
the most efficacious way of inspiring them to virtue was to show
them their duty in lawful praise, solemnly expressed before the gods.
After prayer and sacrifice, readings from the sacred books
acquainted the king with the advice and the deeds of great men, so
that he should be able to govern his state by their maxims and
maintain the laws which had brought happiness to his predecessors
as well as to their subjects.

That these remonstrances were made and earnestly listened to is
shown by their results. At Thebes, that is, in the principal dynasty,
which firmly adhered to the law and was to become the supreme
dynasty of Egypt, the greatest men were the kings. The two Hermes,
who founded the sciences and all the institutions of the Egyptians—
the one living around the time of the Flood, the other, whom they
called Trismegistus, or the Thrice Great, living at the time of
Moses—were both kings of Thebes. All of Egypt has profited from
their wisdom, and Thebes owes to their teachings the fact that it had
few bad princes. The latter were spared during their lifetime in the
interest of public tranquillity; but they were not exempt from the
trial everyone had to undergo after his death. Some of them have
been denied burial, but we see few examples of this. On the
contrary, most kings were so beloved by the people that everyone
mourned their death as much as that of a father or a child.

This custom of judging kings after their death seemed so venerable
to God's people that it has always practiced it. We see in the Scriptures that bad kings were denied burial in the tombs of their ancestors; and Josephus tells us that this custom was still followed at the time of the Hasmonaeans. It made kings understand that, though their majesty places them above human judgment in their lifetime, they will in the end be subject to it, when death has made them equal with other men.

The Egyptians had inventive minds, but they applied them to useful matters. Their Hermes gave Egypt many marvelous inventions and taught them almost everything apt to make life agreeable and peaceful. I cannot leave to the Egyptians the glory, which they attribute to their Osiris, of having invented agriculture; for we find it at all times in the neighboring regions of the world, whence the human race has spread out, and there is no doubt that it was known from the very beginning of the world. For this reason, the Egyptians themselves placed Osiris in such a remote past that it is easy to see that they confused his time with that of the beginning of the universe and that they wanted to attribute to him things whose origin went back far beyond all the ages known to their histories. But if the Egyptians did not invent agriculture or the other arts we see before the Flood, they perfected them to such a point, and took such care to restore them among peoples who had forgotten them in their barbarity, that their glory is almost as great as if they had invented them.

There are even very important arts for whose invention we must give them credit. As their landscape was uniform, and as their skies were always pure and cloudless, they were the first to observe the course of the heavenly bodies. They were also the first to regulate the year. These observations naturally led them to arithmetic; and if it is true, as Plato says, that the sun and the moon taught men the science of numbers, that is, that regular counting was begun by counting days, months, and years, the Egyptians were the first to listen to these marvelous masters. The planets and other heavenly bodies were also known to them, and they discovered the Great Year, which brings the entire heaven back to its point of departure. In order to identify their lands, which were inundated every year by the overflowing Nile, they were obliged to resort to land-surveying, and this soon taught them geometry. They were great observers of
nature; and in such clear air, under such scorching sun, nature was strong and fertile in their land. This fact also led them to invent or perfect medical science. Thus, they held all the sciences in great honor. Inventors of useful things were given proper rewards, during their lifetime as well as after their death. In this manner, the books of their two Hermes were consecrated and looked upon as divine books. The Egyptians were the first nation to have libraries. The name given to them made men wish to enter and explore them, for they were called the "treasure house of remedies for the soul." Here Egypt cured itself of ignorance, the most dangerous of illnesses and the source of all the others.

One of the things most forcefully impressed on the minds of the Egyptians was esteem and love for their fatherland. It was, they said, the dwelling place of the gods, who had reigned there for infinite thousands of years. It was the mother of men and animals, whom the land of Egypt had brought forth while the rest of nature was barren. The priests who wrote the history of Egypt for this infinite span of centuries, only filling it with fables and the genealogies of their gods, did this in order to impress the antiquity and nobility of their country upon the minds of the people. Their true history, of course, lay within reasonable limits, but they liked to lose themselves in an abyss of time, which seemed to bring them close to eternity.

Yet love for the fatherland had more solid foundations. Egypt was indeed the most beautiful land in the world, better endowed by nature, better cultivated by art, richer, more agreeable, and more lavishly adorned by the care of its kings than any other.

Everything was grand in their plans and their works. What they have done with the Nile is unbelievable. It rains rarely in Egypt, but this river waters the whole country when it overflows at regular intervals and brings it the rain and snow of other countries. In order to spread the blessings of such a river, Egypt was crossed by an infinite number of canals of incredible length and width. Everywhere the Nile brought fertility with its beneficial waters; it united town with town, fostered the internal and external trade of the kingdom, and fortified it against the enemy. In this manner, it was both the lifegiver and the defender of Egypt. The countryside was
abandoned to it; but the towns, raised up by immense labor, and rising like islands amid the water, joyfully viewed from their vantage point how all of the plain was inundated and at the same time fertilized by the Nile. If it widened beyond measure, great lakes, which had been excavated by the kings, were waiting to receive the spreading floods. Their overflow devices were in readiness; great sluice gates opened or closed them as it became necessary. Thus, since the floods had an outlet, they remained on the land only long enough to fertilize it.

This was the purpose of the great lake called Myris or Moeris, which was named after the king who had caused it to be made. One is surprised to read, yet it is certain, that its circumference measured about 180 of our leagues. In order not to lose too much good land, it had been excavated mainly along the Libyan frontier. Fishing in it brought the prince immense sums; thus, unproductive land was made to yield treasures by covering it with water. Two pyramids, each bearing two colossal statues on a throne—one representing Myris, the other his wife—rose 300 feet out of the water in the middle of the lake and occupied as much space under the surface. This showed that they had been erected before the hollow had been filled and that a lake of this size had been created by man under a single prince.

Those who do not know to what extent the land can be husbanded take what is told about the number of towns in Egypt for fables. Their wealth was no less incredible. Every one of them was filled with magnificent temples and superb palaces. Their architecture everywhere had that noble simplicity and that greatness which nourish the spirit. Long galleries exhibited the sculptures Greece was to use as models. Thebes could vie with the world’s most beautiful cities. Its hundred gates, celebrated by Homer, are known to everyone. Thebes was as populous as it was vast, and it has been said that 10,000 fighting men together could come out of each of its gates. This number, if you will, may very well be exaggerated; but it is assured that the population was innumerable. The Greeks and the Romans celebrated Thebes’ magnificence and its size, even though they saw only its ruins; and this shows that even its remains were august.
Had our travelers reached the place where the city had stood, they would, no doubt, also have found incomparable things, for the works of the Egyptians were made to defy time. Their statues were colossi. Egypt aimed for greatness and wanted to strike the eye from afar, though always by pleasing it with harmonious proportions. In the Said (and you certainly know that this is the name of the Thebais), temples and almost intact palaces have been found which contain innumerable examples of such columns and statues. The most admirable building there is a palace whose remains seem to have survived only in order to dim the glory of all the greatest works. Four avenues reaching as far as the eye can see, and flanked on either side by sphinxes of very rare material and remarkable size, serve as entranceways to four porticoes of astounding height. What magnificence, and what vastness! Those who have described this prodigious edifice to us did not have time to walk all around it and are not even certain that they had seen half of it; but everything they did see was astonishing. One hall, which apparently formed the center of this superb palace, was supported by twenty-six columns, measuring six arm-lengths around and of proportionate height, interspersed with obelisks which have withstood so many centuries. Even the colors, usually the first to succumb to the power of time, can still be seen in all their vividness among the ruins of this admirable edifice. All this shows how well Egypt knew how to impart a character of immortality to all its works. Now that the name of the king reaches the most unknown parts of the world and this prince has searches made equally afar for the most beautiful works of art and nature, would it not be a worthy object of his noble curiosity to discover the beauties of Thebais, hidden in these deserts, and to enrich our architecture with the inventions of Egypt? What power and what art were needed to make such a country the marvel of the universe! And what glories would we find if we could enter the royal city, since, even at such distance from it, these marvelous things have been discovered?

It fell to Egypt alone to erect monuments for posterity. To this day, its obelisks are the main ornaments of Rome, for their beauty as much as for their height; and since the power of Rome could not
hope to equal the Egyptians, it felt it was doing enough for its
greatness when it borrowed the monuments of Egypt’s kings.

Egypt had seen no great edifices except the Tower of Babel when
it conceived its pyramids, which, because of their shape as much as
their size, have withstood time and the barbarians. From the very
beginning the taste of the Egyptians was such that they liked solidity
and unadorned regularity. Does not Nature itself tend to this
simplicity, which is so hard to recapture once taste has been
corrupted by novelty and extravagant boldness? The Egyptians liked
boldness only within the rules; they sought the new and the
unexpected in the infinite variety of Nature. They boasted that they
were the only men to have created, like the gods, immortal works.
The inscriptions of the pyramids were as noble as the work itself.
They spoke to the beholder. One of these pyramids of brick warned
the viewer in its inscription not to compare it to the others, and that
it was “as much above all the pyramids as Zeus was above all the
gods.”

But however great the efforts men make, their nothingness is
always apparent. These pyramids were tombs; and yet the kings who
built them did not have the power to be buried there and did not
enjoy their resting place.

I would not speak of the beautiful palace called the Labyrinth if
Herodotus, who saw it, had not assured us that it was even more
astonishing than the pyramids. It was built on the shore of Lake
Myris and given a location appropriate to its size. Besides, it was not
so much a single palace as a magnificent complex of twelve regularly
arranged and interconnected palaces. Fifteen hundred rooms, inter-
spersed with terraces, were arranged around twelve halls and
provided no exit for those who went in to visit them. There were as
many buildings underground. These subterranean buildings were
used as burial places for kings and also (who could say this without
feeling shame and deploving the blindness of the human spirit) to
keep the sacred crocodiles, which a nation so wise in other ways
elevated into gods.

You are surprised to see such magnificence in the tombs of Egypt.
The reason is that they were not only erected as sacred monuments
destined to perpetuate the memory of great princes for posterity; they were also regarded as eternal dwelling places. Houses were called “inns,” where we stay only in passing, during a life that is too brief for carrying out all our plans. But the true houses were the tombs, where we are to dwell for infinite centuries.

As for the rest, Egypt did not expend its greatest effort on inanimate things. Its most noble labor and its most accomplished art consisted in forming men. Greece was so persuaded of this that its greatest men—a Homer, a Pythagoras, a Plato, even Lycurgus and Solon, the two great lawgivers, as well as a number of others whom I do not have to mention—went to Egypt to learn wisdom. God wished that Moses himself be learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; this is how he came to be mighty in words and deeds. True wisdom avails itself of everything; and God does not wish those whom he inspires to neglect human means, which, in their own way, also come from him.

