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án 1680. ayant ecrit plus de 20. Traites, publiés a
Amsterdam chez H. Wetstein.
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[Frontispiece

Antoinette Bourignon

QUIETIST

ALEX. R. MACEWEN, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN [illegible]

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON MCMX

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BY

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PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

Printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury

PREFACE

Two hundred years ago the name of Antoinette Bourignon was well known in many parts of northern Europe. Her writings were widely read in the Netherlands, France, Germany and England. Her disciples were as a rule men of learning and piety, and her teaching seemed likely to gain a place in the religion of the modern world. In Scotland, where it found special acceptance, some shrewd observers thought that it threatened the dominance of Calvinism. A generation later, John Wesley published portions of her writings for the edification of his Societies.

Her doctrines were condemned by all the Church authorities of her time: by a Papal Commission and various local authorities of

the Roman Church; by numerous Consistories and State Ministers of Religion in Lutheran lands; by leading English divines and, most emphatically, by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, which placed her on the same evil eminence as Arius, Socinus and Arminius, requiring all candidates for the ministry to repudiate her errors. Hundreds of ministers of the Church of Scotland now living have publicly disowned "Bourignonism."

Yet her life and doctrine have passed out of common knowledge. Although she is mentioned in all important Church Histories, none of them explain the prominent position which she once occupied. The standard treatises on Mysticism refer to her vaguely, contradicting one another upon essential matters, and essayists who theorise on the religion of the eighteenth century use her name unwarrantably to illustrate and confirm their theories. The present writer was led to read her works and investigate her fortunes by a desire to reconcile conflicting

and confusing statements made by authors of repute, and was drawn onwards by the discovery of some singular events in her career involving important causes and persons. He publishes the results of his quest in the hope of saving other students from the need for minute research, and of making a slight contribution to a department of religious history which has recently asserted a claim to attention.

Her career is significant historically. In the latter half of the seventeenth century the life of the Reformed and the Roman Churches was at a low ebb. Dogmatism, superstition and secularism were in possession, and it is instructive to see how a serious and vigorous mind came to abandon all definitely Christian dogma and to indulge in extravagances. Light is thrown upon the position and the attitude of the celebrated quietists who were her contemporaries, and also upon the prevalence of revivalism, mysticism and rationalism in eighteenth-century religion.

General readers may, it is hoped, find some interest in the adventures of the narrative and in its exhibition of an independent and original character in picturesque surroundings. They are recommended to omit or to read lightly the Introductory Chapter, which is required in order to make clear to students the place which her doctrine occupied in Church history.

Cordial thanks are due to Rev. Dr. D. W. Forrest for valuable suggestions, to Rev. Dr. C. G. McCrie, who has been kind enough to revise the proof-sheets, and to another unfailing helper.

1909.

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INTRODUCTION

SOURCES AND LITERATURE

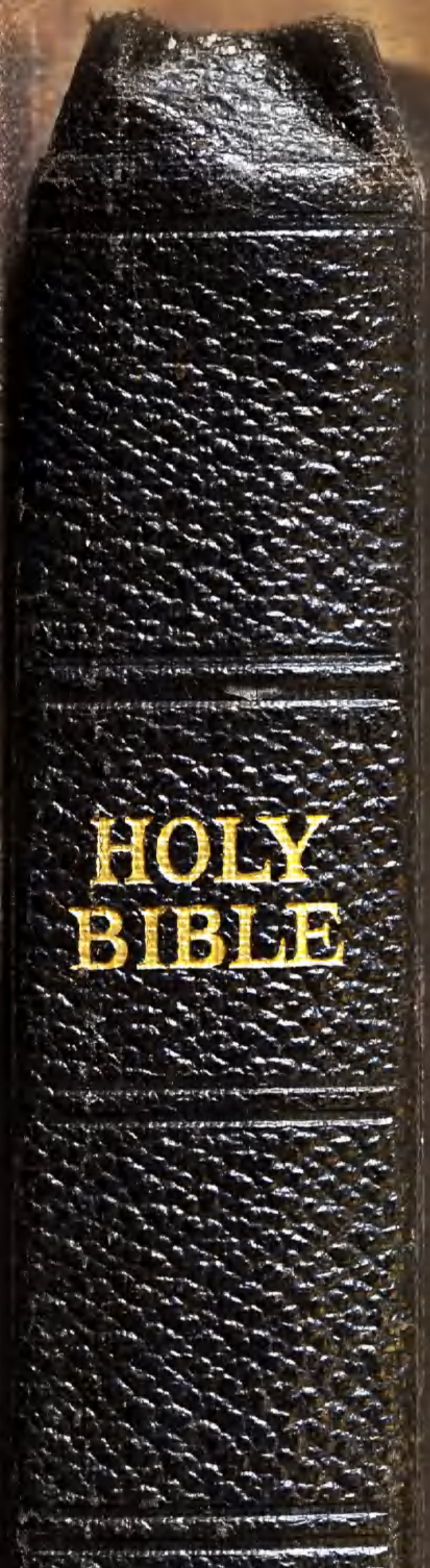
A COLLECTED edition of Mlle. Bourignon's writings was published at Amsterdam in nineteen volumes by Riewerts & Arents in 1679–84; a second collection, also in nineteen volumes, was issued by H. Wetstein in 1686, and a third issue in twenty-one volumes appeared in 1717. The first two volumes in each of these editions consist of her Life in three parts, viz. "*La Parole de Dieu*, ou Sa Vie Intérieure, par elle-même" (written at Malines in 1663); "*Sa Vie Extérieure*, par elle-même" (written at Amsterdam in 1668); "*Sa Vie Continuée*, reprise depuis sa naissance jusqu'à sa mort, par Pierre Poiret." The two autobiographical parts, although they must be followed in their main lines, are contradictory at some critical points and require to be checked by her

other writings and by the statements of her numerous opponents.

Her other writings consist partly of Conférences reported by Christian de Cort, Pierre Poiret and others, and revised by herself, partly of Letters, some long and elaborate, written to various correspondents between 1637 and 1680, the year of her death. They were first issued as separate volumes under the following titles:

L'Appel de Dieu et le Refus des Hommes.
La Dernière Miséricorde de Dieu.
La Lumière née en Tenebres.[1]
La Lumière du Monde.
Le Tombeau de la Fausse Théologie.
L'Académie des Sçavans Théologiens.
Traitté Admirable de la Solide Vertu.
Confusion des Ouvriers de Babel.
Avertissement contre la Secte des Trembleurs.
Les Persécutions du Juste.
Le Témoignage de Verité.
L'Innocence Réconnue.
La Pierre de Touche.
L'Etoile du Matin.
L'Aveuglement des Hommes de Maintenant.

1 The spelling and accentuation here and in the rest of the Introduction are reproduced from the original.



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Christliche gründliche Ammerckungen. G. H. Burchard. Hamburg, 1676.

Widerlegung derer Irrthümer die G. H. Burchardus hat herausgegeben wider Jungfrau A. B., durch N. H. B. 1676.

Apocalypsis Hæreseos der Jungfrau A. B. Ouw. Hamburg, 1674 and 1675.

Journal de Leipsic. January, 1686.

Nouvelles de la République de Lettres. April and May, 1685.

Petri Poireti De Eruditione Solida, etc. 1692.

Praedictio A. B. de Vastationibus urbis Bruxellarum per ignem, ex collectaneis J. Baronis. Amsterdam and Brussels, 1696.

Examen Theologiae Novae et maxime celeberrimi Domini Poireti ejusque magistrae de Bourignon. J. W. Jäger. Frankfurt, 1708.

The articles on "Bourignon" and "Adam" in Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* must also be regarded as giving contemporary evidence, since they contain quotations from and references to the periodical literature of her time. Yet Bayle's work in this direction is largely superseded by the laborious researches of Antonius von der Linde, published at Leyden in 1895 under the title *Antoinette Bourignon, das*

Licht der Welt. Dr. von der Linde has examined the archives of Schleswig, Nordstrand and Aurich, as well as the public libraries of Amsterdam and Hamburg, with a thoroughness which must be regarded as final.

It was not, however, on the Continent but in England and Scotland that "A. B.'s"[1] teaching gained influence after her death. Her biographer and editor, Poiret, records that her writings were translated into English by Richard Baxter, and although von der Linde has shown this to be a blundering boast, it is certain that some of her writings were "englished" as early as 1671 and that English theologians were much exercised by her doctrine, which they regarded as a species of Quakerism. In the Preface to the Amsterdam issue of the *Treatise of Solid Vertue* it is stated that "R. B." [Robert Boyle, not Richard Baxter] "has been having her works translated in

[1] Henceforward we may be allowed to use this designation, which was a usual one both while she lived and afterwards. When English and Scottish theologians attempted to write her name, their spelling became erratic.

London," and that Sir George Mackenzie ("Bloody Mackenzie") in his *De Imbecillitate Ratiocinationis Humanae* has referred to her religious precocity. The systematic translation of her writings began with :

The Light of the World, a most true Relation of a Pilgrimess, M. Antonia Bourignon, travelling towards Eternity. Published by Mr. Christian de Cort, . . . London, 1696.

This translation was anonymous, but Charles Leslie in *The Snake in the Grass*, which appeared in the same year, speaks of it as having been "recommended by some among ourselves who ought to have had more sense and value for the religion of Christ." Leslie's criticisms of the book, which occupy most of his Preface, show little discrimination, and indeed consist mainly of angry assertions that at heart A. B. was a Quaker. The same must be said of *Bourignianism Detected: or the Delusion and Errors of Antonia Bourignon and her Growing Sect*, by John Cockburn, D.D., in two parts (London, 1698), and *A Letter from John Cockburn, D.D.* (London,

1698).[1] The next translation into English was :

> An admirable Treatise of Solid Vertue, unknown to the Men of this Generation, by Antonia Bourignon. Translated from the French original. London, 1699.[2]

In 1699 there appeared a volume destined to have ecclesiastical results : *An Apology for M. Antonia Bourignon*, in four parts : (1) An Abstract of her Sentiments and a Character of her Writings ; (2) An Answer to the Prejudice raised against them ; (3) The Evidence she brings of her being led by the Spirit of God, with her answer to the Prejudices opposed thereunto, to which is added a Dissertation of Dr. De Heyde on

[1] John Cockburn (1652–1729), brother-in-law of George Garden, hereafter to be mentioned, and a relative of the Scougals, was a peculiar sample of the "Aberdeen doctors." Minister of Udny, Old Deer, and Ormiston parishes in succession, he was deprived and imprisoned by the Privy Council for refusing allegiance to William. He escaped to the Court of James at St. Germains and passed thence to Amsterdam, where from 1698 to 1709 he ministered to an Episcopalian congregation, closing his life as a parish clergyman in Middlesex. He was a contentious and voluminous writer.

[2] Part of this edition, including the British Museum copy, was issued at Amsterdam in 1698.

the same Subject; (4) An Abstract of her Life. To which are added Two Letters from different Hands, containing Remarks on the Preface to *The Snake in the Grass* and *Bourignianism Detected* . . . London, 1699.

The *Apology* was written with skill and propriety. Although it was anonymous, the author was known to be the Rev. George Garden, D.D., an Episcopalian clergyman at Aberdeen,[1] where A. B.'s teaching had proved specially welcome. In *An Advertisement annent the Reading of the Books of Antonia Borignion*, by the Rev. George White, minister of Maryculter, published at Aberdeen in 1700, her doctrine is described as spreading "like a devouring fire, leading sundry well-meaning persons to vent many errors, and causing young men of good expectations to have their melan-

[1] Garden, while more scholarly than Cockburn, was as definitely opposed to Presbyterianism. Ordained by Bishop Scougal in 1677, he had been "laid aside" by the Privy Council in 1692. Afterwards he bowed for a while to the House of Hanover, but in 1715 he became an open Jacobite and was thrown into prison. It was he who "stated the case" for Episcopacy in Scotland. His other writings, although excellent, have no bearing upon his "Bourignonism." He died in 1733.

cholly heightened to an excessive degree." In 1700 the Roman Catholic Bishop Nicolson, Scottish Vicar-apostolic, impressively warned the faithful in Scotland against the "errors of the Borigionites," and two years later the Nuncio at Paris informed Propaganda that serious danger existed in Scotland through "the dissemination of Antoinette Bourignon's errors," of which errors the learned ecclesiastic was so ignorant that he regarded them as an outcome of Jansenism.

