

the Romans. Thus they sent to him their disciples, who asked him: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? But Jesus knowing their wickedness, said: Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites? Show me the coin of the tribute. And they offered him a penny. And Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him: Caesar's. Then he saith to them: Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."¹⁶

It is as if he had said: Do not go on using religious pretexts to avoid paying tribute. God has his rights, distinct from those of the prince. You shall obey Caesar: the coinage which you use in your commerce was struck by Caesar's order: if he is your sovereign, recognize his sovereignty by paying to him the tribute he imposes.

Thus the tributes which one pays to the prince are a recognition of supreme authority; and one cannot refuse them without rebellion.

St. Paul teaches this expressly: "The prince is God's minister to thee, for good, the avenger of evil acts. Wherefore be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For therefore also you pay tribute. For they are the ministers of God, serving unto this purpose. Render therefore to all men their dues. Tribute, to whom tribute is due: custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honor, to whom honor."

One sees by these words of the apostle that one must pay tribute to the prince religiously and in good conscience, just as one must render him the honour and the subjection which is due his minister.¹⁷

And reason [also] makes it clear that all [the members of] the state must contribute to the public necessities which the prince provides.

Without this he can neither support nor defend individuals, nor the state itself. The kingdom will suffer, and individuals will perish in the ruins of the state. Such that, in truth, tribute is nothing else than a small part of one's goods, which one pays to the prince in order to give him the means of saving everything.

4th Proposition

The respect, fidelity and obedience which one owes to kings, cannot be changed on any pretext

That is to say that one must always respect and always serve them, whoever they be, good or bad. "Servants, be subject to your masters,

¹⁶ Matt. 22:17-21. ¹⁷ Rom. 13:4-7.

not only to the good and gentle, but also to the hard and regrettable."¹⁸

The state is in peril and the public peace is no longer secure, if anyone is permitted to rise up against princes for any reason whatsoever.

The sacred unction is upon them; and the high ministry which they exercise in the name of God protects them from every insult.

We have seen David not only refuse to plot against the life of Saul, but tremble at having dared to cut the hem of his garment, though this was part of a good plan. "God forbid that I should raise my hand against the Lord's anointed. After which David's heart struck him, because he had cut off the hem of Saul's robe."¹⁹

The words of St. Augustine on this passage are remarkable. "You will object against me," he said to the Donatist Bishop Petilian, "that he who is not innocent cannot be possessed of holiness. I ask of you, if Saul was not possessed of sanctity in virtue of his consecration and the royal unction, what was it in him that caused David to venerate him? For it is because of this holy and sacred unction, that he honored him during his lifetime and avenged his death. And he trembled, heart-struck, when he cut the hem of the robe of this unjust king. You see, then, that Saul, who was not innocent, nonetheless had sanctity: not a holy life, but the sanctity of the divine sacrament, which is holy even in evil men."²⁰

He calls sacramental the royal unction: either because he (with all the Fathers) gives this name to all sacred ceremonies, or more particularly because the royal unction of kings, among the ancient [Jewish] people, was a sacred sign instituted by God, to make them capable of their charge, and to pre-figure the unction of Jesus Christ himself.

But what is still more important is that St. Augustine here recognizes, following Scripture, a sanctity which is inherent in the royal character, which cannot be effaced by any crime whatsoever.

It is, he says, this sanctity which David – unjustly pursued to the death by Saul, though himself sanctified to succeed him – respected in a prince reproved by God. For David knew that it is for God alone to do justice to princes; and that it is for men to respect the prince as long as it pleases God to preserve him.

We see too that Samuel, after having declared to Saul that God had

¹⁸ 1 Pet. 2:18.

¹⁹ 1 Kings 24:6-7.

²⁰ St. Augustine, Lib. 1 cont. Petil., c. XLVIII, 112.

rejected him, did not fail to honor him. "And Saul said to Samuel: I have sinned because I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord . . . But now bear, I beseech thee, my sin, and return with me, that I may adore the Lord. And Samuel said to Saul: I will not return with thee, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And Samuel turned about to go away; but Saul laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said to him: The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to thy neighbor who is better than thee. But the triumph in Israel will not spare, and will not be moved to repentance: for he is not a man that he should repent. I have sinned, answered Saul, yet honor me now before the ancients of my people, and before Israel, and return with me, that I may adore the Lord thy God. So Samuel turned again after Saul, and Saul adored the Lord."²¹

One cannot tell a prince more clearly of his reprobation; but in the end Samuel let himself be swayed, and consented to honor Saul before the great and the people: showing us by this example that the public good does not permit one to expose the prince to contempt.