These wise men of Egypt had found the way of life that makes for solid minds, strong bodies, fertile women, and healthy children. In this manner, the people grew in numbers and strength. The country was healthful by nature, but philosophy had taught them that nature needs to be helped. There is an art of developing the body as well as the mind. This art, which we have lost through neglect, was well known to the ancients, and Egypt had found it. Its principal means of attaining this lofty goal were frugality and exercise. On a large battlefield—which was seen by Herodotus—the fragile skulls of the Persians and those of the Egyptians, harder than the stones with which they were intermingled, showed the decadence of the former and the robust constitution which a frugal diet and vigorous exercise had given the latter. Foot races, horse races, and chariot races were practiced in Egypt with admirable skill, and there were no better horsemen in all the world than the Egyptians. When Diodorus tells us that they rejected wrestling as an exercise that makes for dangerous and short-lived strength, he must have meant the excessive wrestling which even Greece, which gave prizes for it in its games, had censured as unsuitable for free men. But with a certain moderation, it was worthy of honorable people; and Dio-
dorus himself tells us that the Hermes of the Egyptians had invented its rules as well as the art of developing the body. In the same way we must understand what the same author tells us concerning music. The music he says the Egyptians shunned as apt to weaken the courage was no doubt the soft and effeminate kind which inspires only pleasure and a spurious tenderness. For the Egyptians were far from shunning the high-spirited music whose noble chords exalt the mind and the heart, since, according to Diodorus himself, their Hermes had invented it, as he had invented the most full-toned instrument of music. At the head of the solemn procession of the Egyptians, in which the books of Trismegistus were carried in state, we see the cantor holding "a symbol of music" (I do not know what this might be) and "the book of sacred hymns." All in all, Egypt neglected nothing that could refine the mind, ennoble the heart, and strengthen the body. Its standing army of 400,000 was composed of citizens whom it trained with even greater care. The laws of the militia were preserved easily, and as if by their own importance, because fathers taught them to their children. For the profession of war was passed on from father to son like all the others; and, after the priestly families, those that were regarded as the most illustrious were, as with us, the families destined for the army. I do not mean to say, however, that Egypt was warlike. It is all well and good to have regular and well-kept troops and to train them in military pursuits under sheltered circumstances and in imaginary battles, but only war and actual battles will ever create warlike men. Egypt loved peace because it loved justice. Satisfied with a country where there was an abundance of everything, it was not interested in conquests. It expanded in a different way, by establishing colonies all over the earth and, with them, polite manners and laws. The most famous cities came to Egypt to learn about their antiquities and the source of their greatest institutions. Everyone consulted Egypt on the rules of wisdom. When the citizens of Elis had established the Olympian Games, the most illustrious of Greece, they sought the approval of the Egyptians in a formal mission and learned from them new ways to encourage the competing athletes. Egypt ruled by giving advice, and this rule of the mind seemed to them more noble and more
glorious than any rule that can be established by armies. Even though the kings of Thebes were incomparably more powerful than the other kings of Egypt, they never encroached upon the neighboring dynasties and occupied them only after they had been invaded by the Arabs; but this really means that they took them away from foreigners, and not that they wanted to dominate the native population. But when they did embark on conquests, they surpassed all others. I do not speak of Osiris, the famous conqueror of India; apparently he is Bacchus or some other equally legendary hero. The father of Sesostris (learned historians claim that he is Amenophis, also known as Memnon), either by instinct, or as a whim, or, as the Egyptians say, in obedience to an oracle, decided to make his son into a conqueror. He went about it in the true Egyptian way, that is, most thoughtfully. All the children born on the same day were brought to the court by orders of the king. He had them brought up as his children and with the same care as that given to Sesostris, in whose company they were raised. He could not have given him more faithful ministers or more zealous fighting companions. When Sesostris was a little older, he made him serve his apprenticeship in a war against the Arabs. Here the young prince learned to bear hunger and thirst, and he subdued that hitherto indomitable nation. Accustomed to the hardships of war, he turned westward from Egypt, upon his father's advice. He attacked Libya and subjugated the greater part of that vast region. By this time his father had died, but he left him in a position to attempt anything he wanted. He conceived no less a plan than the conquest of the world. But before leaving his kingdom, he made sure of its internal security by winning the hearts of all his subjects through liberality and justice and by regulating the government generally with extreme prudence. Meanwhile, he made his preparations: he levied troops and gave them, as captains, the young men his father had brought up with him. There were 1,700 of them, and they were capable of spreading courage, discipline, and love for the prince throughout the army. Having done this, he marched into Ethiopia and made it a dependent power. He won other victories in Asia. Jerusalem was the first to feel his armed might. Rehoboam for all his temerity could not resist him, and Sesostris carried off Solomon's treasure. A just decree of God had delivered it into his hands. He penetrated into
India further than Hercules or Bacchus, further even than Alexander was later to penetrate, since he subjugated the country beyond the Ganges. You can judge for yourself how well more neighboring countries resisted him. The Scythians as far as Tanais obeyed him; Armenia and Cappadocia were under his rule. He left a colony in the ancient kingdom of Colchis, where Egyptian ways have persisted ever since. Herodotus saw in Asia Minor, from one sea to the other, monuments to his victories, whose proud inscriptions speak of Sesostris, king of kings and lord of lords. Some of them were found as far as Thrace, and his kingdom extended from the Danube to the Ganges. Difficulties in maintaining supplies prevented him from advancing further in Europe. He returned after nine years, laden with the spoils of the defeated nations. Some of them courageously defended their liberty; others yielded without resistance. In his monuments, Sesostris made a careful distinction between these nations in hieroglyphic figures, after the manner of the Egyptians. In order to describe his empire he invented geographic maps. A hundred famous temples, erected as offerings of gratitude to the tutelary deities of all the cities, were the first and most noble markers of his victories; and he carefully pointed out in their inscriptions that these great works had been wrought without wearying his subjects. He made it a point of honor to treat them leniently and to use only captives as labor for the monuments to his victories. Solomon had provided him with this example; that wise prince had employed only dependent nations for the great works that have made his reign immortal. His citizens were engaged in nobler pursuits: they learned the craft of war and of commanding. Sesostris could not have chosen a more perfect model. He reigned for thirty-three years and enjoyed his triumphs for a long time, though they would have been much more worthy of his glory if vanity had not induced him to have his chariot drawn by vanquished kings. It seems that he scorned dying like other men. Having become blind in his old age, he committed suicide and left Egypt rich for all times. Yet his empire did not last beyond the fourth generation. But at the time of Tiberius some magnificent monuments still showed the extent and the amount of tribute owed. Egypt soon returned to its peaceful ways. It has even been written that, after his conquests, Sesostris was the first to soften the manners of
the Egyptians because he feared upheavals. If we can believe it, this can have been a precaution he took only on behalf of his successors. For it is difficult to see what he himself, wise and absolute as he was, had to fear from his subjects, who adored him. Furthermore, such a thought is not appropriate for a great prince; and it would have been a poor safeguard for his conquests if he had permitted the courage of his subjects to slacken. It is also true that this great empire did not endure for long. There had to be a reason for its downfall. Dissension sprang up in Egypt. Under Anysis the Blind, the Ethiopian Shabako invaded the kingdom; but he treated its people as well, and did as great things for it, as any of the native kings. His moderation has never been equaled, since, after fifty years of a happy reign, he returned to Ethiopia, obeying certain premonitions he believed to be divine. The kingdom he left behind fell into the hands of Sethos, a priest of Vulcan. In his own way, he too was a pious prince, but he had little ability for war and completely demoralized the militia when he abused the military. From this time on, Egypt maintained itself only by a foreign militia. A kind of anarchy ensued. We see twelve kings, chosen by the people, who shared the government of the kingdom. It was they who built the twelve palaces composing the Labyrinth. Although Egypt did not give up its splendid style of life, it became weak and divided under these twelve princes. One of them (it was Psammetichus) seized the supreme power with the help of foreigners. Egypt was restored and retained considerable power for the next five or six reigns. Finally, this ancient kingdom, which had lasted for about sixteen centuries, was so weakened by the kings of Babylon and by Cyrus that it fell prey to Cambyses, the most extravagant of princes.

Those who were familiar with the Egyptian nature realized that it was not a warlike country. You have seen the reasons for this. It had lived in peace for about 1,300 years when it produced its first warrior, namely, Sesostris. Therefore, and despite its carefully kept militia, we see that, toward the end, foreign troops are the only strength it had; and this is one of the greatest weaknesses any state can have. But human things are not perfect, and it is very difficult to attain perfection in both the arts of peace and the advantages of war. It is, after all, quite an accomplishment to have existed for sixteen centuries. A number of Ethiopians reigned in
Thebes during this time; among others, Shabako and, it is believed, Tirhakah. But Egypt derived one advantage from the excellent organization of its state: foreign conquerors adopted its ways instead of imposing their own. Thus a change of masters did not involve a change of government. Egypt did not want to live under the Persians and often tried to shake off their yoke. But it was not warlike enough to stand up against such power by its own strength; and the Greeks, who defended Egypt, had to forsake it, being occupied elsewhere. Thus it had to yield to its first masters again and again, but it clung tenaciously to its ancient customs, incapable of giving up the maxims of its original kings. Although these were retained to a great extent under the Ptolemies, Greek and Asiatic ways eventually became intermingled to such a degree that ancient Egypt became almost unrecognizable.

We must not forget that the dates of the ancient kings of Egypt are most uncertain, even in history as written by the Egyptians. It is difficult to place Osymandias, whose magnificent monuments and great battles are recorded in the writings of Diodorus. It seems that the Egyptians did not know the father of Sesostris, since he is not named by Herodotus and Diodorus. His power is more evident in the monuments he left all over the world than in the written records of his country; and for this reason we must not believe, as some do, that what Egypt wrote concerning its ancient history was always as exact as was claimed, since even the Egyptians are vague about the most brilliant age of their monarchy.

Chapter 4

The Old and the New Assyrians, the Medes, and Cyrus

The great empire of the Egyptians is detached, as it were, from all the others and did not have, as you can see, a long sequel. What we have to say from now on is more sustained and has more precise dates.

Nonetheless, there still are very few certainties concerning the first
empire of the Assyrians. But in whatever time we wish to place its beginnings, according to the differing opinions of historians, you will always find that, at the time when the world was divided into a number of small states whose rulers were interested in preservation rather than expansion, Ninus, more ambitious and more powerful than his neighbors, overwhelmed them one after the other and made extensive conquests in the East. His wife, Semiramis, who combined the ambition quite frequently found in her sex with unusual courage and consistency, supported her husband in his vast plans and gave the monarchy its final form.

There is no question that she was a great woman; and the very size of Nineveh, which is greater than that of Babylon, is sufficient proof. But just as the most judicious historians do not make this monarchy as old as others believe it to be, they also give it a smaller size. The small kingdoms of which it should be composed could not have lasted as long as they did if Nineveh were as old and as extensive as Ctesias and those who have taken his word for it describe it to us. On the other hand, Plato, a careful observer of ancient history, makes the kingdom of Troy at the time of Priam a dependency of the Assyrian Empire. But nothing is said about this in Homer, who, being so manifestly interested in emphasizing the glory of Greece, would not have forgotten this circumstance. It seems likely, therefore, that the Assyrians were not very well known in the West, since a poet of such learning, who was so anxious to embellish his poem with everything relevant to his subject, did not mention them at all.

And yet, according to the calculations we have judged to be the most reasonable, the time of the siege of Troy was the heyday of the Assyrians, since it coincides with the conquests of Semiramis. The reason is that these conquests were made only in the East. Those who are the most flattering to her make her advance in that direction. She had been too involved in the plans and the victories of Ninus not to carry out his intentions; and there is no doubt in my mind that Ninus was interested only in the East, since even Justin, who is extremely favorable to him, says that he halted his expeditions to the West at the frontiers of Libya.

It is therefore very difficult to say at what time Nineveh might
have advanced its conquests as far as Troy, since there is so little
evidence that Ninus and Semiramis ever attempted anything of the
kind. Since, furthermore, all of their successors, beginning with
their son Ninyas, lived in such decadence and showed so little
initiative that their names have hardly come down to us, there is
more reason to be surprised that their empire kept going than to
expect any expansion.

It was no doubt much diminished by the conquests of Sesostris;
but since these were of short duration and were scarcely continued
by his successors, it is likely that the countries taken from the
Assyrians, long accustomed as they were to their rule, naturally
reverted to Assyria later. Thus this empire remained very powerful
and quite undisturbed until Arbaces revealed the degenerate ways of
its kings, which had been hidden for a long time in the secrecy of the
palace, so that Sardanapalus, famous for his baseness, became not
only hateful but positively intolerable to his subjects.

You have seen which kingdoms rose from the ruins of this first
empire of the Assyrians, among others, the kingdoms of Nineveh
and Babylon. The kings of Nineveh continued to call themselves
kings of Assyria and acquired the greatest power. Their pride soon
went beyond all bounds, as we see by their conquests, which
included the kingdom of the Israelites, or Samaria. It took nothing
less than the hand of God and a visible miracle to prevent them from
overwhelming Judaea under Hezekiah. Shortly after it had begun to
seem that there was no way to curb their power, they invaded the
nearby kingdom of Babylon, whose royal family had become extinct.

Babylon seemed to be born to hold sway over the entire world. Its
people were full of intelligence and courage. Philosophy and the arts
had always been highly regarded by them, and there were no better
soldiers in the East than the Chaldaeans. The ancient world admired
the rich harvests of a country which is now no longer cultivated
because of the negligence of its inhabitants; but its abundance led
the ancient kings of Persia to count it a third of their great empire.
Thus the kings of Assyria, swelled by an acquisition which added a
city of such opulence to their monarchy, conceived new plans.
Nebuchadrezzar I felt that his empire was unworthy of him unless he
added the whole world to it. Nebuchadrezzar II, haughtier still than
all his royal predecessors, having achieved unheard-of success and resounding victories, preferred being adored as a god to commanding as a king. Think of the works he erected in Babylon! What parapets, towers, gates, and city walls arose! It seemed as if the ancient Tower of Babel was to be recreated in the prodigious height of the Temple of Bel and as if Nebuchadrezzar wanted, again, to storm the heavens. His pride, though smitten by the hand of God, nevertheless revived in his successors. They could not tolerate any power near them, and their ambition to place all nations under their yoke made them hateful to their neighbors. This jealousy united against them not only the kings of Media and Persia, but a large part of the Eastern peoples as well. Pride easily turns to cruelty. As the kings of Babylon treated their subjects inhumanly, whole nations, as well as some of the principal lords of their own realm, joined Cyrus and the Medes. Accustomed as Babylon was to commanding and conquering, it did not fear the coalition of so many enemies; and, too sure of its invincible strength, it was subdued by the very Medes it had aimed to subjugate: pride became its downfall in the end.

This city had a strange destiny, since it perished through its own inventions. The Euphrates had an effect on the vast plains surrounding it much like that which the Nile had on those of Egypt; but in order to make good use of it, even more work and art than the Egyptians expended on the Nile were needed. The Euphrates followed a straight course and never overflowed. Everywhere in the countryside an infinite number of canals had to be made for it, so that it could water the land, which by this means became incomparably fertile. In order to check the turbulence of its rushing waters, it was necessary to make it run through a thousand by-ways and to excavate for it large lakes, which a wise queen buttressed with fabulous splendor. It was Nitocris, mother of Labynetus (also called Nabonidos or Belshazzar), the last king of Babylon, who erected these great works. But then this queen conceived of an even more marvelous project, namely, to span the Euphrates with a stone bridge in order to link the two sides of the city, which were kept too far apart by the immense width of the river. For this purpose the very swift and deep river had to be drained, and this was done by
diverting its water into an immense lake which had been excavated by order of the queen. The bridge was built at the same time, with the solid materials that were in readiness, and both banks of the river were covered with brick up to an astonishing height, leaving exposed the slopes covered in the same manner and as carefully constructed as the city walls. The rapidity with which the work was performed was equal to its scope. But for all her foresight, it did not occur to the queen that she was teaching her foes how to take her city. Cyrus diverted the Euphrates into the very lake she had excavated, when, unable to subdue Babylon by force or famine, he opened his passage to both sides of the city, as it had so often been predicted by the prophets.

If Babylon had been able to realize that it was ephemeral, like all other human things, and if insane self-confidence had not blinded it, it would have anticipated Cyrus' actions, since a similar exploit had been achieved within living memory. Furthermore, if all the slopes had been guarded, the Persians could have been overpowered when they passed through the riverbed. But no one gave thought to anything but pleasures and festivities, and there was no order or chain of command. This is the downfall not only of the strongest fortifications but even of the greatest empires. The whole city was in panic, and the impious king was killed. Xenophon, who applies this epithet to the last king of Babylon, seems to designate by this word Belshazzar's sacrileges, which Daniel shows us punished by his sudden end.

The Medes, who had destroyed the first empire of the Assyrians, also destroyed the second; and it was as if this nation were destined to be always fatal to the greatness of Assyria. But on this last occasion, the valor and the great name of Cyrus gave the glory of the conquest to his subjects, the Persians.

But in truth, it is due to this hero alone, who, brought up under the severe and regular discipline customary in Persia—at that time a nation as moderate as it later became voluptuous—was accustomed from childhood on to a sober and military life. The Medes, once so industrious and warlike but finally enervated by their abundance of wealth, needed this kind of general. Cyrus made use of their wealth and of the respect their name still inspired in the East; but he placed
his hopes for success in the troops he had brought with him from Persia. In the very first battle the king of Babylon was killed, and the troops were routed. The victor challenged the new king to a duel, and this show of courage gave him the reputation of a benevolent prince who spares his subjects' blood. He combined political acumen with valor. Unwilling to devastate this beautiful country, which he already considered his conquest, he negotiated a decision to spare the farmers on both sides. He rekindled the jealousy of the neighboring nations by convincing them that the arrogant power of Babylon was planning to overrun all of them. Eventually, the reputation he acquired by his generosity and justice, as well as by his military success, united all of them under his banners, and all this assistance enabled him to conquer the vast expanse of land which were to compose his empire.