Meanwhile the General Assembly had taken Garden in hand on the initiative of its Commission.[1] When impeached in 1701, he refused to appear in his defence; whereupon the Commission submitted proof of his having declared under examination that A. B.'s writings "represent the essentials of Christian religion" and that he "heartily embraced her sentiments," as promoting Christian union, love and charity, while even "her singular sentiments contra-

[1] This was not the "Commission of Assembly" in its modern sense, but a special committee appointed in 1700 to "purge and plant churches" and search out heresies in certain districts.

dicted no article of the Christian religion." The Assembly deposed him and specifically condemned eight of A. B.'s doctrines[1] as "impious, pernicious, and damnable."

Garden. whose congregation, although formally under the jurisdiction of the Assembly, seems to have been as unpresbyterian as he was, ignored the deposition and continued his propagandism. From his pen or under his guidance there appeared:

The Light risen in Darkness, in 4 parts, being a collection of Letters written to several Persons upon Great and Important Subjects, very profitable for the Common Instruction and Conduct of all who seek God in Sincerity; but in a Special Manner for detecting the Lamentable decay of the Life and Spirit of Christianity now at this time and directing to the proper means of recovering it, with a large Explication of the 24 and 25 Chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, by Antonia Bourignon. Done out of the French. London, 1703.

The Renovation of the Gospel Spirit, in three Parts, showing the Universal Apostacy of Mankind from the spirit and Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ; with the sure and infallible means of

1 A statement and scrutiny of the doctrines condemned will be found on pp. 96-99.

The diffusion of her doctrine by means of these publications continued. Henry Dodwell, in the Premonition to his *Epistolary Discourse* (1706), quotes the following statement from an unnamed correspondent dated April 24, 1705: "The Bourigionists, who make light of order, civil and ecclesiastical, bear it very high, especially at St. Andrews, and the rather because the students were likely to come over to church principles; they boast as if Poiret had worsted Mr. Dodwell. . . . Those enthusiasts are likely in a short time to prove more dangerous than the Presbyterians, the last not being so much supported by the populace as by the secular arm." In the *Discourse* itself Dodwell adduces, in proof of his thesis that divisive spirits are essentially evil, the adherence of Scottish Episcopalians to Antoinette Bourignon, referring contemptuously to her career, but giving little evidence of acquaintance with her teaching.

Equally ineffective is the next critique which falls to be mentioned, as being the production of a man of some celebrity: "*Notes about the Spirit's Operations* . . . with

diverse remarks for detecting the enthusiastic delusions of the Cevenois, A. B. and others, by the Rev. J. Hog of Carnock. Edinburgh, 1709." Hog is satisfied with general censures and denunciations of A. B., whose writings he describes as "a whole mass of errors, heresies and blasphemies, and a profane mixture of philosophy which has been condemned by an assembly of this National Church."

In the same year, or perhaps in 1708, Robert Barclay, son of the apologist for the Quakers, published *A Modest and Serious Address to the Well-meaning Followers of Antonia Bourignon*, which is chiefly remarkable for its testimony to the popularity of her doctrines in England.

More instructive is "*Bourignionism Displayed*, by Andrew Honeyman, in a Discovery and brief Refutation of sundry gross errors maintained by Antonia Bourignon and (G.G.), the author of the Preface to the English Reader before *The Renovation of the Gospel Spirit*, one of A. B.'s books. Aberdeen, 1710." Honeyman states that A. B.'s teaching is "spreading everywhere

as a canker and has laid hold of some persons of quality." Of G. G. (Dr. Garden) he writes respectfully as an acquaintance of Henry Scougal's, and indeed suggests that he may not be responsible for the Preface in question, although his responsibility has been "publicly declared by the President of our Church and by the Quakers." His scrutiny of A. B.'s teaching is close, and to some extent scholarly. It is impossible to say whom he means by "the President of our Church," his tone being Episcopalian rather than Presbyterian.[1]

It was, however, upon the General Assembly that the care of Scottish orthodoxy lay. The Assembly of 1709 pronounced that "dangerous errors of Bourignonism do abound in some places of this nation." The Assembly of 1710, after reiterating the plaint that "gross heresies and errors going

[1] In the British Museum Catalogue and also in Alliboni's *Critical Dictionary*, Honeyman is styled "Bishop of Orkney"; but he cannot be the Bishop Andrew Honeyman mentioned in Keith's *Scottish Bishops*, pp. 228, 350, and Grub's *Ecclesiastical History*, iii. 215, 231, 254, since the latter died in 1676. Bishop Dowden believes that the designation of him as "Bishop" is probably a blunder.

under the name of Bourignonism greatly prevail in the bounds of several Synods,'" proceeded to enact that, where those heresies appeared, schoolmasters, tutors and chaplains shall be required to sign the Confession of Faith. "The names of those who belong to Bourignian Societies and of the books which they circulate shall be transmitted to the Commission of Assembly"; while "professors of divinity are recommended to make a full collection of A. B.'s errors and of such other errors as reflect upon the nature, person and offices of Christ, and to write a confutation of the same." It was at this crisis, which was generally regarded as a serious one, that A. B.'s name was introduced into the Standards of the Scottish Church. The Assembly of 1711, when preparing a Formula for ordinands, included in it the following specific question:

Do you disown all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Bourignian and other doctrines, tenets and opinions whatsoever, contrary to and inconsistent with the Confession of Faith?

With these enactments Bourignonism

practically disappeared from Scotland. In 1714 Wodrow writes severely of the "ecclesiastical foppery" and "pretended gravity" of the sect as "but a step towards Popery."[1] Yet he manifestly sees that the danger is past. The anxiety of Episcopalians lasted a little longer. In 1720, according to the *Lockhart Papers*, there was some apprehension "lest Doctor Gairns, who had publicly advanced Madame Bouguion's (*sic*) wild doctrines,"[2] might be nominated for a vacant bishopric, but the alarm proved groundless. Thereafter A. B. is rarely named by any Scottish theologian, however pugnacious. The above Question was retained in the Formula of the Church of Scotland until 1889, but long before that date the word had lost all meaning for candidates. Even the standard historians of the Scottish Churches show almóst complete

[1] See Wodrow's *Correspondence*, i. 169, 572. In his *Analecta* (ii. 349, iii. 472) Wodrow repeats some curious gossip, which shows that a horror of "Bourignonism" was, in 1728, combined with complete misapprehension of what A. B. had taught.

[2] *Lockhart Papers*, ii. 101. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, "Doctor Gairns" was Dr. Garden.

ignorance of the once famous heretic. Dr. Thomas McCrie lends his authority to a groundless legend that she "travelled in the dress of a hermit through France, Holland, England and Scotland." Dr. John Cunningham, who frankly avows that he has been able to consult only one of her works, speaks of her as "a female fanatic, who in 1696 (!!) laid claim to inspiration." Professor Grub refrains from going beyond a record of the ecclesiastical decisions in her case, while Canon Bellesheim merely repeats the suggestion that she was a Jansenist. When professional writers give so little help,[1] it is not strange that laymen have been perplexed.

In England, however, till the close of the

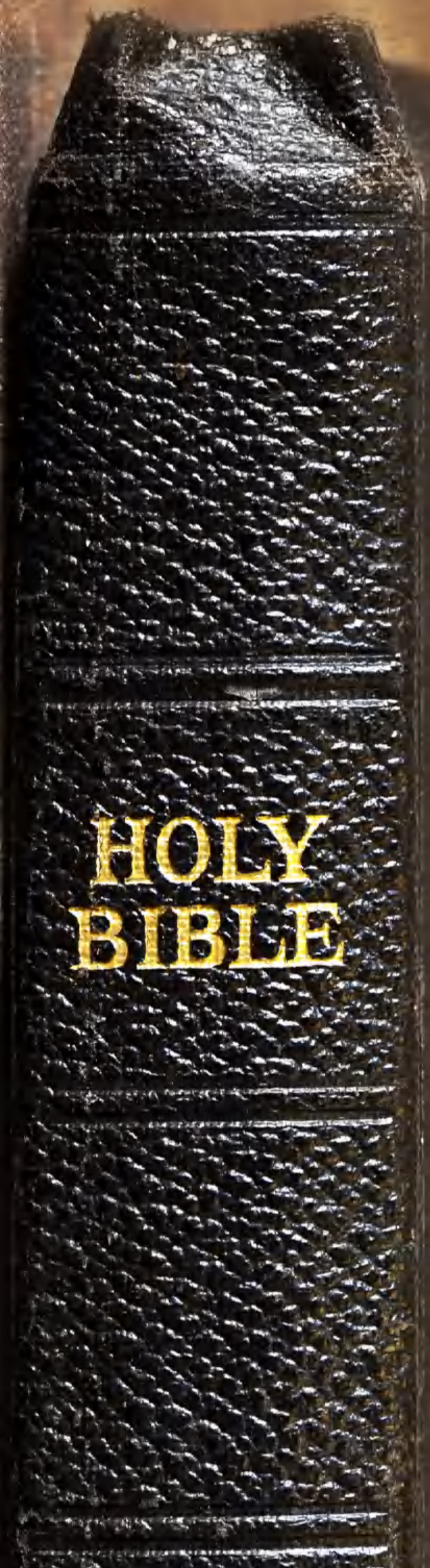
[1] Mr. W. L. Matheson speaks of her as having "served a useful purpose" and "anticipated the influx of liberal theology" by "reviving in Scotland the protest of the Laudian or Canterburian divines against the horrors of the Calvinistic faith" (*Scotland and the Union*, pp. 222–4). Rev. H. G. Graham writes of her teaching as "a passing local epidemic prevailing amongst Aberdonian Episcopalians" (*Social Life of Scotland*, ii. 128–9). Mr. Andrew Lang describes her as "a French mystic of a common type not welcome to Calvinism," whose disciples "doubted whether the heathen were universally reprobate" (*History of Scotland*, iv. 282 ff).

eighteenth century, her teaching maintained a sporadic and fitful life. In 1737 a new edition of *The Renovation of the Gospel Spirit* was published in London, and about the same time John and Charles Wesley became acquainted with some of her other writings. In 1739, in face of the remonstrances of Dr. Byrom, who was afraid that "offence would be given," they included translations of two of her hymns in their *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*. One of these still stands in the Wesleyan hymn-book, as No. 526 (276) beginning—

Come, Saviour Jesus, from above,
Assist me with Thy heavenly grace;
Empty my heart of earthly love
And for Thyself prepare the place.[1]

But John Wesley made a far more extensive use of her writings, by including the *Treatise of Solid Vertue* in his "Christian Library," a collection of the "choicest pieces of practical divinity which have been published in the English tongue." The collection was

[1] The other hymn was "A Farewell to the World." Both of them were versions rather than translations.



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teaching to English readers. The two or three pages given to her by Dr. Vaughan in his *Hours with the Mystics* are so slight that they cannot be regarded as an exception. In 1872 the leading facts of her life were admirably narrated by Principal Gordon of the Unitarian Home Mission College, Manchester, in a paper read to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool, under the title of "The Fortunes of a Flemish Mystic." Dr. Gordon has courteously favoured the writer with a copy of the paper, which is marked by his distinctive accuracy.

In France the meditative aspect of her teaching and her criticisms of Romanism have repeatedly during the past two centuries attracted attention, and occasional attempts have been made to rehabilitate her in general esteem, mainly by writers in periodical literature. The most important of these appeared in 1876, in the "Philosophie Chrétienne" series under the title *Antoinette Bourignon, la prophétesse des derniers temps*, published by Sandoz & Fischbacher. An article by Salomon Rei-

nach in *La Revue de Paris* for October 1894 should also be mentioned, owing to the obvious familiarity of the writer with his subject.