Roboam treated the people harshly; but the revolt of Jeroboam and of the ten tribes who followed him – though permitted by God in punishment of the sins of Solomon – did not fail to be treated with detestation in the whole of Scripture, which declared that in revolting against the house of David, they were revolting against God, who ruled through that house.²²

All the prophets who lived under evil kings – Eliah and Eliseus under Achab and under Jezebel in Israel, Isaiah under Achaz and under Manasses, Jeremiah under Joachim, under Jechonias, under Sedecias – in a word, all the prophets under so many impious and wicked kings, neither failed in obedience nor inspired rebellion, but rather always submission and respect.

We have just heard Jeremiah, after the ruin of Jerusalem and the complete overturning of the throne of the kings of Judah, speaking still with deep respect of his king Sedecias: "The breath of our life, the anointed of the Lord, is taken in our sins: to whom we said: Under thy shadow we shall live among the Gentiles."²³

Good subjects did not take themselves to be relieved of the respect

²¹ 1 Kings 15:24-31. ²² 2 Par. 13:5-8. ²³ Thren. 4:20.

which they owed their king, even after his kingdom was overturned, and he was taken captive with his whole people. They respected, even in chains (and after the ruin of the kingdom), the sacred character of royal authority.

5th Proposition

Open impiety, and even persecution, do not free subjects from the obedience which they owe princes

The royal dignity is holy and sacred even in pagan princes: we have seen that Cyrus is called by Isaiah "the anointed of the Lord."²⁴

Such were the pride and impiety of Nabuchodonosor that he strove to be the equal of God, and sought to put to death those who refused him sacrilegious rites; yet Daniel said to him: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory."²⁵

This is why God's people prayed for the lives of Nabuchodonosor and of Belshazzar,²⁶ and of Ahasuerus.²⁷

Ahab and Jezebel executed all the prophets of the Lord: Elijah lamented this before the Lord,²⁸ but always remained obedient.

At this time the prophets wrought amazing miracles to preserve the king and the kingdom.²⁹

Elisha did the same under Jehoram, the son of Ahab, who was as impious as his father.³⁰

Nothing has ever equaled the impiety of Manasseh, who sinned and caused Judah to sin before the Lord, whose worship he sought to abolish, persecuting the faithful servants of God and making Jerusalem run with their blood.³¹ And yet Isaiah and the holy prophets who reproached him for his crimes never aroused the least rebellion against him.

This doctrine has been maintained in the Christian religion.

It was under Tiberius, not only a pagan but also an evil man, that our Lord said to the Jews: "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's."³²

St. Paul appealed to Caesar,³³ and recognized his power.

He ordered prayers to be said for the Emperors,³⁴ although the

²⁴ Isa. 45:1. ²⁵ Dan. 2:37. ²⁶ Bar. 1:11. ²⁷ 1 Esdr. 6:10.
²⁸ 3 Kings 19:10-14. ²⁹ 3 Kings 20. ³⁰ 4 Kings 3; 6; 7.
³¹ 4 Kings 21:2,3,16. ³² Matt. 22:21. ³³ Acts 25:10-12. ³⁴ 1 Tim. 2:1-2.

emperor reigning at that time was Nero, the most impious and wicked of all men.

His reason for ordering the prayer was the need for public tranquillity, which requires that all live together in peace, even under wicked and persecuting princes.

He and St. Peter commanded the faithful to obey the powers that be.³⁵ We have seen their words; and have also seen which were the powers under whose forms the apostles bade the faithful respect the authority of God.

Because of this apostolic doctrine the first Christians, though persecuted for three hundred years, never raised the least opposition within the Empire. We learn their sentiments from Tertullian and see them continued throughout the history of the Church.

They continued to pray for the emperors even in the midst of the torments to which they were unjustly condemned. "Be of good courage, O worthy judges," said Tertullian, "and tear from the Christians a soul which bursts forth with praise of the Emperor."³⁶

Constantius, the son of Constantine the Great, although protector of the Arians and persecutor of the orthodox, found the Church unshakably loyal.

His successor, Julian the Apostate, who restored the pagan cults proscribed by his predecessors, found the Christians no less faithful and no less zealous in his service in spite of this, so well were they able to separate the prince's impiety from the sacred dignity of his sovereign majesty.