These were the reasons for the rise of that empire. Cyrus made it so powerful that it could hardly fail to increase under his successors. But in order to understand what brought about its downfall, we have only to compare the Persians and Cyrus' successors to the Greeks and their generals, especially to Alexander.

Chapter 5

The Persians, the Greeks, and Alexander

It was Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, who corrupted the ways of the Persians. His father, so well brought up in warlike pursuits himself, did not take enough care to give the successor to his great empire an education similar to his own; and, as is usual in human affairs, too much greatness was detrimental to virtue. Darius, son of Hystaspes, who was elevated to the throne from private life, was better suited for the exercise of sovereign power and made some effort to rectify the disorders. But corruption had already spread too far. Prosperity had made for a great lack of moderation in the way of life, and Darius himself no longer had the strength that would have enabled
him to enact effective reforms. Under his successors the whole society degenerated, and the Persians' love of luxury passed all bounds.

But even though these nations, once they had achieved power, lost much of their ancient virtue when they gave themselves over to pleasure, they still preserved one thing that was great and noble. What could be nobler than their horror of lying, a vice they always considered shameful and base? After lying, the meanest thing to them was to live by borrowing. Such a life, they felt, was slothful, ignominious, slavish, and all the more despicable as it led to lying. Out of a generosity that came naturally to their nations, they treated defeated kings honorably. If the children of such princes were at all able to accommodate the victors, they left them in command of their respective countries with almost all the insignia of their former status. The Persians were equitable, polite, and liberal toward foreigners and knew how to make use of them. They knew who the people of merit were and spared nothing to win them over. It must be admitted that they never acquired the perfect knowledge of that wisdom which teaches how to govern well. There was always a certain confusion in the administration of their great empire. They never mastered the fine art, which was so deftly practiced later by the Romans, of bringing together all the parts of a great state and molding them into a perfect whole. Therefore, they were almost always faced with considerable rebellions. Yet they were not without political acumen. The rules of justice were known to them, and they had great kings who enforced them with admirable exactitude. Crimes were severely punished, but there was leniency in the sense that first offenses were easily pardoned, while repetitions met with rigorous punishment. They had many good laws, almost all of them going back to Cyrus and to Darius, the son of Hystaspes. They had established rules for governing, and a council responsible for their preservation met at regular intervals. There was a strict hierarchy in every profession. When it was said that the great men who sat in the council were the eyes and the ears of the prince, this reminded the prince that he had his ministers as we have the organs of our senses, not so that he might rest, but that he might act through them; and it told the ministers that they were not to act for themselves but for the
prince, their head, and for the entire body of state. These ministers were to be instructed in the ancient maxims of the monarchy. The well-kept records of the past were used to set the pattern for posterity. In these records they marked what services individuals had rendered so as to be sure that they would not go without reward, to the shame of the prince and the great detriment of the state. It was an excellent way to interest private citizens in the public welfare, to teach them that they should never offer sacrifices to the gods solely on their own behalf but rather for the king and for the state, to which they and all the others belonged. It was among the foremost concerns of the prince to foster agriculture; and the satraps whose districts were best cultivated received the largest share of the rewards. Just as there were offices for the conduct of the armed forces, so there were others to supervise agricultural work. These two offices were similar, one of them being in charge of defending the country, the other of cultivating it. The prince granted them almost equal protection and made them work together for the public welfare. After those who had achieved victory in war, the greatest honors went to those who had brought up many children. The respect for royal authority which the Persians were taught from childhood on was carried to excess by its admixture of adoration; and the Persians seemed to be slaves rather than subjects who submitted by reason to lawful authority. But this was their Oriental temperament; and perhaps it is true that the keen and violent nature of such people called for a firmer and more absolute government.

Their manner of bringing up the children of kings was admired by Plato and proposed to the Greeks as the model of perfect education. At the age of seven they were already taken from the care of the eunuchs to be trained in horseback riding and hunting. At the age of fourteen, when the mind begins to form, they were given as teachers four of the most virtuous and wisest men in the state. The first of them, Plato says, taught them magic, that is, in their language, the worship of the gods, according to the ancient traditions and to the laws of Zoroaster, son of Oromazdes. The second taught them to speak the truth and to do justice. The third taught them not to give in to voluptuousness, so that they should always be free and truly kings, in control of themselves and their desires. The fourth
strenthened their courage against fear, which would have enslaved them and robbed them of the self-confidence so necessary for commanding. Young gentlemen were educated at the palace of the king with his children. The king was kept informed of their conduct. The reports to him were followed, on his orders, by chastisements or rewards. Seeing this, the youths early learned, not only virtue, but also that there is a time to obey and a time to command. Such upbringing certainly would have justified the highest hopes for the kings of Persia if as much care had been taken to guide them at a later age as had been given to their instruction during their childhood. But the corrupt ways of the nation soon swept them into a life of pleasure, against which all education is powerless. It must be admitted, however, that despite the effeminacy of the Persians, despite the care they lavished on their beauty and their attire, they were not devoid of valor. Valor was always their pride, and they gave distinguished proof of it. The art of war occupied its deserved place of preference among them, as providing the shelter in which all the others can be practiced in tranquility. But they never fundamentally understood it, nor did they know how an army can be improved by severity, discipline, deployment of troops, marching, and encampment, in a word, by all the techniques that make such a great body move smoothly and appropriately. They imagined that all that was needed was to assemble without discrimination an immense mass of people who went into battle with a certain determination, but without order, and then found itself encumbered by a huge crowd of useless persons brought along by the king and the great lords solely for their pleasure. For they were so pampered that in a campaign they wished to be provided with the same magnificence and the same refinement as at the habitual court residences, so that the kings went to war with their wives, their concubines, their eunuchs, and all that served their pleasure. Gold and silver dishes, precious furniture, in a word, all the paraphernalia of such a life, followed in great abundance. An army of this kind, encumbered as it already was by an excessive number of soldiers, was further hampered by a surfeit of people who did not fight. In this confusion it was impossible to move in a concerted manner; orders never arrived in time, and engagements were fought haphazardly, since no one was in a
position to control the disorder. Furthermore, it was necessary to finish an engagement quickly and to advance rapidly through the countryside, since this great and rapacious body consumed everything within a short time, not only the necessities of life but also all luxury goods. Indeed, it is difficult to see how enough supplies could be found.

And yet this unwieldy apparatus of the Persians did great harm to nations who knew as little of the art of war as they did. And those who did understand it were either weakened by their own internal divisions or were overpowered by the number of their foes; and this is how Egypt, proud though it was of its antiquity, its wise institutions, and the conquests of its Sesostris, came to be defeated by the Persians. Nor was it difficult for them to subjugate Asia Minor and even the Greek colonies, which had been corrupted by the effeminacy of Asia. But when they reached Greece itself, they encountered something they had never seen: a disciplined militia, listened-to officers, and soldiers accustomed to living on very little, whose bodies could withstand hard labor and were nimble from wrestling and the other exercises customary in that country. They found armies which, though of moderate size, were like those bodies which seem to be all muscle and energy and, furthermore, were so well commanded and so responsive to the orders of their generals that their well-concerted movements made it seem as if all the soldiers had but one common soul.

But the greatest thing about Greece was its firm and farsighted policy, which knew how to give in, to venture, and to resist as the need arose, and, what was even more marvelous, a courage which the love of liberty and the fatherland made invincible.

The Greeks, naturally intelligent and courageous, had been educated early by the kings and colonists from Egypt, who, established in various regions of the country from the earliest times on, had widely spread the excellent institutions of the Egyptians. This is how they learned physical exercise—wrestling, foot races, horse races, and chariot races, and other exercises which were brought to perfection by the glorious crowns of the Olympian Games. But the best thing the Egyptians taught them was a willingness to learn and to be molded by the law for the public welfare. They were not
individuals interested simply in their own affairs, who felt the misfortunes of the state only to the extent that these brought them personal suffering or disrupted the tranquillity of their family. The Greeks had learned to see themselves and their families as parts of a greater body, namely, the state. Fathers brought up their children in this spirit; and children learned from the cradle on to look upon their country as a common mother, to whom they belonged even more than to their parents. To the Greeks the word civility meant more than that graciousness and mutual deference which make men sociable; a civil person was the same thing as a good citizen, who always considers himself as a member of the state, abides by law, and works within it for the public welfare without encroaching on anyone. The ancient kings of the various regions of Greece, such as Minos, Cecrops, Theseus, Codrus, Temenus, Creshontes, Eurysthenes, Patrocles, and others like them, had spread these ideals throughout the nation. All of them showed their love of the people, not by flattering them, but by furthering their well-being and upholding the rule of the law.

How can I describe the uncompromising rectitude of their jurisdiction? Was there ever a weightier tribunal than the Areopagus, which all of Greece held in such veneration that it was said that the very gods had been summoned before it? It was famous from earliest times on, and apparently Cecrops founded it on the model of the Egyptian tribunals. No court has preserved its ancient reputation for uncompromising rectitude for so long, and treacherous eloquence was always banished from it.

Under such a regime the Greeks gradually came to feel that they were capable of self-government, and most of the cities formed themselves into republics. But every country brought forth wise legislators, such as Thales, Pythagoras, Pittacus, Lycurgus, Solon, Philotas, and many others known to history; and they prevented liberty from degenerating into license. A small number of simply written laws kept the people within their duty and made them work together for the common good of their country.

The idea of liberty which this regime inspired was admirable. For the liberty the Greeks had in mind was a liberty subject to the law, meaning to reason itself as recognized by all the people. They did
not want men to have power over them. The magistrates, though feared during their tenure, later became private citizens again, retaining only such authority as their experience had given them. The law was supreme; it appointed the magistrates, controlled their power, and also punished them if their administration was corrupt.

This is not the place to examine whether these ideas are as solid as they are plausible. Suffice it to say that Greece loved them and preferred the hazards of liberty to those of lawful submission, though in truth the hazards of the latter are not nearly so great. But as every form of government has its own advantages, the Greeks profited from theirs in the sense that the citizens were all the more attached to their country since they all had a share in its government and since every individual could aspire to the highest office.

How much philosophy did for the preservation of the Greek state can scarcely be fathomed. The freer these people were, the more it became necessary to found the rules of behavior and of society upon sound reasoning. Pythagoras, Thales, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Archytas, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, and an infinite number of others filled Greece with these noble precepts. A few foolish talkers also called themselves philosophers; but authority came only to those who taught that individual interest and life itself must be sacrificed to the welfare of the state; and it was the most common tenet among the philosophers that a man should either retire from public affairs or consider nothing but the general welfare.

Why mention only the philosophers? The poets also, who were known to all the people, instructed them even more than they entertained them. The most famous conqueror regarded Homer as a master who taught him how to rule well. This great poet also taught how to obey and to be a good citizen. He and many other poets, whose works are as weighty as they are agreeable, praise only the arts useful to human life and express solicitude only for public welfare, the fatherland, society, and that admirable civility of which we have already spoken.

When Greece, nurtured in this manner, saw the Asians in their daintiness, their finery, and their effeminate beauty, it had nothing but contempt for them. But their form of government, which was constituted in such a way that the will of the prince was above all the
laws, even the most sacred, inspired Greece with horror; and to all of
Greece there was nothing more hateful than the barbarians.

The Greeks had conceived this hatred in their earliest times, and
it had become as a second nature to them. One of the reasons for
which they loved the poetry of Homer was that it celebrated the
victories and advantages of Greece over Asia. On the side of Asia
was Aphrodite, that is, pleasure, licentious love, and effeminate
manners; on the side of Greece were Hera, that is, steadiness and
conjugal love; Hermes, with eloquence; and Zeus, with political
wisdom. On the side of Asia was the impetuous and brutal Ares,
that is, savage warfare; on the side of Greece was Athena, that is,
military art and valor controlled by the mind. Ever since that time,
Greece had always believed that intelligence and courage were its
natural patrimony. The thought that Asia was planning to subjugate
it was intolerable; and to assume that yoke seemed equivalent to
subjecting virtue to voluptuousness, the mind to the body, and true
courage to uncontrolled power, which consists only in numbers.

These feelings were shared by most of the Greeks when Greece
was attacked by Darius, the son of Hystaspes, and Xerxes, who
commanded armies of seemingly fabulous size. Immediately, all the
Greeks prepared to defend their liberty. Although all the cities of
Greece were individual republics, common interest united them; and
they vied only over who was to make the greatest contribution to the
common cause. The Athenians did not mind giving over their city to
pillage and arson; and after they had saved their old men, women,
and children, they put on ships all those able to bear arms. In order
to detain the Persians for a few days at a difficult mountain pass
<Thermopylae> and to show them the determination of Greece, a
handful of Spartans and their king eagerly went to their certain
death; and they were content that by their death they had sacrificed
an infinite number of barbarians to their country and had bequeathed to their fellow citizens an example of unequaled daring.

Faced with such armies and such strategy, Persia was weak; and
on a number of occasions it was made painfully aware of the
superiority of discipline over great confused masses and of artfully
controlled valor over blind impetuosity.

After so many defeats, the only means left to the Persians was to
sow discord among the Greeks, and the very situation created by the Greek victories made this task easy. Since they had been united by fear, victory and self-assurance broke up their union. Accustomed to war and victory, they turned upon one another when they felt they no longer had to fear the power of the Persians. But I should explain the situation of the Greeks and the mainsprings of Persian policy in greater detail.

Of all the republics composing Greece, Sparta and Athens were without question the most important. Nowhere was there more wit than at Athens or greater strength than at Sparta. Athens strove for pleasure; in Sparta life was hard and industrious. Both of them loved glory and liberty; but at Athens liberty had a natural bent toward license. Curbed by severe laws at Sparta, the more liberty was repressed within the state, the more it sought to expand by dominating without. Athens also wanted to dominate, but for different reasons. Self-interest was mingled with desire for glory. The citizens of Athens were excellent navigators, and their control of the sea had made the city very wealthy. In its desire to preserve its commercial hegemony, it endeavored to subjugate all the Greek states; and the very wealth that was at the root of this desire also provided the means to satisfy it. At Sparta, on the other hand, money was held in contempt. Since all its laws aimed at making it into a republic of warriors, the glory of arms was the only inducement that had power over the minds of its citizens. Thus it was natural that Sparta wanted to dominate; and the more it was above self-interest, the more it was susceptible to the lures of ambition.