In Germany the reading of her works was forbidden as early as 1703 by a "Strafedikt" issued at Stuttgart, and in various localities the Consistories showed an alarm equal to that of the Scottish General Assembly. In 1708 and 1716, J. W. Jäger, Chancellor of the University of Tübingen, published two ponderous refutations of her opinions and of those of Poiret, which seem to have been all but successful in checking the spread of the heresy. Albrecht Ritschl tells how in 1719 a pious pastor discovered with horror that he had in his congregation an adherent of Antoinette Bourignon. Her influence upon the recluse Karl von Marsay is set forth by Max Göbel in his *Geschichte des Christlichen Leben.* In 1735 a sketch of her life was published in German, but it has no independent worth, being a mere blend of her autobiography with Poiret's account of her. Indeed her thinking is so un-German that her writings have had little

attraction for the German mind, and German historians write of her with an angry contempt which is almost comical in its fierceness. This feature disfigures the valuable work of von der Linde referred to above. He exhibits effectively the blunders into which Walch, Adelung, Bauer and Heppe have fallen, and has been patient to a degree in searching local archives; but he has no patience at all with Antoinette herself, so that his monograph, while an indispensable guide as to biographical details, has little worth as an appreciation.

Her poems, which are nine in number, were issued separately, but are now embedded in her various treatises. They all are short except one entitled "Des châtiments universels," which is part of *La Renouvellement de l'Esprit Evangélique* and is rendered into blank verse at the close of the English version of that work. The two poems which Wesley used as hymns were probably, according to Dr. Julian, translated by Wesley's friend Byrom.

A word of explanation is required of the fact that in the following pages, which

depend for their value upon their strict accuracy, no references to pages or chapters of her works are given. To give references that would be of any use to students is impossible. There is no edition of the writings of the authoress which is entitled to be regarded as the standard one. The two seventeenth-century editions for which Poiret was responsible differ in arrangement, and in both of them the text was altered to abate religious prejudices, so that they are inferior to the editions published in A. B.'s lifetime, and yet these have not been collected into a group. The English translations, which have most historical importance, are very carelessly printed. The paging is marred by incessant blunders, there are no chapters, and the order of the Letters is varied. Accordingly, the writer, after attempting several methods of giving references, has abandoned the attempt and asks the reader to believe that the quotations and abstracts have been carefully made. The subject is one upon which it is needless to disclaim theological or religious bias.

With regard to the works which have been cited in this chapter, it should be noted that, although the British Museum Library contains copies of most of them, those which are in pamphlet form and bound together are not all separately catalogued. Those which refer to the Society of Friends are to be found in the Devonshire Square Library. The Superintendent of the Book-room in City Road has kindly given the writer access to the documents with regard to John Wesley. A complete series of the first editions of the English translations may be consulted in the Library of New College, Edinburgh.

The portrait prefixed to this volume is a copy of an engraving made from a drawing by her disciple and editor, Poiret. Another reproduction of the same drawing was prefixed to some volumes of the English translations of her works.

"She was," Poiret wrote, "of the middle stature, neat and slim, of a symmetrical countenance, a dark complexion, a clear forehead, an unwrinkled brow: a frank look from eyes of a bluish tint and of such

excellent sight that she never used glasses : rather a large mouth, full lips and slightly prominent teeth : her hair blanched with age : illness had wasted her cheeks and deepened the setting round her eyes : her aspect, address and mien were sweet, natural and attractive : her pace was deliberate, and when she walked she held her head a trifle high. At upwards of sixty years of age, she looked scarcely more than forty. All her senses except the palate were singularly acute ; her spirits were lively and sustained, never sad, always equable."

CHAPTER I

HER PREPARATION

1616–63

ANTOINETTE BOURIGNON was born on January 13, 1616, in the Belgian town of Lille, which was at that time included in the Spanish Netherlands. Her father, Jean Bourignon, an Italian by descent (*italice*, Giovanni Borignoni), was uneducated, boorish and overbearing, although not without some warmth of affection. Her mother, who was of Flemish parentage and the heiress of a considerable estate, had a colourless and pettish character. Antoinette was the third of five children, but of these only one beside herself grew up, an older sister.

She was born with a hideous hare-lip, so offensive that it was debated if her life was

sometimes ugly. In the midst of her dances she had visions of hell, and, in the intervals of her innocent amusements, strolled in churchyards. The visions were not meaningless. They were sent by her true Spouse, who whispered to her as she danced: "Wilt thou then forsake Me for another? Dost thou hope to find one dearer than Me, more perfect or more faithful?" And again, "Leave all earthly things, sever thyself from love of creatures, deny thyself." Before she was nineteen, these voices prevailed and she begged leave from her father to enter a nunnery. But the sturdy Jean, sound churchman as he was, refused point-blank. He knew, he said, the greed and hypocrisy of all the Flemish nuns; he would rather see her bedridden for life or at once in her grave. Persistent in her purpose, she stole away from home and offered herself to the Prior of a Carmelite Convent, promising to work hard for her living. But the Prior smiled and said, "That cannot be; we are in need of funds and can receive no girls without payment; bring money with you, and you will be

admitted." So began her dislike for churchmen and her scornful suspicion of monastic institutions, for she had a temper which could not brook contradiction. Yet the repulse did not lessen her devoutness. She fasted secretly, mixed her food with ashes to punish her palate, and wore coarse haircloth next her skin. While taking Holy Communion thrice a week with rapture in the parish church, she turned her bedroom into a penitential cloister and remained there on her knees before a crucifix in ardent contemplation. Once at least she fainted from exhaustion and bruised her face on the hard floor. Her devotion found voice in amorous verse of a somewhat sensuous kind. The following is perhaps the best—

Je ne veux pas ni ciel ni terre,
Mon doux Jésus :
Votre pur amour solitaire
Qu'il soit tout nud !
Ni vous aimant ni pour vos grâces,
Ni vos faveurs :
Vous rendant tout, pour faire place
Au seul Donneur.

When at this stage, she received her

first divine commission. Kneeling one night before her crucifix, she saw a venerable man with flaxen hair and beard, clothed in glorious vestments. He said to her: "I am Augustine; thou shalt re-establish my Order in its perfection; tend this vine and it will bring forth fruit." With these words he vanished, leaving behind him a lovely vine which covered the whole of the ceiling. When her eye fell on her own dress, she found that she was robed in a grey habit and a black mantle, and swooned in amazement. On her recovery from the swoon, she was again in her ordinary dress and the vine had vanished, but the sense of a commission from heaven remained.

Her father resolved to bring these extravagances to an end, and betrothed her to a wealthy French merchant; but on the wedding-eve she fled, disguised as a man. At the garden gate she discovered a sou in her pocket and flung it away, saying, "No, I shall put my trust in God alone, not in riches!" But her disguise was faulty, and in the morning some mischievous street-children put a band of roystering soldiers

on her track. They overtook her at a wayside hamlet, and she would have been maltreated by their captain but for the kindly intervention of the village priest, who sheltered her in his church. Kneeling before the altar in terror, she heard a divine voice: "Thou shalt restore again my Gospel Spirit; men and women, under thy guidance, will live like the first Christians, without any earthly business; then will righteousness shine forth; for this I have created thee." She did not, it must be noted, disclose this commission to any one or make any effort to discharge it for twenty-seven years.

Meanwhile her perplexed deliverer consulted his ecclesiastical superior, the Archbishop of Cambray, as to how to deal with the young fugitive. After some hesitation and negotiation she was restored to her parents, with a promise that she would not again be urged to marriage. Indeed she was allowed to retire for five months to an Augustinian convent, but the life there fell far short of her ideal. "Where," she cried to God in ecstasy, "is there a place in which

I can cross the three bridges that lead to Eternity—resignation of the world, of all earthly goods, and of mine own will?" The divine reply was explicit: "There is now no such place upon earth; thou shalt be the founder and beginner." Yet this charge, too, she kept secret.

On her return to Lille, she was, in spite of her parents' promises to the Archbishop, treated even more harshly than before. Her mother reproached her, her father jested at her "notions," and she quarrelled with her sister, a worldly-minded and self-complacent girl. "She was fair and I was brown, she was passionate and I was mild, she was proud and I was humble." So Antoinette shrank completely into herself, redoubling her penitential exercises and private devotions and finding her chief consolation in the exciting glow of Holy Communion. Yet she was unconsciously moving away from the Church. In her father-confessor, who was a Jesuit, she confided for a time, but her confidence in him was shattered when he advised her to escape from her troubles by marriage, to

which her parents had again begun to urge her. It is typical of the Romanism of those days that when she intimated that henceforward she would have no father-confessor but her parish priest, she "was visited by the Religious of the several Orders, who warned her that she would certainly be deluded by the devil for want of a Director."

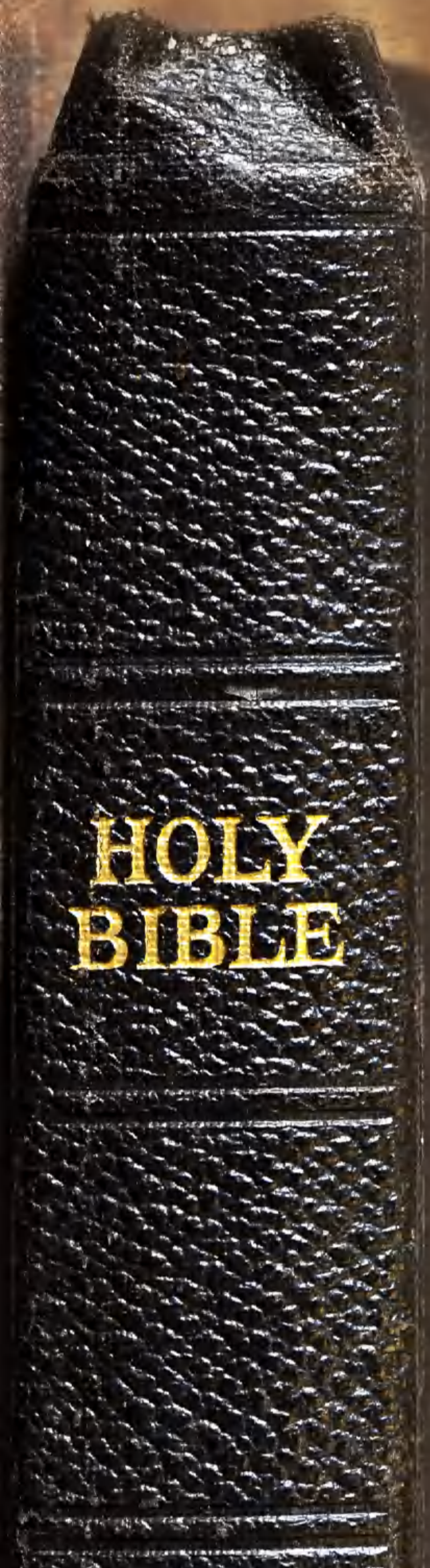
After eighteen months of miserable home-life, she implored her father to allow her to leave the world. Although he not only refused but threatened her with his malediction if she persisted, she defied him and made her way to the Archbishop of Mons, who received her kindly and for a while favoured her request to be allowed to set up a separate establishment of nuns. Among other kindnesses he gave her the special leave which Church law required for the private reading of the Bible. This permission brought about a crisis in her spiritual life, which proved to be so momentous that it must be described in her own words:

"I no sooner began to read the Gospels attentively than I perceived such a conformity with my inward

sentiments that, if I were to set them down in writing, I should write such a book in substance as the Gospels. I read no more, because God taught me inwardly all that I needed. To me the (inward) guidance of God and the reading of the Bible were the same thing."

