



❧ CHAPTER 22 ❧

The objections are refuted

The arguments of Luther and other heretics remain to be taken care of. The first argument, from the experience of the whole Church, is the following. Luther says that the Church from the beginning until now burned no heretic; therefore, it does not seem to be the will of the spirit that they be burned.

I reply that this argument proves very well not Luther's opinion, but Luther's ignorance and impudence, for either Luther ignored that virtually an infinite number of heretics were either burned or otherwise killed, in which case he is ignorant, or he did not ignore it, in which case he is guilty of being impudent and a liar. For it can be shown that heretics were often burned by the Church if we just present a few examples out of many. The heresiarch Priscillian with his associates was killed by the Christian emperor Maximus, as St. Jerome attests in his *De viris illustribus*, and Optatus remembered the killed Donatists in book 3 of *Contra Parmenianum*.

A certain Basilius, a sorcerer and therefore a heretic, for truly there are hardly any sorcerers who are not heretics, was burned by a Christian and Catholic people, as blessed Gregory attests in book 1 of the *Dialogi*, chapter 4.

Again, another Basilius, initiator of Bogomilism, was publicly burned by Emperor Alexius Comnenus, as Zonaras writes in his *Vita Alexii*.²¹⁹

219. Bogomilism was a dualist heretical sect which spread in central Europe in the tenth century.

In sermon 66 on the Song of Songs, Bernard attests that the ultimate punishment was inflicted on heretics also in his own time. Once during the time of Innocent III, 180 Albigensian heretics were burned together after St. Dominic had confuted them with words and miracles and had converted many of their associates. Blessed Antonino of Florence, in his *Chronicon*, third part, title 19, chapter 1, paragraph 4, narrates the whole episode.

Not to mention infinitely many other cases, Jan Hus and Jerome of Prague were burned at the Council of Constance by Emperor Sigismund.

Luther replies to this last example that he was talking about heretics, and Hus and Jerome of Prague were not heretics. But nevertheless at least Priscillianus, the followers of Bogomilism, and the Albigensians were heretics. Besides, Jan Hus was a heretic both for us Catholics and Luther himself. It is well known that he was a heretic for us, and as for Luther, he himself proves this in his book *Contra Henricum regem Angliae*. Here he affirms that it is impious and blasphemous to deny that in the Eucharist there is true bread together with the body of the Lord, and that it is pious and Catholic to deny the conversion of the bread into the body. But Jan Hus remained of the opposite opinion until his death and asserted publicly that he died holding this opinion, believing most firmly in the conversion of the bread into the body of Christ, as John Cochlaeus reports in *Historia Hussitarum*, book 2, p. 76.

The second argument is that experience proves that nothing is accomplished with fear. I reply that experience tells the contrary, for Donatists, Manichaeans, and Albigensians were overthrown and destroyed with weapons. Likewise, (in his epistle 48 [93]) Augustine attests that, for fear of punishment, many people converted in his own time.

The third argument is that the Church tolerates Jews, so why not heretics? I reply, first, that the Jews never accepted the Christian faith, while the heretics did. Second, the Jews worship the religion that God established, even though temporarily, while heretics worship a religion invented by the Devil. Third, the Judaic sect is useful for the Church, for their books are prophecies of our matters, and their ceremonies prefigure our rituals; from this we prove to the pagans that we did not invent these prophecies, since they are preserved by our enemies. Finally, the Jews do

not try to corrupt the Christians, in general, as heretics do. See the Fourth Council of Toledo, canons 55 and 56,²²⁰ Augustine on Psalm 59, and also Bernard in epistle 322 [363] to the people of Speyer and 323 [365] to the Bishop of Mainz.

The fourth argument is drawn from Isaiah 2: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks."²²¹ But this is not to the point, for, as blessed Jerome explains, the prophet describes the time of the coming of the Messiah, and says that it will be the time of the greatest peace, so that men will change their tools of war into tools of agriculture, and they will not use them any longer for battle, at least not for a long time. But this time was fulfilled in the nativity of Christ, for there was never such a general and continuous peace in the whole world as in the time of Augustus. Then, if it is true that there will be no war in the Church, as Luther deduces from this passage, it will be clear that there is no Church among the Lutherans, for they waged most serious wars among themselves and against the Catholics, as for example the war against Charles V in which the Elector of Saxony was captured.²²²

The fifth argument is drawn from Isaiah 11: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."²²³ I reply that this is an argument against Luther himself, for the prophet does not say that the Catholics shall not kill the heretics, but rather the opposite, that the heretics shall not kill and harm the Catholics, as the prophet speaks of lions, bears, snakes, and bees and other poisonous animals, of which he had said: "And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den."²²⁴ But by these beasts are meant the Devil and the heretics, his ministers, as Jerome and Cyril explain; and the prophet says that they shall neither kill nor harm the whole Church, and even

220. The Fourth Council of Toledo was held in 633.

221. Isaiah 2:4.

222. Bellarmine is referring to John Frederick, prince elector of Saxony and leader of the Protestant faction during the Schmalkaldic War between the Protestant princes and Emperor Charles V. The war lasted from 1546 to 1547 and ended with the battle of Mühlberg, in which the Protestants were defeated and John Frederick captured.