Since its life was strictly regulated, Sparta adhered firmly to its tenets and designs. Athens was more spirited, and the people had too much power there. Philosophy and the law did, of course, greatly influence their noble natures; still, reason alone was incapable of restraining them. A wise Athenian who admirably understood the character of his country tells us that these overly spirited and free minds needed fear and that it was no longer possible to govern them once the victory of Salamis had reassured them as to the Persians.

At this juncture two things led to their downfall: pride in their noble actions, and their illusion of safety. The magistrates were no longer listened to; and just as the Persians suffered from excessive
submissiveness, so Athens, Plato says, came to feel the evils of excessive liberty.

These two great republics, so opposite in their ways and their conduct, crossed each other in their mutual design to subjugate all of Greece; and the continuous strife between them arose from their conflicting interests even more than from the incompatibility of their characters.

The Greek cities did not wish to be dominated by either one or the other. For not only did all of them hope to preserve their independence; they also found the rule of either republic too burdensome. That of Sparta was harsh. There was something grim about its people. A very rigid government and a life of very hard work made men too supercilious, too austere, and too peremptory; and, furthermore, there was no hope for peace under the rule of a city which, having been created for war, could preserve itself only by continuing to fight relentlessly. This is how the Spartans wanted to rule, and such a rule was feared by all. The Athenians were by nature more gentle and pleasant. There was nothing more delightful to behold than their city, where celebrations and games never ended and where wit, liberty, and passion created a new spectacle every day. But their unstable conduct offended their allies and was positively intolerable to their subjects. They would have to live with a people used to flattery; and that, according to Plato, is a more dangerous thing than a prince spoiled by flattery.

These two cities did not permit Greece to remain at peace. You have seen the Peloponnesian War and the other wars which were always either caused or fostered by the rivalry between Sparta and Athens. But the very rivalry that disrupted Greece also upheld it in a certain sense and prevented it from becoming dependent on either one of these nations.

The Persians soon became aware of the situation in Greece. Thus their policy consisted simply of encouraging this rivalry and of fomenting this dissension. Sparta, the more ambitious of the two, was the first to call them into the struggle within Greece. The Persians entered with the intention of taking over the whole nation; and while they made every effort to weaken the Greeks by playing them against each other, they waited only for the moment when they
could overpower all of them. As the struggle continued, the Greek cities increasingly looked for help only from the king of Persia, whom they called Great King, or the king, as if they already included themselves among his subjects. But the ancient spirit of Greece could not fail to reawaken just when it was about to be enslaved at the hands of the barbarians. Petty Greek kings decided to oppose the Great King and to overthrow his rule. With an army that was small but nurtured in the discipline we have seen, Agesilaus, king of Sparta, frightened the Persians in Asia Minor and demonstrated that they could be defeated. Only the dissensions among the Greeks could halt his conquests. But at that time it also happened that young Cyrus, Artaxerxes' brother, rebelled against him. There were 10,000 Greeks among his troops, and they alone stood their ground in the general rout of his army. He was killed in that battle—by the hand of Artaxerxes himself, so we are told. Our Greeks found themselves near Babylon, without a protector among thePersians. Yet Artaxerxes, the victor, was unable to persuade or force them to lay down their arms. They conceived the bold plan of reaching their homeland by crossing his entire empire in closed ranks, and they were able to carry it out. [This marvelous story is very well told by Xenophon in his book about The Retreat of the Ten Thousand <the Anabasis> or in The Education of Young Cyrus <the Cyropaedia> .] Now, more than ever before, all of Greece realized that it was in possession of an invincible militia, to which everything had to yield, and that only divisiveness could subjugate it to an enemy too weak to withstand its united strength. Philip, king of Macedon, who was as skillful as he was brave, was in a much better position than all the divided cities and republics because he ruled over a kingdom that was small, to be sure, but unified, and where royal power was absolute. He put this advantage to such good use that in the end, partly by skill and partly by force, he became the most powerful man in Greece and obliged all the Greeks to march under his banners against the common foe. At this juncture he was killed, but his son Alexander inherited his kingdom and his plans. He found the Macedonians not only warlike but positively triumphant. Their many successes had made them almost as superior to the other Greeks in valor and discipline as the other Greeks were superior to the Persians and their like.
Darius, who ruled Persia at this time, was just, valiant, generous, beloved by his subjects, and lacking neither the intelligence nor the vigor to carry out his plans. But if you compare him to Alexander; if you compare his intelligence to that penetrating and sublime genius; his valor to the loftiness and firmness of that invincible courage which was spurred on by obstacles; to that sustained desire to enhance his reputation which made him reach for anything that could advance his glory even slightly, despite any peril, any labor, or a thousand deaths; to that self-confidence, finally, which made him feel in his innermost heart that everything must yield to him as to a man whose destiny made him superior to all others—a confidence he imparted not only to his generals but to the least of his soldiers, whom he thereby raised above all difficulties and themselves: if you compare them in this manner, you will easily judge to whom victory belonged. And if you add to this the advantages of the Macedonians and the Greeks over their enemies, you will have to admit that Persia, attacked by a hero of such stature and by such an army, was bound to come under a new master. Thus you will understand not only what brought about the downfall of the Persian Empire but also what led to the rise of that of Alexander.

His victory was made easier by the fact that Persia lost the only general who could oppose the Greeks, namely, Memnon of Rhodes. As long as Alexander was fighting this famous captain, he could take pride in his victory over a foe worthy of him. Rather than risking a pitched battle against the Greeks, Memnon advocated denying them any passage, cutting off their food supplies, and invading their territory, thus forcing them by a vigorous attack to come to the defense of their own country. Alexander was prepared for this, and the troops he had left with Antipater were adequate to guard Greece. But his good fortune suddenly delivered him of this obstacle. At the beginning of an expedition which was already causing concern in all of Greece, Memnon died, and henceforth Alexander swept everything before him.

This prince made his entry into Babylon a spectacle that surpassed anything the world had ever seen. Then, having avenged Greece and subjugated all the lands under Persian rule with incredible speed, he wanted to secure his new empire on all sides or, rather, gratify his ambition by making his name more famous than
Bacchus. Therefore he invaded India, where his armies advanced further than those of that celebrated conqueror. Deserts, rivers, and mountains could not stop him; but he was forced to yield to his dispirited soldiers, who demanded rest. He had to settle for the magnificent monuments he left on the banks of the Araxes; still, he led his army back by a different route, which permitted him to subdue all the lands he encountered.

He returned to Babylon, where he was feared and respected, not like a conqueror but like a god. But the awe-inspiring empire he had conquered did not endure beyond his lifetime, which was very short indeed. At the age of thirty-three, while he was harboring the vastest schemes any man had ever conceived and was justifiably hoping for their successful outcome, he died without having found time to consolidate his affairs, leaving a feeble-minded brother and his own minor children, who were unable to shoulder so great a burden. But what was most baneful to his house and his empire was that he left captains whom he had taught to live only for ambition and war. He foresaw what excesses they were to commit after his death: in an effort to restrain them and for fear that his dispositions would be disregarded, he did not dare designate his successor or his children’s guardian. He only predicted that his friends would celebrate his funeral with savage battles; and he died in the flower of his manhood, filled with the sad images of the confusion that was to follow his death.

And in fact you have seen the partitioning of his empire and the dreadful ruin of his house. Macedonia, his original kingdom, which had been in the possession of his ancestors for so many centuries, was assailed from all sides as an unclaimed inheritance. After falling prey to the strongest for a long time, it finally went to a different family. Thus this great conqueror, the most renowned and illustrious that ever was, was the last king of his dynasty. Had he remained peacefully in Macedonia, the greatness of his empire would not have tempted his captains, and he could have left the kingdom of his fathers to his children. But because he had been too powerful, he brought about the downfall of his entire house. This, then, was the glorious fruit of all his conquests.

His death was the only cause of that great revolution. For it must be said in his praise that if ever there was a man capable of
maintaining so vast an empire—newly conquered though it was—it was Alexander, who was as intelligent as he was courageous. Therefore, the fall of his family must not be imputed to his shortcomings—though he did have some serious shortcomings—but to his mortal nature alone; unless we maintain that a man of his temperament, whose ambition constantly drove him to new schemes, would never have found time to consolidate his affairs.

However that may be, it can be seen from his example that beyond the errors men can avoid—errors, that is, which they commit from rashness or ignorance—there is one irremediable weakness in every human scheme, and that is our mortal nature. This aspect can destroy everything in an instant. That is why we must realize that the most fundamental flaw, if I may so express myself, inherent in all human endeavors is their own frailty; and we must conclude that a ruler who is able to preserve and consolidate a state has reached a higher plane of wisdom than one who is able to conquer and win battles.

There is no need to give you a detailed account of the causes for the fall of the kingdoms fashioned from the ruins of Alexander's empire, namely, Syria, Macedonia, and Egypt. All of them fell because they had to yield to a stronger power, the power of Rome. But if we were to consider the situation of these monarchies toward their end, we could easily recognize the immediate causes for their fall. Among other things, we would see that the most powerful among them, Syria, seriously weakened already by the effeminacy and luxury of the nation, was dealt the final blow by the division among its princes.

Chapter 6

The Roman Empire, and a Short Digression on Carthage and Its Bad Political Organization

Finally, we have come to the great empire which has engulfed all of the world's empires and has given rise to the greatest kingdoms of
our world—the empire whose laws we still respect and which we consequently should know better than any other. You are aware, of course, that I am speaking of the Roman Empire. You have studied the entire course of its long and memorable history. But in order to gain a full understanding of the reasons for the rise of Rome and the great changes it underwent, you should carefully study not only the ways of the Romans but also the ages which gave rise to all the vicissitudes of that vast empire.

The world has never seen a prouder and bolder, but also a more steadfast and tradition-bound, as well as more astute, industrious, and patient people than those of Rome.

These traits created the best militia and the most farsighted, firm, and consistent policy that ever existed.

The very essence of a Roman, so to speak, was his attachment to his liberty and to his country. These feelings reinforced each other; for because he loved his liberty, he also loved his country as a mother who constantly fostered his generosity and his liberty.

To the Romans, as to the Greeks, the word liberty meant a state in which no one was subject to anything but the law and where the law was more powerful than men.

I might add that, although Rome was born under a royal government, the liberty it enjoyed even under its kings is not suitable to a monarchy as we know it. For not only was the king elected, and elected by all the people; it also fell to the assembled people to confirm the laws and to make decisions concerning war and peace. In certain cases, kings deferred even ultimate judgments to the people, as on the occasion when Tullus Hostilius, not daring either to condemn or to absolve Horatius—who was both honored for defeating the Curiatii and despised for killing his sister—had him judged by the people. Thus, properly speaking, the kings were responsible only for the command of the armies, and their authority was restricted to convoking lawful assemblies, where they proposed the measures to be taken, and to maintaining the laws and executing the public decrees.

When Servius Tullius, as you have seen, conceived his scheme of making Rome into a republic, he further increased the love of liberty in a people which already enjoyed it to such a great extent; and you
can imagine how jealously the Romans were to guard it once they had a full measure of it under their consuls.

Even now it is awe-inspiring to read in our histories of the mournful firmness with which the consul Brutus had his two children killed before his own eyes because they had become involved in the surreptitious plotting by which the Tarquins hoped to restore their power in Rome. Think how the people's love of liberty must have been strengthened when they saw the consul sacrificing his own children to liberty! It is no wonder that the Romans treated scornfully the efforts of neighboring peoples to restore the banished Tarquins. In vain King Porsena championed their cause. Though they were near starvation, the Romans gave him to understand by their firmness that they wished, at least, to die as free men. The people were even more adamant than the senate, and all of Rome sent a message to the powerful king, who had already reduced it to extremity, asking him to cease his efforts on behalf of the Tarquins, since Rome, resolved to risk everything for its liberty, would rather yield to an enemy than accept a traitor. Porsena, amazed by the fierce pride of this people and by the more than human intrepidity of certain individuals, decided to let the Romans peacefully enjoy the liberty they had so gallantly defended.

Liberty, then, was a treasure to them, and they preferred it to all the riches of the world. And you have seen how, early in their history and for a long time thereafter, they did not consider poverty an evil. On the contrary, they saw it as a means of preserving their most complete liberty; for who is freer or more independent than a man who is able to make do with very little and who, not expecting anything from anyone's protection or liberality, counts only on his own industry and his own work for his livelihood?

That is what the Romans did. They raised livestock, worked the land, denied themselves as much as they could, and lived by thrift and hard work. That was their life; and that is how they supported their families, whom they brought up to similar occupations.

Livy was correct when he said that there never was a people to hold frugality, thrift, and poverty in esteem for so long a time. The most illustrious senators, in outward appearance at least, differed little from the peasants and exhibited splendor and majesty only on
public occasions and in the senate. It could happen that they were occupied with ploughing or other rustic pursuits when they were summoned to command an army. There are many such examples in Roman history. Curius and Fabricius, the great captains who defeated the rich King Pyrrhus, had only earthenware dishes; and when the Samnites offered Curius gold and silver dishes, he replied that his pleasure was not to have them but to give orders to those who did. After they had received the honors of a triumph and increased the wealth of the republic by the spoils of its enemies, both these men lacked the wherewithal to be buried. Such moderation could still be found at the time of the Punic Wars. In the First Punic War, Regulus, the commander of the Roman armies, asked the senate to release him so that he might return to the cultivation of his farm, which had been deserted during his absence. After the fall of Carthage, there are still great examples of that ancient simplicity. Paulus Aemilius, who increased the public treasury with the rich treasure of the kings of Macedonia, lived according to the rules of ancient frugality and died a poor man. Mummius, who sacked Carthage, took the wealth of that opulent and voluptuous city only for the community. Thus wealth was held in contempt, and the moderation and probity of the Roman generals were greatly admired by the vanquished nations.