Repeatedly she alleges that for twenty years thereafter she made no use of the Bible. The veracity of these statements has been challenged by many of her critics on the ground that in her writings she shows a fair acquaintance with the narratives as well as with the doctrines of Scripture. Yet her claim to an illumination which made her independent of the Bible certainly marks a turning point in her life. In a later chapter we shall see that this claim was inseparably connected with her other religious ideas.

Another development, even more important biographically, took shape at this time. She informed a chaplain whom the Archbishop of Mons deputed to examine her, that "all the evils of the Church came from the churchmen, and that they must amend if they would escape God's wrath." The



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Lille by her dying mother. At the death-bed she was reconciled to both parents, and thereafter attempted to console her widowed father and to manage his household affairs. But a few months proved her incompetence for such duties. Her health gave way. She fell into a trance which lasted for eight days, and when she emerged from it she was informed by her father that he was about to marry. His second wife was a young girl of vulgar character. After four months of bickering, Antoinette left home and raised a legal process against her father for one-half of her deceased mother's property. Her plea failed, and she had to make her home in a wretched garret, where again lace-making was her means of livelihood. Her life for the next five years, from the age of twenty-six to thirty-one, was laborious but cheerful. At one time, when her health threatened to fail, she spent several months with her friend the Countess; but she preferred her garret and her needle, being upheld by visions, the character of which is sufficiently disclosed by such lines as these--

Mon Jésus, ma douce flamme !
Cessez de me caresser :
C'est trop à mort me blesser,
De votre amour qui m'enflamme !
Ah, mon Jésus doux,
Qu'il est beau de mourir pour vous !

On her father's death in 1648, she again entered the law-courts as a claimant to her mother's property. Her sister had died a year before, but she was supported in her plea by her brother-in-law, and this time she was successful. She secured her moiety of the estate, and thenceforward had an income far beyond her personal needs. According to her own statements she dealt generously with her step-mother and her half-sisters, but she was charged in later life with having treated them harshly.

Making her home at Lille, she found occupation in the training of destitute girls for domestic employment. She began by taking two or three into her house; but subsequently, in 1653, she assumed the charge of a small orphanage which had been founded twelve or thirteen years before by a benevolent merchant. At her own cost

she extended the orphanage and supplemented a small endowment which the founder provided, until she could receive and maintain from thirty to forty children She had as adviser and partner in this enterprise a certain Jean de Saint-Saulieu, who brought her to the verge of a catastrophe. He was a retired soldier and bore a high repute for piety, but he proved to be a thorough knave and a hypocritical profligate. After borrowing largely from her on the pretext of ardent charity, he avowed a sensual passion for her and, when she proudly rejected his approaches, threatened her with public defamation. But she defied his threat, applied to the magistrates for protection, and forced him to retract his slanders and to take oath that he would not molest her. That she was innocent is made clear by the facts that the legal expenses of the action were laid upon Saulieu and that soon afterwards he was detected in outrageous vice. The peril of this exciting experience—it was not the first nor the last of the kind—convinced her of the danger of admitting men to her institute,

and in 1658 she had it converted into a religious cloister, so incurring another unforeseen danger.

The management and regulations were no longer wholly private; at least, they gained a certain amount of publicity. It became known that her discipline of the children was exceedingly severe. This is her own account of their day's work:

"They rose precisely at 5 and, after having spent half an hour in dressing and prayer, they learned to read and write till 6.30. Then they went to church. At 7 they were sent to household work, during which they recited the common prayers. They breakfasted at 8 and read some pious book till 9, when they sang spiritual songs for an hour. The next hour they worked silently. At 11 they repeated the Catechism and dined at noon, after which they had one half-hour of Recreation. From 1 till 8 they repeated the exercises of the forenoon. When they had supped, they went into the Oratory to pray, and after that they lay down in silence, and at 9 all the lamps were put out."

It is not strange that the girls were unhappy, nor that they came to hate their eager and unbending mistress. Still less strange is it that their young hearts wandered

through weariness. Poor children! they, too, like her, had visions. Each of them had an imagined Lover, plighted by sacred vow, who came weekly through closed doors and carried off his dreaming young sweetheart to the Sabbath of the witches, where they "did eat, drink, dance, sing and do a thousand other insolences." One girl, when about to be punished for stealing, said that the devil made her do it—her own dear devil, to whom she was betrothed. Another confessed that, at the age of ten, she had given her soul to her devil, that she had renounced her baptism and received a mark from him on her head, which was proved to be the case, for when they put a pin, the length of a man's finger, into her head, she felt no pain.

When the parish priests who visited the institute were called in, it was clearly proved that "all the thirty-two girls who were then in the house, all in general and each in particular, were bound to the devil"—bound so closely that they declined to forsake his caresses. Not only so; he had persuaded them to poison Antoinette. It

was only by a miracle that the poisoned broth had been untasted. Clearly they were witches! So emerged, in 1662, a lengthy trial before the Lille magistrates, in the course of which a hundred witnesses were examined. The evidence varied in its tone, and some of the witnesses wavered. One girl, having confessed to witchcraft, was asked if Antoinette was not herself a witch. "No, no," cried the girl, "our mother is no witch; she goes not to the Sabbath; she is full of God."

The course of the trial is indistinct, notwithstanding von der Linde's researches. Yet in its general character it closely resembled contemporary processes under the guidance of Spanish Inquisitors and Scottish Kirk-sessions. Writers like Lecky[1] are ludicrously unhistorical in their notion that such conceptions of supernatural agency are specially linked with Puritanism or Calvinism or any other "ism." The devil has had his epochs, and in the seventeenth

[1] *History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism*, i. 107, 127, 133. Cf. Dr. Patrick's Introduction to *The Statutes of the Scottish Church*, p. ci.

century his power was great, reaching to every sect and nationality. The stout Roman Catholic burghers of Lille thought of him as vividly and dealt with him as cautiously as did the Dominican Fathers and the Scottish Elders of those days.

The outcome of the trial was that the children were acquitted of the charge of witchcraft and that Antoinette was admonished to be less severe in her discipline. Meanwhile, however, a girl who had been cruelly punished by one of the servants in the institute died, and the townspeople rose in riotous indignation. Antoinette was driven to resign her charge and, after hiding for a few weeks in a House of Refuge, fled from Lille to Ghent. The institute was handed over by the magistrates to the Jesuits, who proceeded to hear Confession from the girls and, after the hearing, pronounced that they were saints and that Antoinette Bourignon was a guilty woman. But her footsteps, she steadily believed, were ordered by the Lord. When she had left the ungrateful town, His familiar voice said, "The time to speak is come: thou shalt no

apparent. Certain features of it affected her future so strongly that they must be named at this stage.

By her own confession, avarice was her chief temptation. In girlhood she had been negligent and prodigal, but she had learned by experience the duty of being "careful of every pin." In particular she had become convinced that it was dangerous to give money to the poor. Such giving, she said, is not charity; it only encourages and increases sin. Her care for money was not a merely negative quality. She tells how, when she saw low-priced lace in a shop window, she was tempted to buy a quantity and sell it elsewhere, and how she turned away sadly from any opportunity of making a good investment.

Another of her characteristics, all the more inherent because it was based upon settled conviction, was the opinion that the men and women of her time were almost irredeemably wicked. She seriously and repeatedly alleged that she had an inward assurance that three-fourths of mankind had consciously given themselves over to

the devil and a divine commission to bring this fact to light. "It is more needful," she said, "to discover the evil in our neighbours than their good, seeing that their good advantages us nothing, while their evil might greatly hurt us."

Further, she was an overbearing woman. Believing deeply on religious grounds, as we shall see afterwards, in her own infallibility, she was so autocratic in her disposition that she could not associate with any one on a footing of equality. For children, "spiritual children," who under her guidance would "restore the Gospel Spirit," she had a passionate yearning. But they must be obedient children, accepting her laws and bending to her will without reserve or hesitation.

So far as she had a worthy mission, she was sent to be an independent critic, standing apart, not only from the religion of her time but from all humane interests, and for that position she was admirably fitted by her temperament as well as by her training.

CHAPTER II

HER ANTAGONISM TO ROME

1663–67

THE next four years of Antoinette's life were spent in Flanders. From Ghent she passed to Malines, which was her home till 1667. Her residence there was interrupted by a short visit to Brussels, with the licentiousness of which she was disgusted, and by a lengthy visit to Lille, in 1664–65, made with a view to securing her rights and properties there. These, however, were unimportant episodes. It was among the ecclesiastics who found shelter in the pleasant precincts of Malines Cathedral that she brought forth her first "spiritual children" and first gave voice to the Gospel Spirit.

Her first-born was an archdeacon, Amatus

Coriache, afterwards Vicar-General of the Oratory, at whose entreaty she wrote the narrative of her "inner life." Vastly more important for her career was her second spiritual child, Christian de Cort, Superior of the Fathers of the Oratory and Pastor of the Church of St. John. When she made de Cort's acquaintance, he was a burly [1] excitable man of fifty-four, unsettled in conviction and perplexed by his affairs. Besides holding the above ecclesiastical offices he had been, since 1652, Director of a semi-religious, semi-commercial undertaking in the Baltic which will bulk largely in the following narrative. He had little faculty for business, and the liabilities which he had undertaken for this Company were beginning to be urgent. Yet he seems to have been a thoroughly honest man, and there was certainly no duplicity in his attachment to the wealthy recluse. He surrendered himself wholly to her guidance, obeying her slavishly and drinking in her

[1] The contrast he presented to Coriache, who was a little man, excited mirth at Malines; so continually did she harp upon her spiritual maternity.

disclosures of truth with loving and grateful delight.

The only other of her Children who calls for notice at this stage is Pierre Noëls, one of the Canons of the Cathedral. Noëls was not only a scholar but a man of some distinction, having been secretary to Cornelius Jansen, the famous Bishop of Ypres. Jansenism, it should be noted, was at that time under the rule and within the guidance of the Roman Church. Although Pope Alexander VII. had condemned the Five Propositions, the Peace of Clement IX. was at hand[1] and Port Royal was still a centre of learning and piety.

It was in familiar intercourse with these friends that her first publications took shape. It would serve no purpose to specify the various letters which she wrote at this period, but two of her treátises call for attention as giving a continuous and systematic account of her opinions—*La Lumière*

[1] In 1668, the Peace of Clement recognised that churchmen in signing the Formula of 1656 might declare that the intention of Jansen had not been absolutely ("*purement*") heretical.

du Monde and *L'Académie des Sçavans Théologiens*. The former sets forth her views of the Church, the latter her judgment on the questions then at issue between Jesuits and Jansenists.

Before attempting to give an abstract of these treatises, it must be said that, like all her other writings, they often revert in a confusing way to topics which seem to have been exhausted. In such cases it is necessary to bring together passages which occur in different connections.