Many heretical emperors followed: Valens, Justin, Zeno, Basiliscus, Anastasius, Heraclius, Constantius. Though they deposed orthodox bishops and even Popes, and deluged the Church with bloodshed and massacre, they never saw their authority questioned or undermined by the Catholics.

In fine, for seven hundred years there was not a single example of disobedience to the emperor on religious pretexts. In the eighth century the whole empire remained faithful to Leo the Isaurian, the leader of the Iconoclasts and persecutor of the faithful. Under his son, Constantine Copronymus, who inherited his heresy and violence as well as his crown, the faithful in the East offered only their patience in opposition to his persecution. But during the decline of the Empire, when the Caesars were barely able to defend the Orient into

³⁵ Rom. 13:5; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14, 17, 18.

³⁶ *Apol.* 30.

which they had retreated, Rome was forced to separate itself from the emperors, after having been abandoned for two hundred years to the fury of the Lombards, and having been forced to seek the protection of the Franks [*des Français*].

Rome endured her sufferings for long before taking this extreme course, and only embraced it after the emperors had come to regard the capital of their empire as a land left to abandonment and exposed to invasion.

6th Proposition

Subjects have nothing to oppose to the violence of princes but respectful remonstrances, without mutiny and without murmurings, together with prayers for their conversion

When God wanted to deliver the Israelites from the tyranny of Pharaoh, he did not permit them to proceed by mere *de facto* means against a king whose inhumanity to them was unheard of. They asked with respect, its just complaints by permitted means. Pharaoh, desert.

We have seen that princes must listen to individuals: how much more then must they listen to a whole people, which brings to them, with respect, its just complaints by permitted means. Pharaoh, hardened and tyrannical as he was, at least took care to listen to the Israelites. He listened to Moses and Aaron.³⁷ He received in audience "the officers of the children of Israel, who came to complain to him with loud cries, saying: Why dealest thou so with thy servants?"³⁸

Let it then be permitted to an oppressed people to have recourse to the prince through his magistrates and by legitimate paths: but let it always be with respect.

Remonstrances which are full of bitterness and murmuring are the beginning of a sedition which must not be suffered. Thus the Israelites murmured against Moses, and never offered him a quiet remonstrance.³⁹

Moses never ceased to listen to them, to soften them, to pray for them, and gave a memorable example of the goodness that princes must exercise toward their peoples; but God, to establish order, visited great punishments on these seditious people.

When I say that these remonstrances must be respectful, I mean

³⁷ Exod. 5:45.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁹ Num. 11; 13; 14; 20; 21.

that they must truly be so, and not only in appearance, like those of Jeroboam and the ten tribes, who said to Roboam: "Thy father laid a grievous yoke upon us: take off a little . . . of his most heavy yoke, and we will serve thee."⁴⁰

There was in these remonstrances some outward appearance of respect, in that they asked only a small diminution and promised to be faithful. But to make their fidelity depend on the favor they were asking was the beginning of mutiny.

One sees nothing like this in the remonstrances which the persecuted Christians made to the [Roman] emperors. Everything was submissive, everything was modest: God's truth was stated with freedom, but these speeches were so far from using seditious terms that even today one cannot read them without being brought to obedience.

The Empress Justine, mother and tutor of Valentinian II, wanted to oblige St. Ambrose to give a church to the Arians whom she protected, in the city of Milan, residence of the Emperor. The whole people united with its bishop, and assembling at the church awaited the outcome of this affair. St. Ambrose never deviated from the modesty of a subject and a bishop. He made his remonstrances to the Emperor: "Do not believe," he told him, "that you have the power to take from God what is his. I cannot give you the church which you demand: but if you take it, I must not resist."⁴¹ And again: "If the Emperor wants to have the goods of the Church, he can take them; none of us will oppose this: let him take them from us, if he wills; I do not give them, but I do not refuse them."⁴²

"The Emperor," he added, "is in the Church; but not above the Church. A good emperor, far from rejecting the help of the Church, seeks it out. We say these things with respect; but we feel obliged to set them out with freedom."⁴³

He kept the assembled people in such a respectful condition, that not one insolent word escaped them. They prayed, they sang the praises of God, they awaited his help.

There is a resistance worthy of a Christian and of a bishop. However, since the people were assembled with their pastor, it was said at the palace that this holy pastor aspired to tyranny. He

⁴⁰ 3 Kings 12:4; 2 Par. 10:4.

⁴¹ St. Ambrose, *Sermo contra Aurentium de Basilicis tradendis*, Epist. XXI.16.22.