And yet, despite their great love of poverty, the Romans spared nothing to make their city great and beautiful. From earliest times on, their public works were of such quality that they had nothing to be ashamed of, even when they had come to dominate the world. The Capitol, built by Tarquinius Superbus, and the Temple of Jupiter he erected within this fortress, were already worthy of the highest god and of the future glory of the Roman people.

Everything else was in keeping with that greatness. The principal temples, the markets, the baths, the public squares, the roads, the aqueducts, and even the cloacas and sewers were laid out with a magnificence that would seem incredible if it were not documented by all the historians and by the remains we can still see. How can I describe the pomp of the triumphal processions, the religious ceremonies, the games and spectacles that were given for the people? In a word, all public services, anything that could give the
people an enhanced feeling for their common country, was performed with all the profusion an age could afford. Thrift was only for private houses. He who earned more income, increased the fertility of his land by his industry and labor, and was the thriftiest and most self-denying considered himself the freest, most powerful, and happiest man.

Nothing could be further from such a way of life than effeminacy. On the contrary, there was a general tendency toward the other extreme—I mean harshness. Thus the ways of the Romans were naturally not only somewhat unpolished and rigid but positively untamed and fierce. But then they made every effort to create good laws for themselves; and the most fiercely independent nation the world had ever seen was also the most obedient to its magistrates and to lawful power.

The militia of such a people was bound to be admirable, since its members combined firm courage and physical vigor with this unfailing and rigorous obedience.

The rules of this militia were harsh but necessary. A victory was hazardous—and often fatal—if it was obtained in defiance of the orders given. It was a capital offense not only to flee, to lay down arms, or to break ranks but even to move at all, as it were, or to advance in the slightest without orders from the general. A man who laid down his arms before the enemy and preferred being captured to dying a glorious death for his country was judged unworthy of help. Usually prisoners were no longer included among the citizens, and they were left to the enemy as members cast off by the republic. You have read in Florus and Cicero the story of Regulus, who persuaded the senate, at the expense of his own life, to relinquish the prisoners to the Carthaginians. During the war with Hannibal, and after the battle of Cannae—at a time, that is, when Rome was drained by so many losses and in dire need of soldiers—the senate decided to break the custom and to arm 8,000 slaves rather than to ransom 8,000 Romans, though this would not have been more expensive than levying the new militia. But even in this difficult situation they felt it necessary to reaffirm the inviolable law that a Roman soldier was expected to either conquer or die.

Under this rule the Roman armies, though defeated and broken,
fought and rallied to the very last; and, as Sallust notes, more Romans were punished for fighting without orders than for breaking ranks or leaving their posts. Thus it was more often necessary to bridle their courage than to rouse them.

To their valor they added intelligence and inventiveness. Not only were they naturally alert and ingenious; they also were marvelously adept at profiting from anything they saw in other countries that could improve their encampments, their order of battle, or even the kinds of weapons they used—in a word, anything pertaining to offense and defense. You have read in Sallust how much the Romans learned from their neighbors, even their enemies. It is well known that the Romans learned the use of galleys from the Carthaginians, whom they defeated by this means, and that every nation they had ever known contributed to the things that finally enabled Rome to conquer all of them.

As a matter of fact, and by the Romans' own admission, it is certain that the Gauls surpassed them in physical strength and did not yield to them in courage. Polybius shows us that, in a decisive engagement, the Gauls, who were superior in numbers, acted with greater boldness than the Romans, determined as these were. Yet in the same engagement we see that the Romans, at a disadvantage in every other way, defeated the Gauls because of their greater skill in the use of weaponry, in the deployment of troops, and in using the vicissitudes of the engagement to their advantage. Some day you will read this in greater detail in Polybius; and, as you yourself have often remarked when reading Caesar's Commentaries, under this great commander the Romans defeated the Gauls by the skillful application of their military science even more than by their valor.

The Macedonians, determined as they were to preserve the ancient order of their militia, which had been established by Philip and Alexander, believed their phalanx to be invincible and could not imagine that the human mind could invent anything more solid. Yet the same Polybius, and Livy after him, demonstrated that, by the very nature of the Roman and Macedonian armies, the latter were bound to be defeated in the long run; for the Macedonian phalanx, which was nothing but a large battalion in the shape of a rectangle with very thick sides, could move only as one body, whereas the
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Roman army, divided into smaller units, was quicker and readier for all kinds of maneuvers.

The Romans, then, invented—or very quickly learned—the art of dividing an army into several battalions and squadrons and of forming reserve units which could easily be dispatched to any breach in need of reinforcement or defense. Imagine a Macedonian phalanx advancing on troops arranged in this manner: this heavy and cumbersome machine would, of course, be terrible if it fell upon an army with all its weight; but, as Polybius puts it, it cannot for long preserve its natural property, meaning its weight and cohesion, because it needs a suitable and, as it were, specially made terrain, and, if it fails to find it, will become embroiled in itself or, rather, break up because of its own movement. Furthermore, it is unable to rally, once a breach has been made. The Roman army, on the other hand, being divided into smaller units, takes advantage of any terrain and can adjust to it; it can be united or separated as required; it can easily spread out or reassemble; it lends itself to separate or concerted actions and to all sorts of deployments and changes, which are executed by the whole army or parts of it, as the need may be. All told, it is capable of more diverse movements and hence of more action and greater strength than the Macedonian phalanx. You may therefore conclude with Polybius that the phalanx was bound to yield to the Roman army and that Macedonia was bound to be defeated.

It is a pleasure for me, Monseigneur, to speak to you about these things, which you have learned so well from your excellent teachers and which you see practiced under the command of Louis the Great in such an admirable manner that I doubt whether the Roman militia ever experienced anything more noble. Not wishing, however, to make any invidious comparison with the French militia, I am happy that you have seen that the Roman militia—with respect to both its skill in profiting from advantageous circumstances and its extreme severity in enforcing orders in wartime—greatly surpassed anything that had been seen in previous centuries.

Having spoken of Macedonia, I no longer have to speak to you of Greece. You have seen that Macedonia had the upper hand there, and this fact will give you the clue to what followed. Athens did not
produce anything after the time of Alexander. The Aetolians, who distinguished themselves in various wars, were unruly rather than freedom-loving, brutal rather than valiant. Sparta had given its last effort to the war when it produced Cleomenes, and the Achaean League when it produced Philopoemen. Rome was not at war with these two great captains; but when the second, who lived at the time of Hannibal and Scipio, saw how the Romans acted in Macedonia, it became clear to him that the liberty of Greece was nearing its end and that he could only try to postpone its demise. Thus the most warlike nations yielded to the Romans. The Romans triumphed over courage when they defeated the Gauls, over courage and art when they defeated the Greeks, and over both of these qualities, sustained by the most artful strategy, when they triumphed over Hannibal: nothing was ever comparable to the glory of their militia.

Therefore, nothing in their government gave them as much pride as their military discipline. They always considered it the cornerstone of their empire. Military discipline was the first thing their state brought forth and the last thing it lost, and this shows how closely it was connected with the organization of their republic.

It was one of the finest features of the Roman militia that spurious valor was not recognized. The spurious maxims about honor which have been the downfall of so many among us were not even known in a nation so eager for glory. It is said of Caesar and Scipio, the two foremost and bravest military commanders of the Romans, that they never exposed themselves without taking precautions and did so only when it was really necessary. The Romans did not expect much from a general who did not know what care he should take to protect his own person; and missions demanding extraordinary daring were reserved for occasions when they really counted. The Romans also were opposed to venturing a battle without proper preparation and to victories that cost too many casualties. Thus there could be nothing bolder, and at the same time more cautious, than the Roman armies.

But since it is not enough to understand the conduct of war if there is no judicious council to decide on its appropriateness and to maintain domestic law and order, I must now acquaint you with the fundamental policies of the Roman senate. Taking it in the best
days of the republic, we must say that there never was an assembly that treated the affairs of state with more maturity, secrecy, and farsightedness or with greater unanimity and zeal for the public welfare.

The Holy Spirit has not been above noting this fact in the Book of Maccabees, which commends the high prudence and vigorous leadership of that distinguished body, where only knowledge conferred authority and where all the members worked together for public ends without partiality or jealousy.

With regard to secrecy, Livy gives us an illustrious example: while Rome was contemplating a war against Perseus, Eumenes, king of Pergamum, an enemy of that prince, came to Rome to form an alliance against him with the senate. He made his proposals to the full assembly, and the matter was settled by the vote of a body numbering 300 men. Who would believe that the secret was kept and that the deliberation did not become known until four years later, when the war was over? The most astonishing aspect of this is the fact that Perseus' emissaries were in Rome to keep an eye on Eumenes. All the Greek and Asian cities, who feared that they might become involved in that quarrel, had also sent theirs; and all of them endeavored to find out about a matter of such consequence. Yet, in the midst of so many skillful negotiators, the senate remained impenetrable. To enforce secrecy, it was never necessary to resort to threats of torture or to prohibit dealings with foreigners under high penalties. Secrecy seemed to impose itself by its own importance.

It is a very curious aspect of the conduct of Rome that the people almost always eyed the senate with suspicion and yet deferred to it on any momentous occasion, especially when there was great danger. Then all eyes turned to that judicious body, awaiting its resolutions like so many oracles.

Long experience had taught the Romans that here was the source of all the decisions that had saved the state. It was the senate which had preserved the ancient tenets and the very spirit, as it were, of the republic. Plans which could be seen to be effective over long periods of time took shape here; and, what was most impressive in the senate, sweeping measures were taken only in the most pressing circumstances.
The republic was in a pitiful state, still weak and in its infancy, and both divided within by the tribunes and threatened without by the Volsci, when Coriolanus in his anger plotted against his country; but it was precisely under these circumstances that the senate showed its greatest strength. The Volsci, hitherto always defeated by the Romans, hoped to take revenge under the leadership of the greatest Roman, a man of great ability in war, great liberality, and strong feelings against injustice but, at the same time, a very harsh, difficult, and embittered man. They wanted to become citizens by force; and, having made extensive conquests and subjugated the surrounding countryside, they threatened to devastate the country unless their demands were met. Rome had neither army nor officers; yet in that pitiful state, when it had to fear the worst, the senate did not hesitate to issue that bold decree stating that Rome would rather perish than yield anything to an armed foe and that an equitable settlement would be found as soon as the troops had been removed.

Coriolanus' mother, who was sent to change his mind, reasoned with him, among other things, as follows: "Do you not know the Romans? Do you not know, my son, that only entreaties will help you, and that you will gain nothing, great or small, by force?" The uncompromising Coriolanus gave in, but he paid with his life; and the Volsci chose other generals. Still, the senate adhered firmly to the course it had taken; and its decree not to yield to armed threats became a fundamental law of Roman policy from which the Romans did not depart in a single instance as long as the republic existed. Even in the most hopeless circumstances, the Romans never so much as listened to the voice of weakness. If they were always more amenable in victory than in defeat, it was because the senate adhered so firmly to the ancient tenets of the republic and knew how to rally the rest of the citizens behind it.

From the same spirit came the many resolutions of the senate to overcome the enemy by open strength rather than by recourse to stratagems and subterfuges, even of the kind permissible in war. The senate took this course, not from a false sense of honor or from ignorance of the rules of warfare, but because it felt that the most effective way to break the pride of an enemy was to rob him of all illusions of strength, so that in his utter defeat he would see his only salvation in the victor's clemency.
In this manner the high reputation of the Roman armies came to be accepted throughout the world. The widespread belief that there was no resisting them caused their enemies to lay down their arms and was an invaluable help to their allies. You yourself see the benefits of a similar reputation of the French armies; the world, astounded by the King’s exploits, confesses that he, and he alone, will set the limits of his conquests.

The forceful conduct of the Roman senate against foreign enemies was matched by its admirable conduct of internal affairs. At times the judicious senators treated the people with appropriate leniency, as in one case of dire need, when they not only taxed themselves higher than others, as they always did, but also exempted the poor from all taxes, adding that “the poor pay a sufficient tribute to the republic by raising their children.”

This ordinance proved that the senate knew what constitutes the true wealth of a state. This noble attitude, and other expressions of paternal solicitude, impressed themselves so greatly upon the minds of the people that they learned to tolerate the greatest hardships for the sake of their country.

But when the people deserved disapproval, the senate expressed this also with a severity and forcefulness worthy of that distinguished body. This happened in the controversy between the people of Ardea and Aricia. This story is memorable and deserves to be told to you. These two peoples were at war over lands that were claimed by both. Weary of fighting, they finally agreed to submit to the judgment of the Roman people, whose impartiality was greatly admired by all its neighbors. An assembly of the tribes was convoked, and when the people had learned from the discussion that the land under contention rightfully belonged to them, they adjudicated it to themselves. The senate, though convinced that the people had, in fact, judged wisely, felt it was intolerable that the Romans should belie their natural generosity and should basely betray the expectations of their neighbors, who had submitted to their arbitration. No effort was spared to prevent a judgment setting such a pernicious precedent—a judgment by which the judges would take over the lands contested by the parties. When the decision was handed down, the people of Ardea, whose claim seemed the better founded, were incensed at its iniquity and prepared to take armed
revenge. The senate was perfectly willing to declare publicly that it was as shocked as they were by the wrong they had suffered; that, to its regret, it was unable to reverse a judgment by the people; but that if, after this offense, they were still willing to entrust to the senate the compensation to which they were surely entitled, it would make strenuous efforts to satisfy them completely. The people of Ardea trusted its word. Shortly thereafter, they were faced with a difficulty that could have utterly ruined their city. Upon orders from the senate they received such prompt aid that they felt more than compensated for the loss of their lands and had only gratitude for such faithful friends. But the senate was not satisfied until it had returned the lands the Roman people had appropriated and thereby abolished the memory of this disgraceful judgment.

I shall not attempt here to tell you how many similar actions the senate took—how often it handed over to the enemy perjured citizens who tried to break their word or went back on their oaths, or how often it condemned bad decisions that yielded good results. I can only tell you that this august body never inspired the Roman people to anything but noble actions and that it brought its lofty ideas to bear on every issue, being persuaded that a good name is the strongest support of a state.