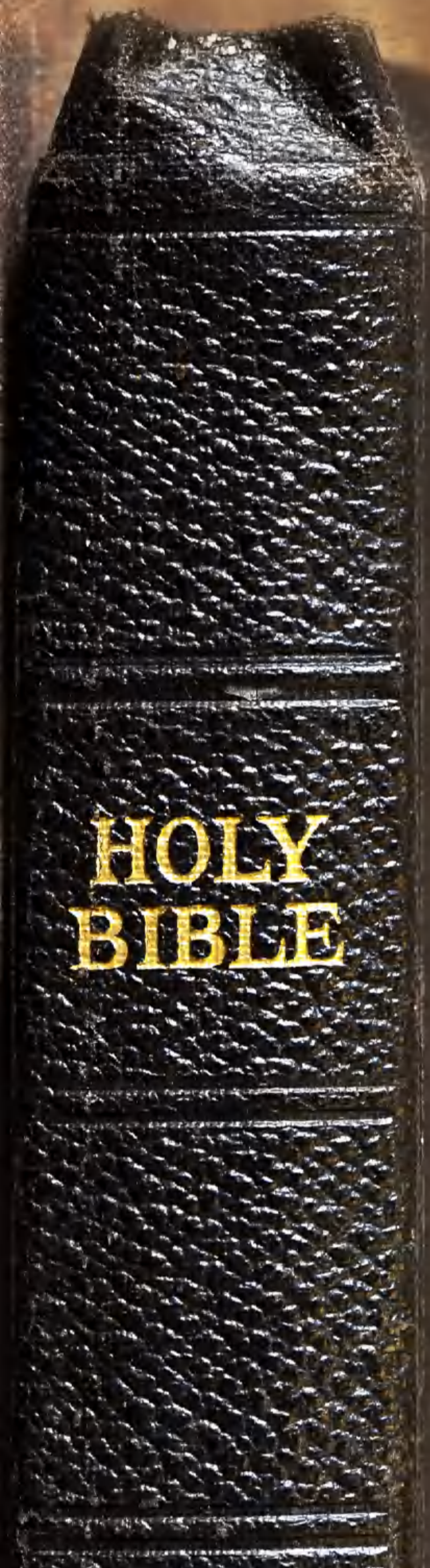
La Lumière du Monde consists, in its first two Parts, of an account by de Cort of a series of "Conférences" as to questions on which he consulted her. Although it was written by de Cort, she revised it before it was printed, and indeed re-wrote parts with her own pen. There is no doubt of her unqualified responsibility for the words as well as the ideas. In the production of Part III. de Cort had no share.

After a laudatory exordium upon her personal character, in which he singles out for special praise her humility and her cheerfulness, he declares that he has been

constrained to abandon all other teachers for her.

He would injure his conscience, if he contradicted her at a single point ; so clear is it that she is directly guided by God. She herself has learned nothing from any man. She reads no books. Although she carries with her a little volume in which the words of Jesus are recorded, this is only for purposes of devotion. She requires no instruction. Her unique humility is due to her self-knowledge, for the human soul is an abstract and epitome of all miseries and evils. True perfection consists in the love of God, and leads to charity, seeing that in our neighbours we see and touch God's image. Charity is not to be shown by making gifts to monks, nor by the building of churches. The idea that men are to be saved by morning and evening prayer or by frequent attendance at Communion has brought the world into darkness. Church pomp and priestcraft have only served to conceal the simplicities of the Gospel. It is certainly a good thing to hear the word of God regularly ; but in those Last Times—the times of Antichrist, who is the devil—men go to church as a mere matter of form.

The reasonings of the Church have been as mischievous as her ordinances. Theological science and learning have been the parents of heresy. The discussion of mysteries has been wholly unprofitable. No doubt the saints are wise, but few learned men



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who are regarded as heretics, she sees with her own eyes that the outward devotions which the Church enjoins only hinder true religion. Prayer consists in an elevation of the soul to God, which is possible when we walk and work and eat and drink, and even while we sleep. Nowadays churches, priests, masses and paternosters are more numerous than they ever were; yet Christians are worse than Turks. The visible Church is thoroughly unholy, and the means of salvation which she tenders are not the true means, for she makes broad and easy the way which Christ made narrow.

No modern person believes the Creed. It is by knowing ourselves that we gain knowledge of God. Yet we must also observe His works. Who is there even among pagans who can doubt His infinite power and wisdom, His unfathomable goodness in making man immortal and in giving him freedom? By creation God is united with ourselves as our souls are united with our bodies. Yet we have forsaken Him. We are worse than our first parents, for they did one wrong thing while we do everything wrong. And for this we men are responsible. To say that we cannot love God and keep His commandments perfectly is sheer blasphemy. It is easier to love God than to love man. He is all beauty and goodness. The only burden He has laid upon us is the yoke of love. All the creatures together cannot give us one moment of life. No-

thing is lovely or gracious unless we refer it to its source, which is God.

So it is not the habit or the cloister that makes religion, but the observance of evangelical counsels. God regards not whether we be "religious" or married, but whether we keep His rules. He will have all our love or none of it, and religious externalities sever us from Him—not in themselves or necessarily but as they are at present, polluted and poisonous. We must quit the poisoned streams and turn to the pure Fountain. The guidance which we gain there always leads to humility, to patience, and to the doctrine of Christ.

At this stage de Cort, entranced with such sentiments, declared to her that he would leave all and follow her. "No," she answered, "you must be swallowed up of God and rest on Him alone." "Where shall I go then?" he cried. "Sir," she said, "you will be well enough in any place, provided you are with God." [1]

When he asked her if he might meanwhile continue to preach, she told him that he must not attempt to teach others until he himself had found God. He is not yet qualified, not brave enough. When he is perfectly united with God, he will be fit for work among the heathen and among heretics. Work among Romanists will be hopeless for any one until the whole papal fabric is shattered, with its infinite mischiefs and its noxious doctrine

[1] See p. 180.

that the body of Christ is in the Sacrament. By this doctrine churchmen have made for themselves gods upon earth. In the Roman College Christ has no audience, and the outward ordinances which that College enjoins have so withdrawn the souls of men from God that in her whole life Antoinette Bourignon has not found a single good person. Therefore we must turn away from the so-called Church and seek for God within our hearts, remembering that He is always teaching new truth. If we bind ourselves by the opinions of the ancient Fathers, we shall hinder the work of His Spirit.

God is coming soon to reign on earth. When He comes, there will be no destruction of the world, for nothing that He has made can ever be wasted. The souls of the wicked will be gathered together in one corner of the earth, amidst all the poisons and venoms with which sin has polluted God's handiwork, and will suffer there eternally in indescribable torture of body as well as of soul. In heaven, on the other hand, when earth is turned into heaven, all will be beauty and bliss. There will be leisurely and painless procreation of a new race of men. Otherwise God would have a meagre company.

For the general deterioration of mankind men themselves, she insists, are entirely responsible, God having created all, heathen as well as Christians, for salvation. The concealment of this fact is the chief offence of the Church. Without faith, baptism

is worthless. It is wicked to contend that it derives redeeming merit from the intention of the officiating priest. It operates only according to the disposition of our own souls, and the baptism of children before the growth of reason is an ill-contrived thing, although it may perhaps be justified by reference to the faith of parents and godparents. As to the Confessional, it is full of danger and mischief. To ordain systematic confession is to ordain systematic sin. Those who, like Antoinette herself, have given themselves wholly to God have no reason to repeat their confession of sin, even once a year. So it is that the Roman Church, although once the Bride of Christ, has become a great and boastful harlot. Yet her power for mischief is limited. She cannot injure the true Church, which may be found among Jews, Turks and heathen, in the hearts of those who are living in entire dependence upon God.

God has not entrusted frail men with the power to distribute and bestow eternal life. Monastic life is a fraud, and cloisters are manifestly the creation of the devil, for it is notorious that all monks covet wealth and pomp and that their virtues are but apish and imagined tricks. A good man can no more abide in a monastery than water can abide in fire. In fact it is useless to attempt to be good or to do good in any organisation which is under Church control. Far better it is to work among the Jews, for they expect the coming of the

Messiah upon earth, and are thus better prepared to receive the truth than are Christians, who have been trained by the Church to look forward to the destruction of the world. Yet even to the Jews Antoinette wishes not to be announced by de Cort as a Prophetess. He is certainly bound to impart to others what he has learned from her, but he must show great caution in judging to whom he may speak. She desires not to be disturbed. The converse of men would withdraw her from divine communion. It is from God that she derives all her wisdom. When Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took," it is as if He said, "The kingdom of heaven will be proclaimed by a woman." The three measures of meal are the Law of Nature, the Written Law and those Evangelical Counsels vouchsafed to her, by which revelation is now completed.

The above summary, which has been made as far as possible in her own phrases, includes only such statement of her positive teaching as may serve to explain her relation to the Church, a fuller statement of her doctrine being reserved for a later chapter. For a fair appreciation of her criticisms of Rome and things Roman, it should be noted that they were in no historical sense those of a Protestant. At the

date when they were formulated, she was all but wholly unacquainted with the teaching and the usages of the Reformed Churches.

The same fact must be kept in mind when turning to her discussion of Predestination as set forth in Part III. of *La Lumière du Monde* and in *L'Académie des Sçavans Théologiens*. The doctrine which she there scrutinises is not that of Calvin, nor that of the Synod of Dort, but Jansenism as set forth in Jansen's *Augustinus*, which had appeared in 1640 and had been condemned in 1656 in the Bull *Cum Occasione*. In 1656 there had also appeared the first of Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, and the Catholic world in all its French-speaking provinces was intensely excited thereby; but she shows no sign of familiarity with Pascal's writings. Her acquaintance with the questions in debate was gained partly through reading the *Augustinus*, with a copy of which she had been presented,[1] partly through con-

[1] By a rather strange error her biographers have supposed that she was presented with the works of St. Augustine. Her strictures upon his doctrine of grace must be estimated in light of the fact that she saw him through Jansen's spectacles.

versation with Canon Noëls, Jansen's former secretary, and partly through listening to the polemical preaching of Jesuits. Indeed, the interest of her opinions lies in their obvious independence and individuality. We see how the opposing views appeared to a shrewd, hard-headed woman, who was free from partisanship and mainly concerned in practical life. The following statement is again couched in her own idiom :—

Disputes about Sufficient and Effectual Grace are mere words. All the books which argue on such topics ought to be burned. It is true that man can do nothing of himself without God. Yet God has given every man enough of grace to enable him to leave sin. He bestows grace upon all without their co-operation. Even sinners receive grace; and, if it has no influence upon them, that is because they refuse to co-operate with God, for He also bestows upon all absolute freedom. Freedom of the will constitutes humanity, making men little gods; without freedom, men would be filth. God never guides or saves a man who does not deliberately surrender to Him. Yet He inclines us to follow Him. While He varies the amount of grace that He gives to individuals, He loves all equally

share of these, he is not entitled to complain, "just as the corn ought not to murmur if it has not sufficient husbandry." But we do not require a share of those Special Graces in order to be saved. God certainly creates all men for salvation and gives every sinner enough of grace for redemption.

Having thus definitely rejected the distinctive theory of the Jansenists, she turns upon the Jesuits and scouts their notions one by one with unsparing severity. Their ethical teaching she loathes, both in its theory and in its application. The value which they attach to Attrition[1] is literally antichristian. It is the exaltation of self-love, which is essentially a sin, to the position of a saving virtue. Has not Christ said, He that loveth his soul shall lose it? So the doctrine of probabilities is pestilential,

1 Attrition is an imperfect sorrow for sin arising from fear of hell and a sense of turpitude, and falling short of Contrition. In the seventeenth century, it was keenly debated whether Attrition, with the sacrament of Penance and Absolution, suffices to restore sinners to baptismal grace. In 1667 Pope Alexander VII. forbade the advocates of either opinion to pronounce censure on their opponents. Yet the opinion that Attrition is sufficient steadily prevailed. See Liguori's *Moral Theology*, vi. n. 440.

and the whole system of Jesuit instruction, with its externalities and formalities, its minute directions and its cautious reservations, is morally degrading. She pronounces the preachers whom she heard at Malines to be incarnate devils. After analysing a Jesuit catechism published at Brussels in 1666, she writes, "I do not believe that Satan himself in his endeavour to win the world could teach more dangerously." The arguments by which she vindicates such criticism need not be repeated, for although vigorous and stinging they traverse familiar ground. Yet historically they have considerable interest as the expression of the thoughts and observations of one who was unversed in the Protestant polemics of the day, and who had fought her own way through the thicket.

A single passage, written in 1666 and included in *The Academy of Learned Divines*, will suffice to show the literary style of her polemics.