223. Isaiah 11:9.

224. Isaiah 11:8.

though the heretics seem to harm the Church, nevertheless in truth they do not, but they enforce it and make it progress in wisdom and patience.

The sixth argument comes from Matthew 18, where the Lord established that heretics should be considered heathens and publicans, not that they should be burned. And Paul in his epistle to Titus, chapter 3, orders that heretics should be avoided, not killed, and therefore it is not lawful to kill them. I reply that it is certainly true that Christ and Paul in this passage did not order the heretics to be burned, but they did not prohibit it either, and therefore nothing can be deduced from this passage. And Luther himself used this argument, for in book 2 of his dispute with Karlstadt, who was attacking Luther for designating as sacraments what Christ did not prescribe as such, Luther replied: And why do you prohibit the designation as sacraments of what Christ did not prohibit as such?²²⁵

Moreover, Christ and Paul never order us to kill adulterers and forgers, to hang robbers, to burn thieves; and nevertheless this happens and it happens rightly, and Luther would not dare to deny it.

The seventh argument arises from the following facts. According to Sulpicius, *Historia Sacra*, toward the end of book 2, blessed Martin of Tours vigorously reproached the bishops Hydatius and Ithacius who were lobbying the emperor for the death of the heretic Priscillian, and in the same passage Sulpicius accuses them of being guilty of a great crime because of this.

I reply that those bishops are deservedly accused for two reasons. First, because they deferred a matter of the Church to the emperor, for Priscillian, who was accused at the council, appealed his case from the council to the emperor, and the two bishops allowed that. Martin says about this issue that it is a new and unheard-of sin that a Church matter should be judged by a secular judge. Second, those bishops assumed the role of accusers in a case involving capital punishment, but even if it is the prerogative of bishops to excommunicate heretics and to leave them to the secular judge and even to exhort the judges to fulfill their duty, nevertheless it is

225. Bellarmine is here referring to the theological dispute between Luther and Karlstadt in Jena in 1524, which was recorded and published in the same year as *Weß sich Doctor Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt mit Doctor Martino Luther*.

not appropriate for the bishop to act as accuser. However, it is clear that Sulpicius thought that Priscillian and his associates were justly killed from his words: "In this way these men, who because of an appalling example were completely unworthy of the light of the day, were killed."

The eighth argument is drawn from 1 Corinthians 11: "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you";²²⁶ therefore heresies must not be destroyed. I reply that the meaning of this sentence is that given the wickedness of the Devil, who always plants heresies, given human nature, corrupt and prone to evil, and, last, given the divine permission, heresies are necessarily found in the world, just as we say that there must be some bad grass in the garden, and just as the Lord says in Matthew 18: "For it must needs be that offences come."²²⁷ Therefore the apostle does not order us to plant heresies nor to destroy them according to our strength, but he only predicts that which will always exist in the world, just as we try most justly to remove scandals and to extirpate the bad grass from the garden even if we know that all scandals will never be removed.

The ninth argument comes from Luke 11 [9], where the Lord says to the disciples who wanted to burn the Samaritans: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."²²⁸ I reply, first, that there is a very great difference between those Samaritans and the heretics, for the former never promised that they would keep the religion of Christ, which was presented to them then for the first time, and therefore they were not obliged to. But the heretics promised and declared that they would, and therefore they are rightly obliged to. Then, Jacob and John wanted to burn the Samaritans not so much out of zeal for the salvation of souls, but out of lust for revenge, and therefore they are deservedly blamed. The Church, indeed, persecutes heretics out of zeal for the salvation of those souls that they pervert, out of the same zeal with which Christ twice with a scourge expelled those from the temple who were selling sheep and oxen "and overthrew the tables"²²⁹ (John 2 and Matthew 21). Peter killed Ananias and Sapphira

226. 1 Corinthians 11:19.

227. Matthew 18:7.

228. Luke 9:55.

229. John 2:15, Matthew 21:12.

(Acts 5). Paul delivered the man who committed fornication "unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh"²³⁰ (1 Corinthians 5), not to mention Moses, Phinehas, Eliah, Mattithiah, and others who killed many people out of zeal for God.

The tenth argument comes from Matthew 13: "Let both grow together until the harvest,"²³¹ where the Lord openly speaks of heretics and prohibits that they be killed, as Chrysostom says explaining this passage, and likewise Cyprian in book 3, epistle 3 [51] to Maximus and Urbanus, where, speaking of this parable, he says that it is granted only to God to destroy the vessels of earth²³² and to root up the tares.