It is obvious that in a nation directed with such wisdom, rewards and punishments were meted out with great care. Service and zeal for the public welfare were, of course, the surest way to advancement in office. But military actions also brought many rewards, which, though no burden to the public, were infinitely precious to those who earned them because they were a sign of glory, which this warlike people cherished above anything. A wreath, sometimes of thin gold but more often of oak, laurel, or some other, even more ordinary, plant, became invaluable to the soldiers, who knew no nobler reputation than that of valor and no higher distinction than to be known for glorious deeds. The senate, whose commendation was considered a reward, knew when to praise and when to disapprove. Immediately following a battle, the consuls and other generals publicly meted out to the soldiers and officers the praise or the criticism they deserved. But they themselves anxiously awaited the judgment of the senate, which judged the quality of the strategy
without being impressed by a successful outcome. Praise was precious because it was given with understanding; criticism wounded generous hearts to the quick and kept weaker hearts within their duty. The punishments following bad conduct kept the soldiers in fear, while rewards and well-deserved glory raised them above themselves.

If a government can give its people a taste for glory, patient labor, the greatness of the nation, and patriotism, it can claim that it has constituted its state in such a way that it will surely bring forth great men. There is no doubt that great men are an empire’s strength. Nature does not fail to endow all nations with lofty minds and hearts, but it needs help in developing them. They are developed and perfected by the strong convictions and the lofty outlook of the community, which are imperceptibly passed on to all its members. Why is it that our nobility is so valiant in battle and so bold in all its ventures? It is because it was taught from childhood on, and confirmed in this opinion by the unanimous feeling of the nation, that lack of courage degrades a gentleman and makes him unworthy of the light of day. All the Romans were brought up in this attitude, and the people were vying with the nobility as to whose conduct conformed most to these forceful maxims. In the best days of Rome, even children were trained for war; the greatness of the Roman name was all that counted. They had to go to war whenever the republic summoned them, constantly bear its hardships, obey without a murmur, die or conquer. Fathers who failed to bring up their children on such maxims, and in a way that would prepare them to serve the state, were brought to trial by the magistrates and convicted of an offense against the public. Once such a course is taken, great men will bring forth others; and if Rome has produced more of them than any other city before it, it was not by coincidence but rather because Rome was organized in the manner we have just seen and had become temperamentally fit, as it were, to engender many heroes.

A state that is made up of such citizens also, and at the same time, feels it is incomparably strong and can never be completely bereft. Thus we see that the Romans never gave up all hope of prevailing: not when Porsena, king of Etruria, starved them within their walls;
nor when the Gauls, having burnt their city, completely overran their countryside and held them captive in the Capitol; nor when Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, who was as clever as he was bold, frightened them with his elephants and routed all of their armies; nor even when Hannibal, who had already defeated them a number of times, again killed more than 500,000 of their men and their best militia in the battle of Cannae.

At that time, the consul Terentius Varro, who was responsible for losing that battle, was received in Rome as if he had won it simply because, in that great misfortune, he had not given up hope for the republic. The senate publicly thanked him for this, and it was decided on the spot to adhere to the ancient maxims and not to hear any proposals for peace in this predicament. The enemy was astounded, and the people rallied, believing that there were secret resources known only to the senate.

And indeed, the senate's steadfastness in the face of this chain of misfortunes came not only from a stubborn determination never to yield to fate but also from a profound knowledge as to the strength of Rome and the strength of the enemy. Rome knew through its census—that is, the register of its citizens, which had been painstakingly kept up ever since Servius Tullius—exactly how many citizens capable of bearing arms were available and how many youths could be expected to come of age every day. Rome could thus husband its strength against an enemy coming from the coast of Africa and therefore bound to be destroyed by time itself in a strange land, where help was very slow in coming and where even victories were fatal by their high cost in lives. That is why, however serious the losses suffered by Rome, the senate, always knowing how many good soldiers were left, had only to bargain for time and never gave in to despair. When the defeat at Cannae and the ensuing revolts had sapped the republic's strength to such a point that it could hardly have defended itself if the enemy had pressed on, the senate maintained itself by sheer courage and, giving no thought to its own losses, began to observe the victor's conduct. As soon as it became clear that Hannibal, instead of pursuing his victory, was spending considerable time just savoring it, the senate took heart and realized that an enemy incapable of seizing his good fortune,
who permitted himself to be blinded by his great success, was not born to vanquish the Romans. From this point on the Roman sallies became bolder day by day, and Hannibal, for all his skill, courage, and success, was unable to withstand them.

It is easy to judge from this example alone who was ultimately destined to prevail. Hannibal, inflated by his great exploits, believed that it would be very easy to take Rome, and slackened. Rome, in the face of its misfortunes, lost neither its courage nor its self-confidence and made greater efforts than ever before. Immediately after the defeat of Cannae, it besieged Syracuse and Capua, the former for its failure to honor a treaty, the latter for a rebellion. Syracuse was unable to defend itself by its fortifications or by the inventions of Archimedes. Nor could Hannibal's victorious army help Capua. On the contrary, the Romans also forced this captain to raise the siege of Nola. Shortly thereafter, the Carthaginians defeated and killed the two Scipios in Spain. No event of that entire war had been as sorely felt by the Romans or as disastrous to them. This loss inspired them to make the supreme effort. Young Scipio, the son of one of the generals, not satisfied with restoring the Roman position in Spain, took the Carthaginian war to their own city and dealt the empire its last blow.

The condition of that city was such that it was unable to offer Scipio the resistance Hannibal had encountered at Rome; and you will believe this as soon as you have taken even a superficial look at the organization of the two cities.

Rome was in full vigor; Carthage, which had begun to decline, was maintained by Hannibal alone. The Roman senate stood united; and it was precisely at this time that it acted with the unanimity which is so highly praised in the Book of Maccabees. The senate of Carthage was riven by old, irreconcilable factions, and the loss of Hannibal would have been the joy of the vast majority of the great lords. Rome, still a poor and agricultural country, kept an admirable militia, which aspired only to glory and sought only to heighten Rome's reputation. All the citizens of Carthage, having become wealthy through its commerce, cared only about their wealth and were in no way trained for war. While almost all of the Roman armies were composed of citizens, Carthage, as a matter of prin-
ciple, had only foreign troops, which are often as dangerous to those who pay them as to those against whom they are employed.

These shortcomings were the result partly of the original laws and customs of the republic of Carthage and partly of later developments. Carthage had always loved wealth; and Aristotle accuses it of attaching so much importance to wealth that its citizens were led to place it above virtue. Hence a republic very well suited for war, as Aristotle also notes, came to neglect the training for it. Since the philosopher does not criticize Carthage for its use of a foreign militia, we can assume that this shortcoming developed much later. But wealth naturally leads a trading nation to it: everyone wants to enjoy his wealth and believes that his money can buy everything. Carthage felt strong because it had many soldiers, but it had failed to learn from the frequent revolts of the recent past that a state is most unfortunate if it can maintain itself only with the help of foreigners, in whom it will find neither zeal, nor reliability, nor obedience.

Nonetheless, the great genius of Hannibal appeared to have remedied the shortcomings of his republic. It does seem prodigious that, in a foreign country and for a full sixteen years, he was never faced with a rebellion—or even so much as a murmur—in an army composed exclusively of foreigners who, unable to understand one another, were perfectly attuned to understanding their general. But Hannibal's skill could not uphold Carthage when it was attacked within its walls by a general of Scipio's stature and found itself lacking in strength. It was necessary to recall Hannibal, whose remaining troops had been weakened, not so much by the victories of the Romans as by their own; and the long voyage completed their ruin. This is how Hannibal was defeated; and Carthage, which had once dominated all of Africa, the Mediterranean, and world commerce, was made to bear the yoke under which Scipio placed it.

Such was the glorious result of Rome's patience. Men who were made daring and strong by their misfortunes rightly believed that all could be saved as long as hope was not lost. By the same token, Polybius rightly concluded that Carthage was bound to yield to Rome in the end by the very nature of the two republics.
Chapter 6: The Roman Empire

If the Romans had used their great political and military excellence only to maintain peace in their state or to protect their allies, as they claimed, we should have to commend them for their probity as much as for their valor and prudence. But once they had come to enjoy the sweet taste of victory, they wanted everything to give way to them and laid claim to nothing less than giving laws to all their neighbors at first and, eventually, to the whole world.

For this purpose, they knew very well how to keep their allies and unite them among themselves and also how to sow discord and jealousy among their enemies, to gain knowledge of their plans, to discover their secret alliances, and to forestall their initiatives.

They watched not only the maneuvers of their enemies but also every move of their neighbors, since it was their foremost aim either to divide or in some other way to counterbalance any power that became too dangerous or created too great an obstacle to their conquests.

Therefore the Greeks were mistaken when they imagined, at the time of Polybius, that Rome was becoming great by chance rather than by design. They felt too strongly about their own nation and were too jealous when they saw others surpassing them; or, perhaps, seeing the great strides of Rome from their distance without understanding how this great body could be made to move, they were inclined—as men will be—to attribute to chance events whose causes were unknown to them. But Polybius, whose close acquaintance with the Romans afforded him a penetrating insight into the mainsprings of their actions and who observed the Roman policies during the Punic Wars at close range, was more impartial than the rest of the Greeks and understood that the Roman conquests were the result of a well-thought-out design. For he saw how the Romans, from their position in the center of the Mediterranean, surveyed all the lands surrounding it, as far as Spain and Syria; how they watched the developments there and advanced step by step at regular intervals; how they consolidated their position before every move; how they avoided becoming involved in too many issues at once; how they concealed their intentions for a time and struck at the appropriate moment; how they waited until Hannibal was.
defeated before disarming King Philip of Macedon, who had favored him; how, once they had become involved, they were never weary or satisfied until the matter was entirely settled; how they did not give the Macedonians a moment to collect themselves; how, having defeated them, they promulgated a decree giving the Greeks—a captive nation for so long—the liberty they no longer hoped to obtain; and how this was the means of spreading terror, on the one hand, and veneration for their name, on the other. All this was enough to convince him that the Romans were about to conquer the world, not by chance, but by design.

Polybius saw this at the time when Rome was expanding. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who wrote after the empire had been established and in the Augustan Age, came to the same conclusion by retracing to their beginnings the ancient institutions of the Roman Republic, which, by their very nature, are so conducive to the formation of an invincible and dominant people. You are sufficiently acquainted with them to share the views of these two judicious historians and to disagree with Plutarch, who, in his passion for his Greek compatriots, attributed to fortune alone the greatness of Rome, and to virtue alone that of Alexander.

But the more these historians uncover the design behind the conquests of Rome, the more they uncover the inherent injustice of these conquests. This vice is inseparable from the desire to dominate, and it is therefore justly condemned by the rules of the Gospel. But philosophy alone is sufficient to make us understand that strength is given to us to preserve what belongs to us and not to usurp what belongs to others. Cicero recognized this, and his rules of warfare are a manifest condemnation of Roman conduct.

It must be said that the Romans seemed to be fairly equitable in the early times of their republic. They themselves seemed to want to bridle their warlike temper by keeping it within the bounds of fairness. What could be nobler and more righteous than the College of Fetiales, whether it was founded by Numa, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus tells us, or by Ancus Martius, as Livy claims? It was the task of this council to decide whether a war was just. Before the senate proposed war, and before the people decided on it, this inquest into its equity was always held. When it was decided that the war was just, the senate took steps to prepare for it; but before going
any further, a formal demand for the restitution of what had been unjustly usurped was always sent to the usurper, and the final step was taken only after all peaceful means had been exhausted. Here was a righteous institution if ever there was one; and it puts to shame the Christians who have not been able to learn charity and peace from a God who came into the world to bring peace to all mankind. But what is the use of the best institutions if they degenerate into empty ceremonies? The sweet taste of victory and domination soon corrupted the rectitude which natural equity had given the Romans. The debates of the Fetiales came to be looked upon as a useless formality; and although they sometimes treated their greatest enemies with great fairness, even clemency, ambition usually overruled justice in their decisions.

Furthermore, their injustice was all the more dangerous since they were able to disguise it with specious pretexts of impartiality; and they imperceptibly subjugated kings and nations under the guise of protecting and defending them.

We must add that they were cruel to those who resisted them. This quality comes easily to conquerors because they know that terror counts for more than half in their conquests. Must we domenate at that price, and is it so sweet to rule that men are willing to pay for this pleasure with inhuman acts? In their desire to spread terror wherever they went, the Romans made it a practice to leave behind them sights of dreadful cruelty in the cities they had taken and to appear pitiless to those who did not yield at once. Not even kings were spared but were put to death in inhuman ways, having first been led in chains in triumphant processions and dragged behind chariots like so many slaves.

But if they were cruel and unjust in order to conquer, they governed conquered nations with moderation. They tried to make their rule palatable to the conquered nations, feeling that this was the best way to safeguard their conquests. The senate kept the governors in check and gave justice to the people. This body was looked upon as the asylum of the oppressed. For this reason upheavals and violence were unknown to the Romans until the last years of the republic. Until that time, the moderation of their magistrates was admired throughout the world.

Thus they cannot be called brutal and rapacious conquerors like
those who are interested only in pillage and who establish their rule on the ruins of vanquished countries. The Romans improved all the countries they conquered, because they developed justice, agriculture, commerce, and even the arts and sciences, once they had become acquainted with them.

This is what gave them the most flourishing and solid, as well as the most extensive, empire that had ever existed. They held sway over all the lands and all the seas from the Euphrates and the Tanais to the Pillars of Hercules and the Atlantic: placed in the middle of the Mediterranean, as in a central position, they dominated the entire area of that sea, including the length and breadth of all the surrounding states, and controlled it tightly to hold their empire together. To this day it is awesome to think that nations which are now redoubtable kingdoms—all of Gaul, all of Spain, almost all of Great Britain, Illyricum as far as the Danube, Germany as far as the Elbe, Africa as far as its dreadful and forbidding deserts, Greece, Thrace, Syria, Egypt, all the kingdoms of Asia Minor, and all those situated between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, as well as others I may forget or do not wish to mention—were nothing but Roman provinces for several centuries. All the nations of our world, even the most uncivilized among them, respected the power of Rome, and to almost all of them its rule brought law and civilized behavior.

It does seem prodigious that in so vast an empire, embracing many nations and kingdoms, the people were so obedient and revolts so rare. The Romans had various ways of dealing with this, which I should briefly explain to you.