"How many Christians there are nowadays who suffer themselves to be led away by these new

inventions! One believes that to fulfil the command of God, he is required only to abstain from doing evil; another, that he needs love God but once in his life; another, that his sins will be forgiven, provided he is afraid of hell, with a thousand other sorts of opinions which these doctors call 'probable,' by which they reverse the whole law of God and corrupt charity and good manners; so that there is nothing to be seen among Christians but deceit and falsehood. And it is no wonder, since these churchmen teach that a man may do all sorts of evil without sinning. . . . The most learned divines of this age declare, as well in general as in particular, that it is lawful to swear a false oath, provided a man make some mental reservation in his own mind, if he had no intention of lying. Can this be true? The intention to deceive our neighbour and to lead him to mistake one thing for another,—is not that a sin against charity? If we ought to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, ought we not to love truth, which is God, and sincerity and righteousness towards our neighbour, not desiring to deceive him any more than we would desire to be ourselves deceived? . . . If these mental reservations were permitted by God, St. Peter would have been to blame, who wept so much for having denied his Master, seeing that in his 'intention' he loved Him, and denied Him only in words in order to escape bad usage. Was this Apostle a fool or an

ignorant man to lament all his lifetime for having made a lie with a mental reservation? If there were no sin in such concealment, as these new Casuists affirm, he ought not to have wept, since, according to their assertion, he did not sin. . . . I myself was present when one of their preachers declared to a great crowd that the greatest lie that could be uttered was no more than a venial sin, and might be no sin at all. The same preacher affirmed that there was no sin in carnal pleasures which did not effectuate the deed, and that endearing caresses were but pastimes which need not be disclosed in confession. Truly I trembled when I heard such discourse. . . . I saw several young gentlemen cover their faces with their cloaks, that they might laugh unnoticed, and pulling at one another to draw attention to this infernal teaching, which seems designed to awaken luxury in the youthful heart. It is not this preacher alone who advances such doctrines. Almost all the preachers and confessors are now leavened with this new casuistical divinity; many books are printed about it, and the use of it is degrading our daily life. . . . I tell nothing but what I have had experience of or what has come to my knowledge by chance; I could bewail with tears of blood the disastrous state into which poor Christendom is now reduced, wherein we can no longer tell where to find the truth or the law of God. . . . The devil has thrust himself even into the sanctuary, and has won over those who ought to

oppose him, and they have transferred to him full dominion over their hearers. We see the Church outwardly more flourishing than ever; splendour, magnificence and ornament everywhere. Yet these are mere vanity and amusement, which bring no honour to God and serve rather for entertainment of the people, who hurry from place to place and satisfy their curiosity by gazing on trivialities. The most pious waste their time in preparations for these solemnities, and others in criticising them; they chatter in church and laugh as at comedies. Their outward behaviour testifies that not one of a thousand has lifted up his heart to God. . . . Nevertheless, they are held for good Christians, so long as they follow the maxims of those blind leaders of the blind, on whom Jesus Christ has pronounced so many woes in the Gospel according to St. Matthew. The Scribes and Pharisees were at that time what the priests, bishops and popes of the New Law are now, accursed of God by Jesus Christ as hypocrites who lead souls to perdition by their blindness. . . . In truth these are far worse than the Pharisees, for the Pharisees taught the law of God with their tradition, whereas now God's law is wholly set aside for these new doctrines."

It is not strange that she and her friends, fearless and indeed reckless as they were, found it impossible to publish such writings

in a country which was intensely and exclusively Roman Catholic. They contained violent declarations of war against every existing form of Romanism—not only against Jansenists and Jesuits, but against those who, without sharing in that contention, adhered simply to the Roman obedience. "The publication," she wrote twelve years afterwards, "was delayed by the advice of many friends, who, knowing the partiality and jealousy of many divines of the Roman Church, were afraid that de Cort and I might be put into the Inquisition for having declared too openly the faults and corruptions which have crept into the Roman Church, telling us that that would be insupportable to many zealots of that religion." Her treatises were still in manuscript when in 1667 she removed from Malines to Amsterdam.

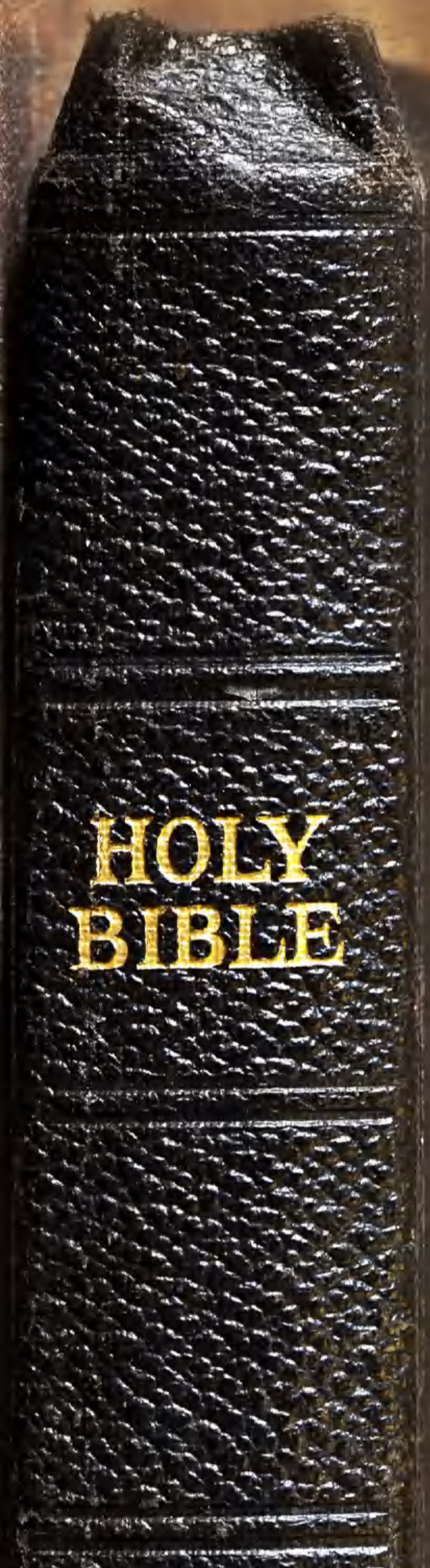
CHAPTER III

HER ANTAGONISM TO ALL CHURCHES

1667–71

ANTOINETTE's only motive for leaving Belgium for Holland was the desire to secure the circulation of her writings, Holland being at that time the one country in Europe in which liberty of religious opinion was guaranteed. There was no attraction for her in the fact that the Reformed Church was established in Holland. Indeed, she disliked all that she as yet knew of Protestantism. Roman Catholic historians have so persistently represented her as a child of the Reformation that her own words must be quoted.

"I had never yet conversed with any, nor had I been in any place or country, outside the Roman Obedience, and I knew not what sort of people I should meet with in Amsterdam. I imagined that



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doctrine of Predestination as taught by the Jansenists. When she heard the presentation of it in the Dutch Reformed Church, her condemnation of it gained in intensity.

It is, she wrote, the most pernicious doctrine in Christendom, . . . the outcome of lying and pride. No doubt Calvin wrote on some subjects with discrimination, but it is only through devilry that his opinions on this topic have come to be regarded as a standard. Calvinism is the product of an unmortified imagination. It is not true that God has set a limit to the freedom of the human will. To teach that the elect will certainly be saved and that the reprobate will certainly be damned can only promote moral negligence and spiritual sloth.

Yet the Arminian theology is, she holds, as far from the truth and almost as dangerous, since it rests upon the theory that men can be saved when they please without the grace which Jesus has obtained for us from His Father. The poor ignorant Arminians take no account of the Fall; therefore they are false and deceitful. Although some of them, she has heard, have laid down their lives for their opinions,[1] they wholly lack the humility of Jesus Christ.

[1] She wrote in the land where Arminians had suffered most at the hands of Calvinists. Some of those who had been banished from the Netherlands after the Synod of Dort must have been still alive.

While thus rejecting the doctrine of both branches of Protestantism, she strikes still deeper by dismissing abruptly the central dogma of the Reformation, Justification by Faith alone. The idea that men can be saved without good works inevitably leads to the neglect of good works and prevents any endeavour to reach perfection. It is "an idea which stinks in God's nostrils. To promulgate it is to sin against the Holy Ghost." She rejects not only the antinomian perversion of Justification by Faith; the doctrine itself is false. No man can reach heaven without doing something to secure an entrance. When Jesus calls us to strive for admission to the Kingdom, He thereby makes it clear that we have no title to rely upon Him for our admission. It is sheer ignorance to allege that He has given full satisfaction for us.

In fact the Reformers, she says, were wholly mistaken in their attempt to reform the Church. What was required was, not the assertion of new principles or theories, but a revival of evangelical counsels and evangelical life. Their insistence upon Bible-reading and upon the continual hearing of

sermons is simply a stupid blunder which strikes at the root of piety. So it is that their adherents are an undevout, unsanctified race, even further distant from true sanctity than the Romanists. They entirely forget holy things and lead a secular, selfish, sensuous life. As a rule they are libertines. They eat and drink and marry, and speak smooth words to the rich. Recognising no authority, they live like animals—quarrelsome animals. She forbids her disciples to join them, and scoffs at the idea that any spiritual good can come from frequenting the Lord's Table in their churches. "I openly acknowledge on all occasions, that I am of the Roman Church and that I will never leave it. . . . No man ought to leave our religion, which is the most ancient mother of the Christian Churches. . . . I am under the ordinances of the Roman Church."

Not unnaturally nor unreasonably, in spite of her denunciations of Rome recorded in the last chapter, her Protestant neighbours charged her with being a Romanist. It is, in any case, a misuse of terms to describe her as a Protestant.

In Amsterdam, however, she was not forced to make a choice between Romanists and Protestants. Holland was at the time a nursery of theorists and a haven of sects.

Since the splendid struggle for emancipation, the intellectual life of the Dutch had been keen, varied and productive, with untrammelled religious developments which had been reinforced from other lands. Persecuted Protestants from Hungary, England and Scotland lodged in the same boarding-houses as persecuted Romanists from Italy, France and Spain. With the Socinian, Independent and Presbyterian refugees Antoinette had nothing in common. Her affinities and possibilities of agreement lay with those who rejected dogma, Roman or Reformed—with the innumerable visionaries, theosophists and philosophers whose religious idealism flourished and flowered in the loamy soil. She did not seek for their society. On the contrary, she desired to be left alone with her meditations and her manuscripts. But they discovered her and pressed their company upon her. It was the one period of her life when she exercised a personal fascination over a very large number of strangers, and appeared to men of real ability and spirituality to be a valuable ally. Yet the period was short,

terminated by her own deliberate choice. She measured her would-be allies one by one with critical and haughty coldness. The Jansenists, who were already finding the Low Countries more congenial than France, at first won her favour, but became impossible associates for her when she had measured their "preposterous doctrine" of Predestination. The Anabaptists and Mennonites,[1] although claiming to be re-generate, clung, she saw, to the impulses of flesh and blood, and concealed proud, worldly hearts beneath modest words and humble gestures. With the notorious visionary Serrarius (Serrurier) she agreed for a while, but the agreement gave way to strife when he advocated the re-establish-ment of Levitical worship and set forth the claims of a certain impostor who had arisen

[1] A sect of Anabaptists named after Menno Simons (1492–1559). In Holland they subdivided in the sixteenth century on the question of the "bann"—*i.e.* the bearing of excommunication upon family relationships; but in the seventeenth century they recovered unity and strength. They objected to a paid clergy, payment of tithes, the use of the sword, etc., and tended to absurdities, some of them holding the use of buttons and the practice of shaving to be sinful.

among the Jews in the east. The ideas and methods of Madame Guyon had not yet taken shape, and, so far as she had heard of them, they seemed too gentle and too pliant. With the Cartesians Heydan [1] and Burmann [2] she debated many points of religious philosophy. They were eager to secure her assistance, but she discovered their malady. They would fain reach truth by the activity of human reason, without use of that divine light which dawns when reason bends passively before God. When she explained to them her horror of this "wicked disposition of philosophising," they turned away from her in scorn, although two of them gave her their partial adherence at a later date—Swammerdam, the naturalist, and Pierre Poiret, once a Calvinist pastor and afterwards the industrious editor

[1] Abraham Heydan (1597–1678), whose *Meditationes* brought him to some distinction in the Netherlands, is interesting as having given occasion to an Edict of the States General prohibiting "the mixture of philosophy and theology."