⁴² Ibid., 33.

⁴³ Ibid., 36.

answered: "I have a defense: but in the prayers of the poor. These blind and lame men, these cripples and ancients, are stronger than the most courageous soldiers."⁴⁴ See the forces of a bishop, see his army!

He had other arms still: his patience, and the prayers which he made to God. "Since they call my action a tyranny," he said, "I do have arms: I have the power to offer my body in sacrifice. We have our tyranny and our power. The power of a bishop is his weakness. I am strong when I am weak, as St. Paul said."⁴⁵

While awaiting the violence with which the Church was threatened, the holy bishop was at the altar, asking of God with tears that no blood be spilled, or at least that God should be content with his. "I began," he says, "to weep bitterly in offering the sacrifice: praying God to help us in such a way that no blood would be shed in the cause of the Church: or at least that no more than mine should be spilled, either among the people or even among the impious."⁴⁶

God listened to such ardent prayers: the Church was victorious, and it cost the blood of no one.

Only a little later, Justine and her son, abandoned by nearly everyone, had recourse to St. Ambrose, and found faithfulness and zeal for their service only in this bishop, who had opposed their plans in the cause of God and of the Church.

This is what respectful remonstrances can achieve: this is what prayers can achieve. Thus did Queen Esther: having conceived a plan to sway her husband Assuerus (who had resolved to sacrifice all the Jews to the vengeance of Aman), she said to Mordechai: "Go, and gather together all the Jews whom thou shalt find in Susan, and pray ye for me. Neither eat nor drink for three days and three nights: and I with my handmaids will fast in like manner, and then I will go in to the king, against the law, not being called, and expose myself to death and to danger."⁴⁷

When she appeared before the king, "the burning eyes of this prince had shown the wrath of his heart . . . but God changed the king's spirit into mildness, remembering the prayers of Esther and of the Jews."⁴⁸ And the Jews were delivered through the queen.

Thus when the prince of the apostles was made a prisoner by Herod, "the whole Church prayed for him without respite."⁴⁹ And

⁴⁴ Ibid., Epist. XXI, 33.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Epist. V.

⁴⁶ Esther 15:10-11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Epist. XXIII.

⁴⁸ Esther 4:16.

⁴⁹ Acts 12:5.

God sent his angel to deliver him. These are the arms of the Church: vows and persevering prayers.

St. Paul, a prisoner for Jesus Christ, had only this help and these arms. "But withal prepare me also a lodging: For I hope that through your prayers I shall be given unto you."⁵⁰

Indeed he left prison, "and was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."⁵¹ Thus he called Nero, the enemy not just of Christians, but of the whole human race.

If God does not listen to the prayers of his faithful, if in order to test and to punish his children he permits persecution to warm against them, they must then remember that Jesus Christ has sent them "as sheep in the midst of wolves."⁵²

There is a doctrine which is truly holy, truly worthy of Jesus Christ and of his disciples.

Article III

Two difficulties drawn from Scripture: David and the Maccabees

1st Proposition

The conduct of David does not favor rebellion

David, persecuted by Saul, did not content himself with taking flight: rather "he assembled his brothers and his relatives, and all that were in distress and oppressed with debt, and under affliction of mind; and he became their prince, and there were with him about four hundred men."¹

He remained in this condition in Judah, armed against Saul who had declared him his enemy, and who pursued him as such with all the forces of Israel.²

Finally he retired into the kingdom of Achis, King of the Philistines, with whom he treated, and obtained the city of Siceleg.³

Achis so regarded David as the sworn enemy of the Israelites, that

⁵⁰ Philem. 22. ⁵¹ 2 Tim. 4:17. ⁵² Matt. 10:16.
¹ 1 Kings 22:1-2. ² Ibid., 6-7; 24:2-3; 26:1-4. ³ Ibid., 27:6.

he led him with himself in going to combat them, and said to David: "I will appoint thee to guard my life for ever."⁴

Indeed David and his people marched in the train with Achis, and he did not withdraw from the army of the Philistines until the satraps, who distrusted him, obliged the king to dismiss him.⁵

It seems that he withdrew regretfully. "But what have I done, he said to Achis, and what hast thou found in me thy servant, from the day that I have been in thy sight until this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"⁶

To be armed against his king, to treat with his enemies, to go to war with them against his people – there is everything that can make a subject a rebel.

But to justify David, one need only consider all the circumstances of the story.