The establishment of Roman colonies everywhere in the empire had two very beneficial consequences: one was that it relieved the metropolis of a great number of citizens, most of them poor; the other was that it guarded the principal outposts and gradually acquainted foreign peoples with Roman ways.

These colonies retained all their privileges, were never separated from the main body of the republic, and populated all of the Roman Empire.

But aside from the colonies, a great many cities obtained the right
of Roman citizenship for their inhabitants; and, once their own interest coincided with that of the ruling nation, they kept the neighboring nations under control.

This went so far that, in the end, all the subjects of the empire felt themselves to be Romans. The public functions of this victorious people were gradually also given to the conquered peoples. The senate was opened to them, and they could aspire to even the highest offices. Thus Rome’s lenience molded all nations into a single nation, and Rome came to be looked upon as the common fatherland.

Navigation and commerce benefited greatly from this marvelous union of all the world’s nations under one empire. Roman society included the whole world; and, with the exception of a few frontiers which were occasionally disturbed by their neighbors, the world enjoyed a profound tranquillity. Neither Greece, nor Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, nor, indeed, most of the other provinces have ever lived in peace except under the Roman Empire; and it is easy to understand that such friendly exchanges among nations made for continued harmony and obedience throughout the empire.

The legions which had been sent out to guard the frontiers not only defended Rome against outside aggression but also consolidated the interior. Rome was not in the habit of providing its strongholds with citadels and its frontiers with fortifications, and I see little evidence of such precautions before Valentinian I. Up to that time the strength and security of the country were exclusively entrusted to the troops, which were placed in such a way that they would be of help to one another. Furthermore, they were supposed to live in camps at all times, so that they were no inconvenience to the towns; and military discipline did not permit the soldiers to roam the countryside. Thus the Roman armies did not interfere with commerce or agriculture. Their camps were like towns in many ways, the only difference being that there was constant hard work and that discipline was more severe and authority more strict. They were always ready to react to the slightest unrest; and all that was needed to keep the inhabitants within bounds was to let them know that this invincible militia was in the area.
But nothing was as conducive to the peace of the empire as the proper administration of justice. This administration had been founded under the ancient republic, and emperors and sages continued to interpret justice by the same principles. Therefore all nations, even the most uncivilized, looked upon it with admiration; and it was mainly for this reason that the Romans were deemed worthy of ruling the world. If, moreover, the laws of Rome seemed so venerable that we still bow to them, even though the empire has long since fallen, it is because they are based throughout on common sense, which rules all of human life, and because there is nothing that applies more nobly the principles of natural equity.

Despite the greatness of the Roman name, despite the profound policies and all the noble institutions of that famous republic, it carried within it the seeds of its destruction, namely, the constant jealousy directed by the people against the senate or, rather, by the plebeians against the patricians. This distinction went back to Romulus. It was natural for the kings to need outstanding men whom they could attach to their person and through whom they could rule the rest of the people. For this reason, Romulus chose the Fathers and constituted them as the senate. They were called thus because of their dignity and their age, and the patrician families of Rome are descended from them. Furthermore, although Romulus granted the people a certain authority, he also subordinated the plebeians to the patricians in a number of ways; and this subordination, which was necessary under the monarchy, was preserved not only under the kings but also under the republic. The patricians furnished all the senators. The patricians held all the offices, commands, and dignities, even in the priesthood; and the Fathers, who had been the authors of liberty, were unwilling to give up their prerogatives. But jealousy soon arose between the two estates. For there is no need here to speak of the Roman knights—a third and, as it were, intermediary estate between the patricians and the common people, which sometimes sided with one, sometimes with the other. Between these two estates, then, jealousy arose and flared up on various occasions; but the underlying cause that kept it alive was love of liberty.
It was the fundamental tenet of the republic to regard liberty as an integral part of being a Roman. A people nurtured in that spirit, nay more, a people born to command others and therefore so nobly called a king-people by Virgil, was unwilling to accept any laws but its own.

The senate's authority was deemed necessary to tone down the popular assemblies, which would have been too unruly without that calming influence. Nevertheless, the people did have the right to command, to make laws, and to decide matters pertaining to war and peace. Enjoying the most essential rights of royalty, the people somehow assumed the attitude of a king. It was willing enough to be advised, but refused to be forced, by the senate. Any seemingly overbearing action, anything outstanding, in a word, anything that offended or seemed to offend the equality which a free society demands, became suspect to this touchy people. Their love of liberty, of glory and conquests, made such men difficult to control; and the very audacity with which they attempted the greatest things in foreign affairs was bound to bring internal divisiveness.

In its jealous attachment to liberty, Rome thus saw that the love of liberty, on which its state had been founded, created division among all the estates composing it. Hence the furious rivalry between the senate and the people, between the patricians and the plebeians, the former always claiming that excessive liberty will in the end destroy itself, and the latter, by contrast, always fearful that authority, ever increasing by its own nature, might eventually degenerate into tyranny.

Between these two extremes a people so wise in other ways was unable to find a middle course. Personal interest, by which even measures originally taken in the public interest were carried to excess on either side, did not permit Rome to remain within the bounds of moderation. Ambitious and unruly elements fostered these jealousies for their own ends. Smoldering or openly displayed at various times, but always alive in the Roman consciousness, these feelings eventually caused the great change occurring at the time of Caesar and then those changes that followed.
Chapter 7

The Progressive Changes of Rome Explained

It will be easy for you to find the reasons for all these changes if, once you have fundamentally understood the character of the Romans and the organization of their republic, you then proceed to observe a certain number of principal events which, though occurring in different ages, are obviously related. I have brought them together here for the sake of convenience.

Romulus, brought up in war and reputed to be the son of Mars, built Rome and populated it with such people as he could find—shepherds, slaves, and thieves, who had come to seek independence and impunity in the asylum he had opened to all comers; and some of those who came were of more honorable estate and condition.

He taught this uncivilized people to use force in all its undertakings, and even the women they married were obtained by this means.

Gradually he established order and curbed their spirit by the most excellent laws. He began with religion, since he considered it the foundation of the state. He made religion as serious, weighty, and modest as the darkness of this idolatrous age would permit. Foreign religions and sacrifices not established by Roman custom were prohibited. Later, this law was dispensed with; but it was Romulus' intention to observe it, and parts of it were permanently retained.

From among the entire population he chose the very best to form the public council, which he called the senate. He appointed two or three hundred senators, whose number was increased later. This was the origin of the noble, or patrician, families. The others called themselves plebeians, that is, the common people.

The senate was to examine all public issues and to make recommendations. Some of them it settled by its own authority, with the king; but the most general issues were brought before the people, who made the decision.

In an assembly which experienced the sudden outbreak of a great storm, Romulus was torn to pieces by the senators, who found him too overbearing; this was the earliest manifestation of the spirit of independence in that estate.
In order to appease the people, who loved their prince, and to create a great image of the city’s founder, the senators spread the notion that the gods had taken him into the heavens, and they proceeded to have altars built to him.

In a long and undisturbed period of peace, Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, completed the formation of the Roman character and the establishment of religion on the foundations laid by Romulus.

Tullus Hostilius instituted severe regulations to create military discipline and the rules of warfare, to which his successor, Ancus Marcius, added religious ceremonies designed to make the militia righteous and pious.

After him, Tarquinius the Elder, who needed loyal followers, increased the number of senators to three hundred, where it remained for several centuries. He also began the great works destined for the use of the public.

Servius Tullius planned the establishment of a republic ruled by two magistrates with a tenure of one year, to be chosen by the people.

Hatred for Tarquinius Superbus led to the abolition of the monarchy, and dreadful maledictions were pronounced against anyone who might try to restore it. Brutus made the people swear that they would never give up their liberty.

The guidelines of Servius Tullius were followed when the change was made. The consuls, chosen by the people from among the patricians, had the power of kings, except that the two of them took regular turns at commanding, and two new ones had to be chosen every year.

Collatinus was elected consul with Brutus as the cofounder of liberty. Although he was the husband of Lucretia, whose death had precipitated the change, and although he was more interested than anyone in avenging the outrage to which she had been subjected, he became suspect as a member of the royal family and was exiled.

When Valerius, who had been put in his place, returned from an expedition which had delivered his country from the Veii and the Etruscans, the people suspected him of tyrannical leanings because he was building a house on a promontory. He not only discontinued the building; he became the champion of the people, despite his
patrician origin, and established the law permitting an appeal to the people, which made it the final judge in certain cases.

This new law weakened the consular power from the outset and increased the people's rights.

The fact that the rich could bodily seize the poor for debts aroused the people against the power of the consuls and the senate and led to the famous march to the Aventine Hill.

Liberty was the only topic in these assemblies, and the Roman people did not feel free as long as they did not have legal means for resisting the senate. They obtained special magistrates, called tribunes of the people, whose duty it was to convoke assemblies of the people and to take up their cause against consular authority through either opposition or appeal.

These magistrates wanted to gain authority and therefore fostered the division between the two estates. They constantly flattered the people by proposing that the lands of conquered nations—or the revenues from their sale—be distributed among the citizens.

The senate always firmly opposed such laws as ruinous to the state and wanted to appropriate the proceeds from these lands to the public treasury.

The people let themselves be guided by these seditious magistrates; yet they were still fair-minded enough to admire the strength of great men who opposed them.

For such domestic dissension the senate found no better cure than constantly to provoke new occasions for foreign wars. These kept the dissension within bounds and united the two estates in the defense of their country.

As soon as the wars succeeded, and conquest upon conquest was made, the old rivalry reawakened.

Weary of their division, which threatened to ruin the state, both parties finally agreed to make laws guaranteeing tranquillity to both of them and to establish the equality which must exist in a free city.

Each of the estates claimed that it had the right to make these laws.

Their rivalry, further inflamed by such claims, led them to decide unanimously that a delegation should be sent to Greece to study the institutions of that country's cities, especially the laws of Solon, which were the most favorable to the people. The Laws of the Twelve
Tables were adopted; but the decemvirs who had formulated them were stripped of their power when it was found that they had misused it.

While everything was quiet, and while such equitable laws seemed to create lasting public tranquillity, new unrest broke out because of new demands of the people, who aspired to public offices and consulships, hitherto the exclusive domain of the first estate.

A law to make them eligible was proposed. Instead of lowering the consulship, the senate agreed to create three new magistrates under the name of military tribunes, and the people were made eligible for this office.

Satisfied with establishing its right, the people used its victory with moderation and continued for some time to entrust the command exclusively to the patricians.

After much debate, the consulate was reinstituted, and public office gradually came to be held by both estates, although the patricians always fared better in the elections.

More wars followed, and, 500 years after the founding of Rome, the Romans subjugated their principal enemies, the Cisapine Gauls, as well as all of Italy.

Then the Punic Wars began, and the situation became so critical that neither of the two rival nations believed it could survive unless the other was crushed.

Rome almost succumbed; and in this misfortune the perseverance and wisdom of the senate were its strongest support.

Finally Rome's patience was rewarded: Hannibal was defeated, and Carthage was subjugated by Scipio Africanus.

In the 200 years after this victory, Rome expanded prodigiously on sea and on land, bringing the whole world under its power.

In these times, and especially after the fall of Carthage, public offices, which had become more prestigious and also more profitable with the growth of the empire, were passionately sought after. Ambitious candidates did everything to flatter the people; and the relations between the estates, which had been improved by their common pursuit of the Punic Wars, became more strained than ever. The Gracchi created the greatest upheaval, and their seditious proposals were the beginning of all the ensuing civil wars.

Now the people armed themselves and began to act with open
force in their assemblies, whereas hitherto they had sought to win only by lawful means and by safeguarding freedom of opinion.

The wise conduct of the senate, together with further wars, mitigated these disorders.

The plebeian Marius, a great war leader, used his martial eloquence and seditious speeches, in which he constantly attacked the arrogance of the nobility, to rekindle the people's jealousy and thus ascended to the highest offices.

The patrician Sulla took the leadership of the opposing faction and became Marius' rival.

Maneuver and corruption could achieve everything in Rome. Patriotism and respect for the law were completely extinguished.

As a crowning misfortune, the Asian wars acquainted the Romans with luxury and increased their desire for possessions.

In these times the generals began to attach their soldiers to their person, whereas hitherto they had been seen only as symbols of public authority.

In the war against Mithradates, Sulla permitted his soldiers to enrich themselves in order to win them over.

Marius, on his part, promised his followers a share of money and land.

Having thus gained control over their troops, they engaged in a fierce struggle—one of them under the pretext of defending the senate, the other in the name of the people—which they carried into the very heart of the city.

The faction of Marius and the people was utterly defeated, and Sulla assumed sovereign power under the title of dictator.

He ordered a terrible blood bath and treated the people harshly in deeds and words, even in lawful assemblies.

Unchallenged, and at the height of his power, he retired to private life, but not without having demonstrated that the Roman people could tolerate a master.

Pompey, who had been raised by Sulla, inherited a considerable share of his power. He alternately flattered the people and the senate to consolidate his own position, but inclination and self-interest eventually attached him to the latter.

Having defeated the pirates, Spain, and all of the East, he became all-powerful in the republic and, above all, in the senate.
Chapter 7: The Progressive Changes of Rome

Caesar, who wanted to be at least his equal, took the people's side. Following in the footsteps of the most seditious tribunes during his consulate, he proposed free distributions of land and laws as favorable to the people as he could make them.

The conquest of the Gauls brought Caesar's prestige and power to their highest point.

He and Pompey joined forces because it was in their mutual interest, but they soon fell out because they were jealous of each other. Civil war broke out. Pompey believed that his name alone could sustain him and became careless. Caesar, active and discerning, won the victory and assumed power.

He made various attempts to see whether the Romans could be made to tolerate the name of king, but this only served to make him hateful. In order to deepen the public hatred, the senate conferred on him honors hitherto unheard of in Rome, so that he was assassinated as a tyrant in the midst of the senate.

Antony, Caesar's creature, who happened to be consul at the time of his death, stirred up the people against his murderers and tried to take advantage of the ensuing disorders to usurp the sovereign power. Lepidus, who had also held a high military post under Caesar, tried to support him. Finally, young Caesar, at the age of nineteen, undertook to avenge his father's death and sought a way to succeed to his power.