[2] Franz Burmann (1632–79), author of several devotional works and also of *Synopsis Theologiae*, an attempt to reconcile the different branches of the Reformed Church.

of Madame Guyon and of Antoinette herself.[1]

These are names known only to specialists, but she had intimate dealings with men of wide and permanent repute. Foremost must be placed John Amos Comenius or Komensky (1592–1671), the educationist. Comenius, last Bishop of the Church of the Moravian Brethren, had been banished from Bohemia in 1624, and since then had led a wandering life of hardships, but by his eloquent preaching, and still more by his brilliant treatises on education, had won a more than European fame.[2] His *Janua Linguarum Reserata* in particular had been translated into twelve European and several Asiatic languages. He had been invited by the English Parliament and the Swedish Government to organise their respective systems of education, and by the authorities of Harvard University to succeed Dunster as President. His enlightened and com-

[1] As to Swammerdam and Poiret, see pp. 171–4.

[2] *J. A. Comenius: His Life and Educational Works*, by Professor S. S. Laurie, which should be compared with Mr. Oscar Browning's account of Comenius in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *s. v.* "Education."

written are the fruit of human argument and reason; but she has gained all her wisdom directly [Latin *immediate*] by the working of God's Holy Spirit."

Less distinguished in general esteem but more influential in religious life was another of her intimates at Amsterdam, Jean de Labadie (1610–74), whose distinctive work has been fully set forth by Albrecht Ritschl.[1] Labadie, like Antoinette, had been trained in the Roman faith, and had incurred the hatred of the Jesuits by his eloquent and fearless denunciations of Roman usages. Joining the Reformed communion, he became a professor at Montauban, but there he developed further separatist tendencies. Making for the Low Countries, he formed a pact or covenant in 1666 with some adherents, which proved to be the nucleus of the Labadist Communion. His socialistic views led to his being banished from one town after another, until in 1672 he found a safe home at Altona, where he died. At what date he first communicated with Antoinette is uncertain. They were in correspondence

[1] *Geschichte des Pietismus*, i. 194–268.

before 1668, and thereafter interchanged views with friendly frankness. But from the first she was suspicious of his desire to build up a Church and to maintain a church life. "The Holy Spirit," she wrote to him, "presides over no human assembly." Gradually it became clear that he was not prepared for any such break with normal Christianity as she held to be imperative, and before long misunderstandings arose, to the deep regret not only of Labadie,[1] but of his disciples. According to her account, the Labadists actually attempted to bribe her to join their ranks; but she finally concluded that they had "no other light than what reading, barren speculation and some acts of their own understanding yielded," that they "lacked calmness and sought after novelties, like the magicians in Moses' time, who counterfeited all the works of God." Accordingly their temporary approximation to her turned into antagonism which, after

[1] Ritschl indicates that Labadie was extremely anxious to secure her as an ally, and that her refusal was due to her unwillingness to take any part in organising a schismatical Church (*Geschichte des Pietismus*, ii. 226).

Labadie's death, found voice in public controversy. In her later years she had no keener assailant than Yvon, who became the literary champion of the Labadists.

Of the English refugees at Amsterdam there was one section which pressed its attentions on her eagerly, the Society of Friends, to which George Fox and Robert Barclay were at that time giving shape in England. They imagined that they could not but find helpfulness and fellowship in one who disparaged church ordinances and obligations, and who was guided solely by an inward light. But she met their advances with contempt. Their conception of a separate religious community, bound by specific customs and costumes, was repugnant to her. She jeered at their usages, and pronounced them to be unspiritual because they aimed at establishing a party. The pungency and piquancy of her criticisms stung them, not only in Holland but in England, and an Englishman, Benjamin Furly,[1] appeared at Amsterdam, commis-

[1] Author of *The World's Honour Detected* (1663), and other controversial tracts. Cf. p. 3.

sioned to refute her charges. To her intense annoyance she herself was charged with being a Quaker, and she prepared a lengthy *Warning against the Quakers*, one of the ablest and the least extravagant of her writings.

While she thus condemned herself to isolation, her reputation steadily increased, and her publications found eager readers. The use of the word "publications" would be misleading without some explanation. In 1671 she wrote that for three years she had been trying in vain to get *La Lumière du Monde* published, having been hindered partly by a serious illness, partly by the malice and stupidity of transcribers and printers. Yet this can refer only to the completed work in three parts, for Part I. and probably Part II. of that treatise were issued very soon after her arrival in Holland. Her practice seems to have been to put out occasionally a few "Letters" or "Conférences" in pamphlet form, affixing dates to the letters with considerable carelessness.

[1] The clearest proof of this is the fact that several of her Letters are dated "1684"—four years after her death!

Her Quaker enemies charged her with this irregularity, as though it had been intentionally misleading, but she replied contemptuously that the dates were of no consequence, and that her writings might be read in any order. This being her own view, any attempt to fix closely the dates of her letters and pamphlets is needless. It is enough to say that during her stay in Holland parts of the following treatises were in circulation:—*Le Tombeau de la Fausse Théologie*; *La Dernière Miséricorde de Dieu*; *La Lumière du Monde*; *La Lumière née en Ténèbres*; *L'Antichrist Découvert*; *La Sainte Visière*; *Le Nouveau Ciel et la Nouvelle Terre*; *L'Innocence Reconnue*. Of these the principal had been translated into Dutch, and a certain number into German and English.

The main outlines of her teaching were by this time clearly drawn. When in 1671 she fled from Amsterdam, she was fifty-six years of age, and her subsequent writings, while they have more amplitude in statement, show no important development of conviction or sentiment. This, therefore,

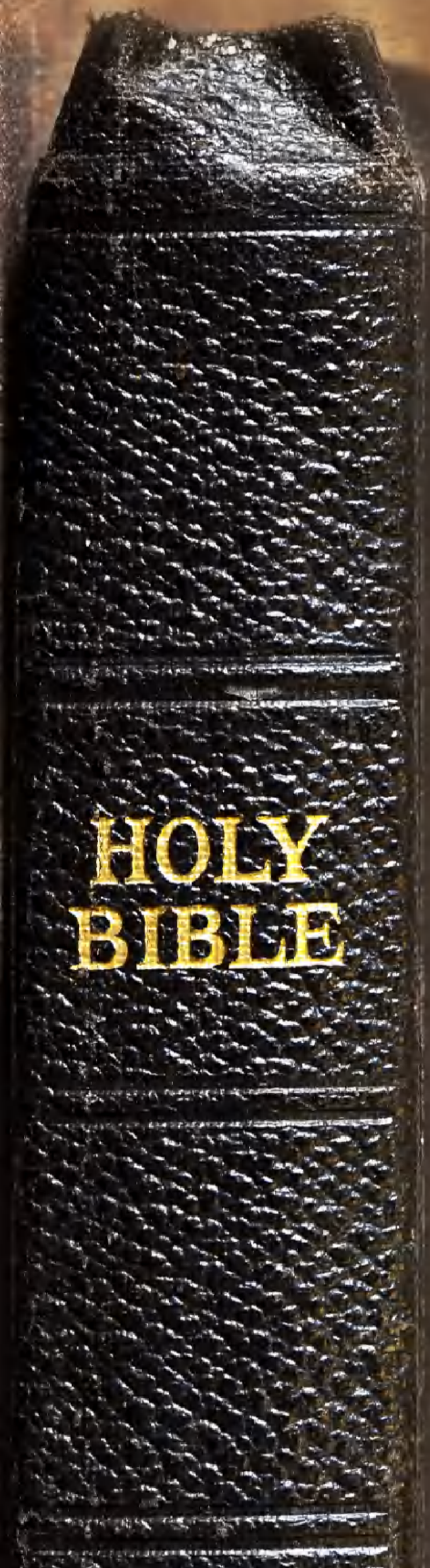
seems to be the proper stage at which to explain her positive doctrines, as distinct from her criticisms of church life and dogma, which alone have to this point been presented. As a preliminary, fairly illustrative of her usual tone in correspondence, an extract may be quoted from a letter written to an unnamed "English divine" and dated February 27, 1671, a few months before she left Amsterdam.

"SIR,

"Upon the 24th of February I received yours dated the $\frac{23}{15}$ of September, 1670, by which you inform me that you had written to me before and had enclosed your letter in one sent to P. Serrarius, which I have not received; nor have I understood anything of your kindness. It is true I was told some time ago that several of my writings have been Englished, but I could not learn by whom this had been done. I am very anxious to see those translations, in order to know if they are faithful and in accordance with my sentiments, because the sense may be altered by a few words. I must examine them with the assistance of friends who understand English, for I myself know no other language than French, which is spoken in my native land. Since you tell me that I may write in any language I please, I write this with my own

hand, in order to give you, as you desire, some knowledge of my condition. . . . I am at present in good health and am employed in writing continually. I receive from God such great abundance of His light that it seems to me the time of the promise is come, wherein Jesus said prophetically to His apostles that the Holy Spirit would teach them all truth; for not one sect of religion has spoken to me of its sentiments without my immediately perceiving what good or evil it contained. . . . Whence I gather that God is ready to show all men the errors in which they are involved and to give them an understanding of Holy Scriptures which none yet have reached; for the apostles said of their day, 'We know in part and prophesy in part, but when the fulness of time comes we shall understand in full perfection.' In my opinion we are arrived at this fulness of time. . . .

"I believe also that we live in Antichrist's unhappy reign, when that passage, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, is to be fully realised. The serpent's head is not yet bruised, since he still has such power over the spirits of men. . . . There is no region where he reigns not; he has gained to himself well-nigh all human hearts. Sometimes I consider whether the 'seed' may not be the lights which God will give unto women, and which they will sow over the world in writing or print, shining so brightly that the devil will no longer be able to deceive men of good-will



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by false pretences. . . . The Solid Truths which God begins to offer to the world by my pen are, as it were, the seed that He sows in souls of good-will, which will surely bring forth fruit an hundredfold, if it falls in good ground. . . . I learn by daily experience that the devil does all his endeavours to stifle this seed in its birth. . . . It is not human malice which makes men unwilling to labour faithfully in a thing that is so good, so useful and even refreshing to nature as is the reading or translating or printing of my writings. Those Divine Lights are like a river which flows in great abundance into my soul and is never drained; but I find few who will assist in publishing them. Yet I am hopeful that God will raise up some, seeing it is His own work, and the vine which He hath planted in my soul. He will send labourers to dress it, that all men may gather of the fruits of it and relish the sweet savour which you say you find in my writings. . . . The devil makes all this ado because he sees that if the seed comes to grow it will bruise his head. . . . All his strength will be taken from him, nor will he be able any more to seduce men by his deceits, when the truth of everything shall be laid open: which it seems is to be done by these writings of mine. . . . Let me know which of them you desire to have, and I shall send them for the consolation of your soul; meanwhile I continue, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"ANTOINETTE BOURIGNON."

In the two following chapters the "solid truths" contained in her writings will be presented as succinctly as a regard for accuracy will allow.

picturesque, are not original in their governing thoughts. Her critics were probably correct in alleging that these were mainly borrowed from Jacob Böhme, the only religious writer besides Augustine and Thomas à Kempis of whom she speaks with much respect.

The same may be said of her theory that Adam was bi-sexual, "endowed with a principle of fecundity," and of her very gross accounts of the working of that principle, over which Bayle gloats with his own gusto. But she seems to present an idea of her own in teaching that the First-born of Adam, born before the creation of Eve, was the Second Adam. With the Second Adam God united Himself, in order that He might converse intimately with man as a friend. Through this union there came into existence "Jesus Christ, eternal God and true man." Antoinette did not press this theory upon her readers as "necessary unto salvation." It was what she called an "accessory sentiment" intended for the enlightenment of her advanced pupils. Yet it entered pretty deeply into her thinking,

and gave shape to her disbelief in the eternity of the Second Person in the Godhead—a disbelief which, as we shall see later, was absolute. When she spoke of Jesus as "eternal God," she was far from meaning that His personality was eternal.