I reply, by "tares" is meant not only heretics, but all evil men, as is clear from the explanation of the Lord when he says: "The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one"²³³ and later: "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire."²³⁴ And when the Lord prohibits the extirpation of the wicked, he does not prohibit the killing of this or that person but prohibits that good men try to eliminate the wicked everywhere and to leave no wicked man at all, for this could not happen without a great calamity for the good, and this is what the Lord says: "Lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them."²³⁵ Therefore this is a general parable, and it teaches only that it will never happen that all the wicked would be eliminated before the end of the world.²³⁶

Regarding the particular question whether heretics, robbers, or other wicked men should be extirpated, it must always be considered whether,

230. 1 Corinthians 5:5.

231. Matthew 13:30.

232. 2 Timothy 2:20.

233. Matthew 13:38.

234. Matthew 13:40-42.

235. Matthew 13:29.

236. Bellarmine also comments on those verses from Matthew 13 in his treatise against Barclay, chapter 9, defending the legitimacy of the papal deposition of a secular ruler, in particular Gregory VII's sentence against Henry IV (cf. pp. 221-24).

according to the reasoning of the Lord, this could be done without damage to good people, and if this can be done, then without a doubt those must be extirpated. If, however, they cannot be extirpated, either because we do not know them enough, or because there is a danger of punishing the innocent instead of the guilty, or because they are stronger than we are and there is a danger that if we fight them in battle more of our people may die than their people, then we must keep quiet. This is what Augustine replies in *Contra epistolam Parmeniani*, book 3, chapter 2, explaining the same passage [Matthew 13:29–30] that was brought up against him by the Donatists. And Chrysostom teaches the same, as is clear from these words: “The Lord prohibits the extirpation of the tares lest while they are gathered the wheat is also rooted up with them, for if we killed the heretics now, a cruel and unstoppable war would be caused.” Moreover, Cyprian in book 3, epistle 3 [51] to Maximus and Urbanus, interprets this parable as referring not to heretics, but to evil Christians, and he does not so much prohibit the killing of the wicked but says that it pertains to the Lord alone to distinguish the wicked from the good and to clean up completely the wheat from the tares.

The eleventh argument comes from John 6, where, when many of the disciples were walking away, the Lord says: “Will ye also go away?”²³⁷ therefore the Church must do likewise.

I deny the conclusion, first, because the disciples did not oblige themselves to stay as the heretics did through baptism. Second, because it was appropriate that Christ, Who had come to be judged and not to judge, would not Himself take revenge for the injuries He suffered, but would leave them to be vindicated by His spiritual children, and we have the symbol of this in the figure of David, who, as long as he lived, never wanted to kill Shimei, who had cursed him, but ordered Solomon to commit the murder so as not to leave that sin unpunished (3 Kings 2).²³⁸

The twelfth argument is that faith is a gift of God; therefore, nobody can force anybody into it. I reply, faith is a gift of God as much as an act of free will; otherwise, in fact, even chastity and the other virtues are

237. John 6:67.

238. 1 Kings 2 in the King James Version.

gifts of God, but nevertheless adulterers, murderers, and robbers are justly punished and obliged to live chastely and honestly. Also, wisdom is a gift of God, but nevertheless in Proverbs 29 it is written: “The rod and reproof give wisdom.”²³⁹ Finally, faith is a gift of God, but God preserves such a gift in various ways, one of which is correction.

The thirteenth argument is that the Lord gave to the Church the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, but not a sword of iron. Indeed, He said to Peter who wanted to defend Him with the sword of iron in John 18: “Put up thy sword into the sheath.”²⁴⁰

I reply that just as the Church has ecclesiastical and secular princes, who are almost two arms of the Church, so it has two swords, the spiritual and the material, and therefore when the right hand cannot convert the heretic with the spiritual sword, it asks the left hand to help and to convert the heretics with the sword of iron, and maybe the Lord meant this when he forbade Peter, who was the future prince of the clergy, from using the sword of iron.

In *De consideratione*, book 4, St. Bernard says: “Why do you try again to seize the sword which you have been ordered once to put back in its sheath? For if anybody denies that it is yours, they do not seem to me to pay enough attention to the words of the Lord when He says: ‘Put up thy sword into its sheath.’²⁴¹ It is therefore really yours, perhaps subject to your nod, but if it need not be unsheathed by your hand, [it must be unsheathed in some other way]. Besides, if indeed this did not pertain to you in any way, then the Lord would not have replied ‘It is enough’ but ‘It is too much,’ when the apostles said ‘Here are two swords.’²⁴² Therefore the Church has both swords, the spiritual and the material. But while the latter has to be taken out for the Church, the former has to be taken out by the Church. While the former is in the hand of the priest, the latter is in the hand of the soldier but clearly subject to the nod of the priest and at the command of the emperor.” These are his words, and in any case it could be said more briefly that the Lord prohibited the use of

239. Proverbs 29:15.

240. John 18:11.

241. Ibid.

242. Luke 22:38.

the sword only by a private authority, for Peter was not yet pontiff, but a disciple.²⁴³

The fourteenth argument is that the Church spares heretics only once, but the apostle in his epistle to Titus, chapter 3, orders that they be forgiven at least twice.