He was not a subject like the others; he was chosen by God to succeed Saul, and Samuel had already consecrated him.⁷

Thus the public good, as much as his individual interest, obliged him to preserve his life, which Saul wanted unjustly to deprive him of.

His intention, however, was not to remain in Israel, with the four hundred men who followed his orders. "And David departed into Maspha of Moab with his father and his mother . . . until it should please God to declare his will to him."⁸

This was an order of God brought by the prophet Gad,⁹ who obliged him to remain in the land of Judah, where he was better loved (since this was his tribe).

Furthermore he never engaged in any combat against Saul, nor against his people. He fled from desert to desert, solely to keep from being taken captive.

Being in Carmel, in the richest country of the Holy Land and in the midst of the estates of Nabal, the most powerful man in the country, he never took so much as a lamb from an immense flock; and far from vexing Naval, he defended him against a race of enemies.¹⁰

However cruel may have been the persecution raised against him, he never lost the love which he had for his prince, whose person he always regarded as sacred.

"He knew that the Philistines were attacking the city of Ceila, and were pillaging the environs. He went there with his men; he cut the

⁴ 1 Kings 28:1-2. ⁵ 1 Kings 29. ⁶ Ibid., 8. ⁷ 1 Kings 16:12-13.
⁸ 1 Kings 22:34. ⁹ Ibid., 5. ¹⁰ 1 Kings 25:15-16.

Philistines to pieces; he took their baggage-trains and their loot; he saved the people of Ceila."¹¹

"And the men that were with David, who opposed his plans, said to him: Behold we are in fear here in Judaea; how much more if we go to Ceila against the bands of the Philistines?"¹² But David's zeal prevailed over their fear.

It is thus that, though hounded to excess, he never lost the desire to serve his prince and his country.

It is true that in the end he went over to Achis, and treated with him. But though he had the dexterity to persuade this prince that he would go against the Jews,¹³ in fact he took nothing except from the Amalecites and from other enemies of the people of God.

As for the city which King Achis gave him, he incorporated it into the kingdom of Judah;¹⁴ and the treaty which he made with the enemy profited his country.

If, in order not to defy Achis, he followed him when he marched against Saul; if for the same reason he claimed to withdraw only regretfully, this was simply the same dexterity which had [earlier] saved his life.

One must hold it as certain that, in this last encounter, he would no more have been able to fight against his own people, than he had done hitherto. He was at the back of the camp with the King of the Philistines,¹⁵ to whom it seemed that the custom of these peoples forbade them to risk themselves.

To know what he would have done in the melee, if combat had actually reached King Achis – this is what one cannot guess. These great men, abandoned to divine Providence, learn at the last moment what they are to do; and after pushing human prudence as far as it can go, they find, when they have reached its limit, a divine aid which, against all hope, extricates them from difficulties in which it seems they must be inevitably shrouded.

2nd Proposition

The wars of the Maccabees do not authorize rebellion

After being conquered by the Assyrians, the Jews were subject in turn to the power of the Persians, of Alexander the Great and finally of the kings of Syria.

¹¹ 1 Kings 23:1-5. ¹² Ibid., 3,4,5. ¹³ 1 Kings 27.
¹⁴ Ibid., 6. ¹⁵ 1 Kings 29:2.

They remained in this condition for about three hundred and fifty years, and for one hundred and fifty of these they accepted the kings of Syria, until the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes caused them to take up arms against him under the leadership of the Maccabees. For a long time they made war, during the course of which they treated with the Romans and Greeks against the kings of Syria, their legitimate lords, whose yoke they finally overthrew and established princes of their own nation.

Here is a manifest rebellion: if it is not, this instance would seem to show that a tyrannical government, and above all a violent persecution for the sake of true religion, exempts a people from the obedience they owe to their princes.

It is not to be doubted that the war of the Maccabees was just, for God himself approved it: but if we examine the actual circumstances of the event, we see that this example does not sanction later revolts for religious motives.

The true religion until the coming of the Messiah was to be preserved in the race of Abraham and by succession through the blood line.

It was to be preserved in Judaea, in Jerusalem, in the Temple, the place chosen by God for the offering of sacrifices and for rites not permitted anywhere else.

The very essence of this religion thus required that the children of Abraham should continue for ever, and in the land given to their fathers, to live there according to the law of Moses, the observances of which had been freely allowed by the kings of Persia and the other rulers down to the time of Antiochus.

This family of Abraham living in the Holy Land were to be removed from there only once, at the express command of God, but not into eternal banishment.