He was able to use the enemies of his house and even his competitors for his own ends.

His father's troops went over to him, impressed by the name of Caesar and by the prodigious sums he gave them.

The senate had become powerless; everything was done by force and by the soldiers who were at the service of him who paid the most.

In this baneful situation, the triumvirate did away with all the courage and opposition to tyranny that were left in Rome. Caesar and Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius, and liberty died with them. The victors, having first eliminated the weak Lepidus, made various agreements and divisions in which Caesar, being the more astute of the two, always received the better share, so that he brought Rome over to his side and gained the upper hand. Antony tried in vain to recover his position, and the Battle of Actium placed the entire empire in the power of Augustus Caesar.
Weary and exhausted by this long period of civil war and in need of tranquillity, Rome was forced to renounce its liberty. The house of the Caesars took over the command of the armies under the resounding imperial title and exercised absolute power.

Under the Caesars, Rome was more interested in self-preservation than in expansion and made hardly any more conquests than were needed to drive away the barbarians who were poised to invade the empire.

Upon Caligula's death the senate was ready to restore liberty and the consular power, but this was prevented by the soldiers, who demanded a permanent chief and wanted him to be the master.

During the upheavals caused by Nero's violence, each of the armies elected an emperor; and the soldiers realized that it was up to them to bestow the empire.

They were brazen enough to sell it publicly to the highest bidder and henceforth refused to bear the yoke of any chief. The loss of obedience led to the loss of discipline. In vain good princes made every effort to preserve it; their zealous endeavors to uphold the ancient order of the Roman militia served only to expose them to the fury of the soldiery.

Whenever there was a change of emperors, and each army proceeded to create its own emperor, civil war and dreadful massacres ensued.

In this manner the empire was crippled by the slackening of discipline and was at the same time weakened by continuous domestic strife.

Amid all this disorder, respect for the majesty of the Roman name declined. The Parthians, who had so often been defeated, made themselves feared on the eastern frontiers under the ancient name of Persians, which they again assumed.

To the north, the nations who inhabited cold and uncultivated regions coveted the beauty and richness of the lands in the empire and tried to enter it on all sides.

One man alone could no longer bear the burden of so vast and beleaguered an empire.

The prodigious number of wars and the mood of the soldiers, who insisted on being led by emperors and caesars, made it necessary to create a number of them.
Since the emperorship itself was regarded as hereditary property, it was natural that the number of emperors increased with the number of children these princes had.

Marcus Aurelius made his brother coemperor. Severus made his two sons emperors. Circumstances obliged Diocletian to divide the East and the West between himself and Maximianus; and since the pressure was still too great, each of them eased it by creating two caesars.

So great a number of emperors and caesars burdened the state with excessive expense; the unity of the empire was rent; and more civil wars ensued.

Constantine, the son of Emperor Constantius Chlorus, divided the empire among his children like an inheritance. Later emperors followed his example, and one single emperor was hardly ever seen again.

The effeminacy of Honorius and of Valentinian III, emperors of the West, brought on the final ruin.

Italy and Rome itself were repeatedly sacked and fell prey to the barbarians.

The West was in complete disarray. Africa was occupied by the Vandals; Spain by the Visigoths; Gaul by the Franks; Great Britain by the Saxons; Rome, and Italy as well, by the Heruli and, later, by the Ostrogoths. The Roman emperors confined themselves to the East and gave up the rest, even Rome and Italy.

The empire regained some strength under Justinian, owing to the valor of Belisarius and Narses. Taken and retaken again and again, Rome finally remained with the emperors. The Saracens, who had become powerful because of the divisions among their neighbors and the carelessness of the emperors, took over a large part of the East and so tormented the emperors on that side that they no longer gave any thought to Italy. There, the Lombards occupied the richest and most beautiful provinces. Rome, reduced to extremity by their continuous encroachments, and left defenseless by its emperors, was obliged to beg the help of the French. Pepin, king of France, crossed the mountains and overcame the Lombards. After Charlemagne had definitively destroyed their rule, he had himself crowned king of Italy; and it was only from moderation that he left some small parts of that country to the successors of the Caesars. Finally, in the year
of Our Lord 800, he was elected emperor by the Romans and founded the new empire.

Now you can easily perceive the causes of the rise and the fall of the Roman Empire.

You can see that this state—founded as it was on war and therefore naturally inclined to encroach upon its neighbors—subjugated the world because it had brought political and military science to the highest point of perfection.

You see that the divisions within the republic and its eventual fall were caused by the jealousy of its citizens and by a love of liberty that was carried to an excessive and intolerable degree of sensitivity.

It is no longer difficult for you to recognize all the ages of Rome, whether you wish to consider it in itself or in relation to other nations; and you see what changes were bound to follow from the configuration of issues in each age.

Examining Rome in itself, you see it first in a monarchical state, which was based on its original laws; then in its liberty; and finally subject again to a monarchical rule, but this time by force and violence.

It is easy to understand how the popular state developed from the rudiments that had existed even at the time of the monarchy; and it is equally evident that the basis of the new monarchy was gradually forming during the time of liberty.

For just as you have seen that the plans for a republic were drawn up under the monarchy by Servius Tullius, who gave the Romans a first taste, as it were, of liberty, so you have also seen that Sulla's tyranny, though ephemeral and short, made it clear that Rome, despite its pride, was as capable of bearing a yoke as the nations over which it held sway.

If you wish to know what this furious jealousy between the estates wrought in the course of time, you must remember to distinguish between the two ages I have clearly pointed out to you: the age when the people was somewhat restrained by the dangers encompassing it on all sides, and the age when it no longer had anything to fear from the outside and indulged its passion to the fullest.

These two ages are of an essentially different character: in one, patriotism and respect for the law were uppermost in men's minds; in the other, self-interest and power were all that counted.
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Hence it also followed that, in the first of these ages, military leaders who aspired to office by lawful means kept the soldiers in check and loyal to the republic, whereas, in the second age, they were interested only in humoring them, so as to enlist them in their cause in defiance of the senate’s authority.

This last situation necessarily brought war to Rome; and the character of war is such that the command had to fall into the hands of a single man. But since in war the law is powerless and only force decides, the strongest man was bound to remain in command, and Rome was bound to go back under the power of one individual.

And this came about so naturally that Polybius, who lived in the most flourishing age of the republic, foresaw, simply by observing the configuration of circumstances, that the Roman state would revert to a monarchy in the long run.

This change took place because the divisions among the Romans of various estates could be ended only by an absolute master and also because the Romans cherished their liberty too much to give it up voluntarily. It was therefore necessary to weaken that liberty gradually, by specious pretexts, so that it could be destroyed in the end by open force.

Deceit, as Aristotle says, must begin by flattering the people and must naturally be followed by violence.

But this entailed another disadvantage, namely, the use of force by the military, an evil that is unavoidably connected with that estate.

And indeed, since the monarchy of the Caesars had been erected by armed strength, it was bound to be of a completely military nature; and that is why it was carried on under the title of emperor, the proper and natural title of military leadership.

Therefore, you will have seen that, just as the republic had its inevitable weakness, namely, the jealousy between the people and the senate, the monarchy of the Caesars had its weakness too, namely, the license of the soldiers who had created them.

For it was impossible that the armies, once they had changed the government and had created emperors, should remain unaware for long that, in fact, the empire was at their disposal.

Now you may add to the ages you have already observed what you know about the condition and the changes in the military. You know
in which age it was obedient and loyal to the senate and the people of Rome; when it attached its loyalty to its generals; when it raised them to absolute power under the military title of emperors; and when, having, as it were, become master of the emperors of its own making, it made and unmade them as it saw fit. Hence the slackening of discipline, hence the revolts and the wars you have seen; hence, finally, the destruction of the military with the destruction of the empire.

These are the noteworthy ages which mark the changes in the Roman state considered in itself. Those which show us its situation in relation to others are equally easy to discern.

There was the age of its struggle against equals, during which Rome was in danger. This lasted for a little over 500 years and ended with the annihilation of the Gauls in Italy and of the Carthaginian Empire.

There was the age of struggle from a position of superior strength, which presented no danger to Rome, however great the wars undertaken. It lasted for 200 years and continued until the establishment of the Caesars.

There was the age in which Rome preserved its empire and its majesty. This lasted for 400 years and ended with the reign of Theodosius <I>, the Great.

There was the age, finally, when the empire, losing ground on all sides, gradually declined. This stage, which also lasted for 400 years, began with the children of Theodosius and came to a definitive end with Charlemagne.

I am fully aware, Monseigneur, that many specific incidents could be added to the causes for the fall of Rome. The rigorous treatment of debtors by their creditors, for example, frequently stirred up great upheavals. The prodigious number of gladiators and slaves, of whom there were entirely too many in Rome and Italy, caused dreadful violence and even savage wars. Exhausted by a long period of civil and foreign wars, Rome created so many new citizens—who were admitted either by conniving or for good reasons—that it could hardly recognize itself in the throng of naturalized foreigners. The senate became filled with barbarians; Roman blood lost its purity; love of the fatherland, which had enabled Rome to rise above all the
world's nations, did not come naturally to citizens of foreign origin; and the others were tainted by this admixture. More and more factions resulted from the great number of new citizens; and unruly elements used them as a new means for creating disturbances and for their own advancement.

Meanwhile, the number of poor was growing endlessly, because luxury, debauchery, and sloth had crept into Rome. Those who found themselves ruined found redress only in sedition; in any case, it was of little concern to them that their actions might lead to the collapse of the entire society. It is well known that this attitude prompted the Catalinian conspiracy. Men of great ambition, together with the wretched poor, who have nothing to lose, always favor change. These two kinds of citizens were the most numerous in Rome; and since the middle class, the only one which can create an equilibrium in a popular state, was weak, the republic was bound to fall.

To this we might also add the character and special aptitudes of those who brought about the great changes; I mean the Gracchi, Marius, Sulla, Pompey, Julius Caesar, Antony, and Augustus. I have gone into this to a certain extent, but I have mainly focused your attention on the universal causes and the true root of the evil, namely, the jealousy between the two estates, since it is important that you see this with all its consequences.

Chapter 8

Conclusion of the Entire Preceding Discourse, in Which It Is Shown That Everything Must Be Ascribed to a Providence

You should recall, however, Monseigneur, that this long concatenation of particular causes which make and unmake empires depends on the secret decrees of Divine Providence. From the highest heavens God holds the reins of every kingdom and holds every heart in his hands. At times he bridles man's passions, at
others he gives them free rein; and that is how he moves all of mankind. Should he wish to see a conqueror, he will spread terror before him and will inspire him and his armies with invincible boldness. Should he wish to see legislators, he will send them his spirit of wisdom and foresight; he will cause them to forestall the evils that can befall a state and to lay the foundations for public tranquillity. Knowing that human wisdom always falls short in some way, he will enlighten it and give it scope—but then he will also leave it to its own ignorance, blind it, hasten it, and throw it into confusion. Then it will become perplexed by its own subtlety, and its very precautions will become so many snares. In this manner God renders his redoubtable judgments, according to the rules of his never-failing justice. It is he who plants the seeds of future events in their most remote causes and who strikes the great blows whose reverberations reach so far. When he wishes to unleash the final blow and to overthrow an empire, human conduct becomes fitful and weak. Egypt, once so wise, marched on like a nation drunken, staggering, and reeling because the Lord had struck its conduct with bewilderment—Egypt no longer knew what it did and lost its way. But let no man deceive himself: God will set aright the bewildered senses whenever it pleases him, and he who mocks the blindness of others will fall into even profounder darkness himself; and it may be that nothing more than his prolonged good fortune is needed to lead him astray.

Thus God reigns over every nation. Let us no longer speak of coincidence or fortune; or let us use these words only to cover our ignorance. What is coincidence to our uncertain foresight is concerted design to a higher foresight, that is, to the eternal foresight which encompasses all causes and all effects in a single plan. Thus all things concur to the same end; and it is only because we fail to understand the whole design that we see coincidence or strangeness in particular events.

Thus we see that the apostle speaks the truth when he says: God is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is blessed, for his rest is unalterable; he sees change everywhere without changing himself, and all change is wrought by his un-
changing decree; he gives and takes away power, transferring it from one person to the other, one house to another, in order to show that all of them possess it only as a loan and that it naturally resides in him alone.

That is why all rulers feel that they are subject to a higher power. They achieve either more or less than they plan, and their intentions have always led to unforeseen consequences. They neither control the configuration of circumstances that was bequeathed to them by past centuries, nor can they foresee the course of the future, much less control that course. All this is in the hands of him who can name what is and what is yet to be, who presides over all the ages, and who knows in advance what will come to pass.

Alexander did not think that he was working for his captains or for the fall of his house when he made his conquests. When Brutus inspired the Romans with a boundless love of liberty, it did not occur to him that he was planting the seeds of that unbridled license through which the very tyranny he wished to destroy was one day to be restored in a harsher form than under the Tarquins. When the Caesars flattered the soldiers, they did not intend to make them masters over their successors and the empire. In a word, there is no human power which does not unintentionally serve other ends than its own. God alone can subject everything to his will. That is why every event is unexpected if we perceive only its specific causes; and yet the world goes forward in a foreordained sequence. The present discourse makes this clear to you. Not to mention the other empires here, you can see how many unexpected and yet consistent decrees have shaped the fortunes of Rome from Romulus to Charlemagne.

You may think, Monseigneur, that I should have spoken at greater length of your French people and of Charlemagne, who founded the new empire. But aside from the fact that he is part of that history of France you yourself are writing, and in which you have already considerably advanced, I am hoping to write for you a second discourse, which will give me the opportunity to speak of France and of that great conqueror who, equaling the valor of the most vaunted heroes of antiquity, has surpassed them in piety, wisdom, and justice.
That discourse will also give you the reasons for the prodigious success of Mohammed and his successors. That empire, which began 200 years before Charlemagne, could have been included in the present discourse; but I felt that it would be better to show you its rise and fall in a single sequence.

This is all I wanted to tell you about the first part of universal history. You can now see what its wellsprings are; and henceforth you yourself will be able to observe the continuity of religion and of the great empires up to Charlemagne.

While you will see almost all of them falling of their own weakness, you will see religion upheld by its own strength; and you will discern without difficulty where solid greatness lies, and where a man of understanding is to place his hopes.