I reply that even if all Latin and Greek manuscripts now constantly have: "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject,"²⁴⁴ nevertheless in some of the Greek and Latin ones there was not this version, but "after the first admonition reject," as is clear from Irenaeus, book 3, chapter 3; Tertullian in *De praescriptione*; Cyprian in *Ad Quirinum*, book 3, chapter 78; and Ambrose and Jerome in their commentary on this passage of the apostle. Therefore it is not certain which version is the true one. Moreover, in this passage of the apostle—which St. Jerome approves more in our version, as did St. Athanasius, according to him—²⁴⁵ the apostle does not talk about the pardon to be given to a converted heretic but of the admonition that is given before the heretic is excommunicated through the sentence of a judge. The Church, indeed, observes this procedure not only in the case of heretics, but also in the case of every other person whom it excommunicates, for it always gives at least two admonitions beforehand.

The fifteenth argument is that heretics are outside of the Church, and in 1 Corinthians 5 it is said: "But them that are without God judgeth."²⁴⁶ I reply that they are outside of the Church, but with the duty and obligation of remaining inside, and therefore they can be forced to come back as we force sheep when they leave the flock.

The sixteenth argument is that wishing the death of heretics is against

243. Bellarmine devotes the entire chapter 19 of his treatise against Barclay to explain this passage from Bernard's *De consideratione*, which is a *locus classicus* for the question of papal authority in temporal matters. See I. S. Robinson, "Church and Papacy," in Burns, ed., *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, pp. 252–305 at pp. 300ff., and J. A. Watt, "Spiritual and Temporal Power," in *ibid.*, pp. 367–423, at pp. 368–74.

244. Titus 3:10.

245. This italic phrase was added by Bellarmine himself to the 1599 Venice edition of this work (APUG 1364, col. 504).

246. 1 Corinthians 5:13.

the mildness of the Church. But it is not against the mildness of the Church, because the Church is held to show compassion toward its children, and it would certainly be harsh and cruel if it showed compassion toward the wolves rather than the sheep. Second, the Church tried all other methods before it could be persuaded to inflict the ultimate punishment. For, as we said above, initially it only excommunicated them, but seeing that this alone was not sufficient, it added pecuniary sanctions, then the loss of all goods, then exile, and in the end it came to this, as is sufficiently clear from various laws of ancient emperors under the title "De haereticis."²⁴⁷

The seventeenth argument is that faith is free. Yes, but "free" is understood in two ways. In one sense it means free from obligation, as when we say that one is free to make a vow of chastity or to enter a religious order; but he is not free to break the vow or leave his order. In this sense faith for those who never accepted it is free from the obligation of human law, but not of divine law, and therefore men do not force them, but God will punish them. But for those who professed it with baptism, faith is not free from the obligation of either divine or human law, and therefore men force them to keep it. In the second sense "free" is taken as opposed to "compulsory," and in this sense one is free not to believe, as he is free to commit other sins, but such freedom does not prevent men who act badly from being punished. Indeed, it rather demands that they be punished, for if a person is free to believe or not believe, he could believe and remain in the Church as he should have, and because he did not do so, he is deservedly punished: this is the reply of St. Augustine in epistle 50 [185] to Boniface, and *Contra epistolam Gaudentii* [*Contra Gaudentium*], book 2 [1], chapter 11 [19], where he says: "Free will has been given to man, but if man has done evil, he should suffer the punishment."

The eighteenth argument is that the apostles never called upon the secular arm against the heretics. St. Augustine in epistle 50 [185] and in other places replies that the apostles did not do so because there was no

247. This is title 5, book 16, of the Theodosian Code and title 5, book 1, of the Justinian Code (text in *Corpus iuris civilis*, vol. 2, pp. 50–60).

Christian prince then to call upon. Then, in fact, that prophecy of Psalm 2 was fulfilled: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed";²⁴⁸ and afterward, in the time of Constantine, that other prophecy that follows in the same Psalm started to be fulfilled: "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear,"²⁴⁹ and soon the Church invoked the help of the secular arm.

*On the Temporal Power of the Pope.
Against William Barclay*

248. Psalm 2:2.

249. Psalm 2:10–11.