On the contrary, the prophet Jeremiah who had brought the people the commandment to go to Babylon,¹⁶ where it was God's will that they should suffer the pain due their crimes, at the same time promised that after three score years and ten of captivity they would be reestablished in their own land, there to observe the law of Moses as before, and to practice their religion as usual in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁷

The people thus reestablished were to live there until the coming of

¹⁶ Jer. 21:7-9.

¹⁷ Jer. 25:12; 27:11-12; 29:10-14; 30:3.

Christ; at which time God would cause a new people to arise, no longer of the race of Abraham, but of all the nations of the world, and would scatter the Jews unfaithful to their Messiah in captivity throughout the world.

But before this the Messiah was to be born of this people, and was to begin among the Jews in Jerusalem that Church which was to fill the whole universe. This great mystery of religion is attested by all the prophets, and it is not the place here to rehearse all the passages [where they do so].

On this basis, it may be seen that by the extinction of the race of Abraham, or by their expulsion from their country at the time of the kings of Syria, religion would be betrayed and the worship of God destroyed.

It only remains now to examine Antiochus' intentions.

He commanded that the Jews should forsake their law to live after the manner of the Gentiles, sacrificing to the same idols and giving up their temple, which he desecrated by erecting the statue of Olympian Zeus on the altar of God.¹⁸

He decreed the punishment of death for those who disobeyed.¹⁹

This he carried out: all Judaea ran with the blood of its sons.²⁰

He assembled all his forces "to destroy the Israelites and the remains of Jerusalem, and to wipe out from Judaea the memory of the people of God, there to establish strangers, and to parcel out the land by lot."²¹

He had resolved to sell to the Gentiles all who escaped death; and the merchants of the neighboring peoples flocked with money to buy them.²²

It was in this desperate extremity that Judas Maccabaeus took up arms with his brothers and what remained of the Jewish people. When they saw the pitiless king directing all his power to "the total ruin of the nation, they said to one another: 'let us not suffer our people to be destroyed, but let us fight for our country and our religion, lest it perish with us.'"²³

If subjects owe nothing further to a king who abdicates his kingship and completely gives up the government, what are we to think of a ruler who would plan to spill the blood of all his subjects and then,

¹⁸ 1 Macc. 1:43-57.

²⁰ Ibid., 60-64; 2 Macc. 6:8-10.

²² Ibid., 41; 2 Macc. 8:11, 14, 34, 36.

¹⁹ Ibid., 52.

²¹ 1 Macc. 3:35-36.

²³ 2 Macc. 8:42-43.

once tired of massacres, would sell the rest to strangers? Can he renounce more clearly his intention to have them for his subjects, or proclaim himself more flagrantly to be no more the king and father, but the enemy of all his people?

This is what Antiochus did towards the Jews, who saw themselves not only abandoned, but exterminated in a body by their king, although they were innocent of any fault, as Antiochus himself was forced to admit in the end. "I remember the wrongs I did in Jerusalem, and the unjust commandments that I made to annihilate all the inhabitants of Judaea."²⁴

But the Jews were even better justified, because in accordance with the dispensation of the time and of their people, their religion would perish with them; and for them to give up their land was to give up their religion as well. They could not therefore allow themselves to be sold or carried off or massacred: in this case the law of God manifestly enjoined them to resist.

God also did not fail to reveal his will to them, by miraculous victories and by the strict command which Judas received when he saw the spirit of the prophet Jeremiah "who placed a golden sword in his hands, saying: 'receive this sacred sword sent of God, in the knowledge that with its aid you shall overthrow the enemies of Israel.'"²⁵

It is for God to choose the means by which his people shall be preserved. When Assuerus, misled by the wiles of Haman, wished to destroy the whole Jewish people, God prevented this impious design by changing the king's heart by means of his queen Esther, for the king had been drawn into this crime through unfortunate weakness rather than stubborn wickedness. But for the proud Antiochus who openly made war against heaven God prepared a more terrible downfall, and filled his people with a courage against which no wealth, strength, or numbers could be more than a forlorn hope.

God gave them so many victories that finally the kings of Syria made peace with them, recognizing the princes they had chosen from among themselves, and treating them as friends and brothers, so that all the sanctions of legitimate authority combined to establish them.²⁶

²⁴ 1 Macc. 15:12.

²⁵ Ibid., 15-16.

²⁶ 1 Macc. 11: 24-31; 14:38-42; 15:1-2.

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