All men were "in Adam's loins"; so she says in Augustine's very words. He held in his power the free-will of all his posterity. Quaintly enough, she passes over Eve's share in the first transgression.[1] Adam was tempted by Satan to gratify his self-love and to declare himself independent of God. When he yielded to the temptation, earth was turned into a fierce and perplexing wilderness.

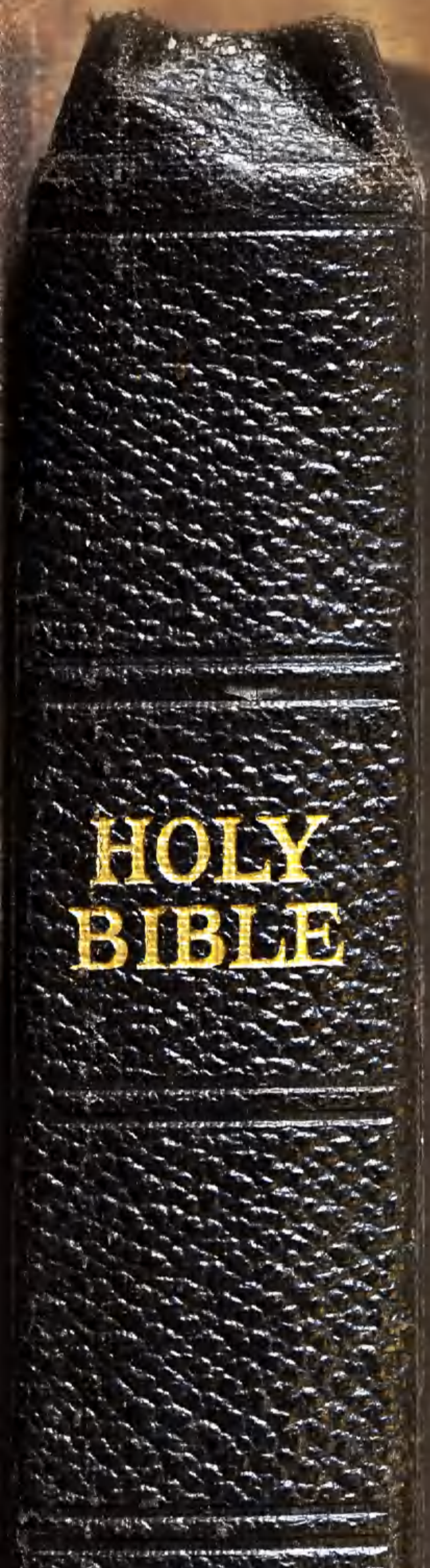
The fire began to burn man, the water to drown him, the air to poison him, and the earth to bring forth briars and thorns and poisonous herbs. The beasts also began to bite him and the stones to bruise him. In fact, everything rose up against

[1] In one graphic passage she speaks of Eve as having been *a failure*, but calmly indicates that God may make a more successful use of the sex. The idea that woman is God's favoured Organ appears in various shapes, once in the assertion that God made two Eves. But her views of her sex altered. See pp. 194, 204.

him because he had exalted himself against God. But these were only the shadows of the true calamity. Through Adam all men were defiled with corruption, "all became reprobate . . . a stink was brought upon humanity. Our whole nature became utterly vicious."

Yet man retained one treasure—the freedom of his will. On every soul there is engraven the necessity of depending upon God, and each man, when he reaches the use of his reason, may, by the exercise of his will, pass out of the power of Adam, retaining only "a certain malignity of disposition." This possibility of deliverance, while grounded upon free-will, must also be ascribed to Jesus Christ, for He intervened, immediately after the Fall, and by His intercession obtained for all men time for repentance and grace to live aright. So it was that in the Adams, the First Adam and the Second, God elected and pardoned all men. It is absurd to say that in Adam there were the seeds of two kinds of men, evil and good. All men, as being Adam's children, inherited (1) a corrupt nature; (2) freedom of will; (3) the means of grace, including the Mosaic Law. This was the First Mercy of God.

But this Mercy was not accepted. Mankind neglected grace, and in due time came the Second Mercy of God: Jesus Christ clothed Himself with mortality. He became incarnate, in order that He might stir men's hearts and secure an extension of the Time of Penitence. There was no need for His



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physic for our souls and drinks it Himself in our presence; but if we ourselves do not drink the physic it has no operation upon us. He suffered unto death, in order to teach us to be willing to die shamefully, if that be God's will. That our sufferings might be easier for us, He charged Himself with them, as a captain who desires to encourage his soldiers exposes himself first to the battle. Jesus also became a pledge to God for man, the pledge being a promise to God that men would live aright if they had time to repent. In this sense He may be regarded as a Saviour, but in this sense only. It is a cruel thought that He, the holy and perfect One, bore the punishment due to the sins of criminals who are hardened in their sins and will not forsake them. A hateful thought it is, a mere pretext for sloth under a cloak of piety. That cruel, hateful thought is now enthroned in the sanctuary. Surely it is the abomination of desolation. Yet it is welcomed by graceless men, who presume to lay their sins and pollutions upon Christ's shoulders, desiring Him to suffer in their name and to obtain for them the love of God which will save them from death. "One of those preachers wrote to me lately that men ought to live aright, not in order to merit salvation but out of gratitude to the suffering Christ. A pretty thought that! That a guilty man should allow his innocent Friend to suffer on his behalf! A man who would desire or tolerate such a sacrifice or substitution must be,

not only a sinner but the possessor of a mean and cowardly heart." The work of Jesus was to teach men the means by which they themselves may recover God's favour.

Equally clear is it that the doctrine of the Trinity as set forth by "men nowadays" must be discarded. The Trinity is but one God, who is all love, one Person with three divine operations. Almost anything we say about God in the way of definition lessens His glory. If we were speaking of a man, we might perhaps say that the heart is the Father, the mouth the Son, and the understanding the Holy Spirit; for the heart is the seat of love, the mouth is the channel by which love finds expression, and the understanding is the garden wherein grow the conceptions by which love is comprehended. Yet that would be a mere figure. There are not in God three Persons. When such an expression is used, it is to be understood that there are three Powers, of which the essence is love. Jesus Christ is nothing but the word which communicates to man the love that is in God, and the Holy Spirit is the wisdom which enables us to comprehend the divine life. The saints and doctors who attempted further definitions blundered sadly in their attempts. No human words can convey the faintest idea of the being of God. In order to render to Him acceptable service, we need know nothing beyond what He has appointed and ordained for us as our duty.

The teaching of Jesus Christ was complete and final. Although God at divers times sent prophets and holy persons commissioned to teach Resignation, none of these can be compared with Jesus, who omitted nothing. No addition to His doctrine is to be expected. Yet His doctrine has been forgotten by men generally and in all the Churches it has been obliterated, so that a restoration is required, a renovation of the Gospel spirit. This restoration or renovation has come in the Third and Last Mercy of God, of which Antoinette Bourignon is the mouthpiece. She learns from God the Evangelical Counsels which Jesus gave. She learns them from God directly, with perfect assurance and without the need for consulting any record such as the New Testament.

Before we turn to consider these Divine Communications on which she rested her claim to authority, note should be taken of some features of her remarkable system.

Her account of the Fall, while absurd in some of its details, was as a whole a fairly ingenious attempt to retain the Scriptural narrative as history, while denuding it of its bearing upon the need for redemption. The ascription to Adam of a certain power of transmitting grace as well as sin, and the

by Calvinist and Lutheran preachers. It is true that the morose temper which led her to declare that three-fourths of mankind were in league with the devil, and that she herself had never met a real Christian, affected her estimate of church teaching. Yet no well-informed reader will question that the orthodoxy of the times was exaggerated and repellent, and that there was real need for some "renovation of the Gospel spirit" which would lay stress upon the supreme importance of Christian character and conduct.

This aspect of her system is emphasised by the inadequate and indiscriminating judgment passed upon it by the Churches of her time. The least worthy pronouncements were those of the Roman Catholic authorities. So far as they dealt with her doctrine, they charged her with being a Jansenist—an absurd charge, seeing that she repudiated the distinctive dogmas of Jansenism with vehement and laborious reiteration.[1] In the main, however, they condemned her as they condemned the

[1] See pp. 58–60, 72, etc.

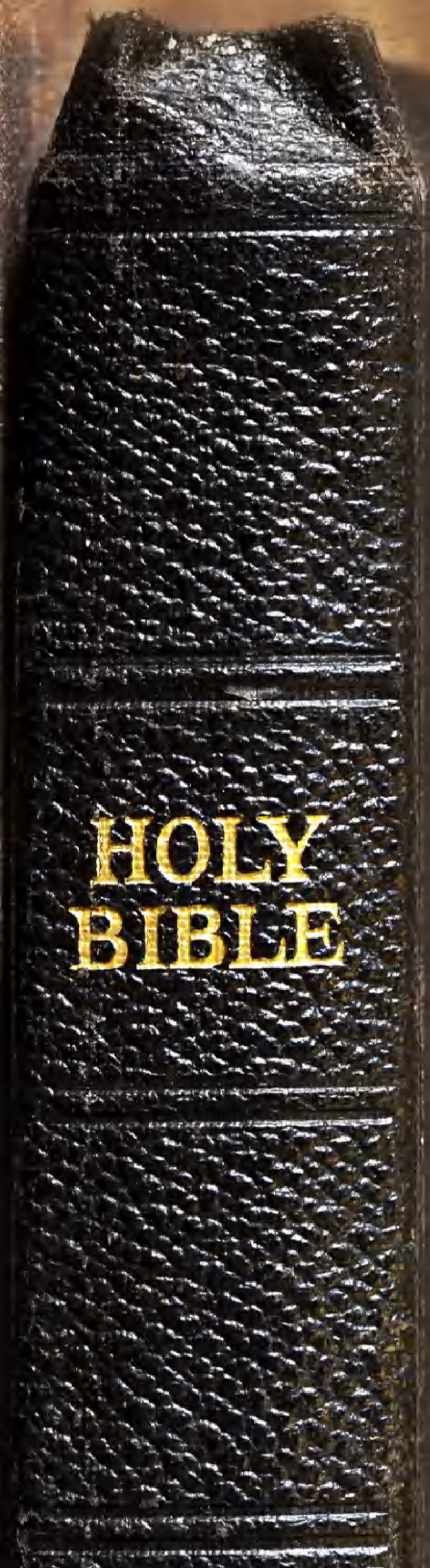
leading Mystics of that age, on the ground that her teaching was hostile to Roman usages, especially to the Confessional and other functions of the priesthood.

Her Lutheran judges and her English critics were almost as superficial. They fastened upon a statement she had made, when justifying her own inconsistencies, that the different parts of the Bible do not always agree with one another, and proved this to be at variance with that mechanical theory of inspiration which both in Germany and in England claimed to be orthodox. They also pronounced her a heretic for holding the theory that in the consciousness of Jesus the divine will and the human will were sometimes at variance, as though that involved our Lord in sinfulness. Even these matters they handled badly, blending their criticisms with personalities and ignoring all the graver questions she had raised. It was her claim to the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit that excited their anger and alarm, for this led her "to despise sermons, sacraments, pastors, priests and all church government." She was actually censured by Lutheran

Consistories for the fact that her prophecies were not fulfilled and that she produced no miracles in proof of her inspiration, while her leading English censors, John Cockburn and Charles Leslie, taunted her with her sex and coarsely derided her for speaking of her disciples as her Spiritual Children.

In Scotland her teaching was measured more carefully, yet by a narrow gauge.[1] When in 1701 the General Assembly declared "Bourignonism" to be heretical, eight items of heresy were specified, viz. (1) Her denying that God permits sin and inflicts damnation and vengeance for it. (2) Her ascribing to Christ a twofold human nature, the one produced of Adam, the other born of the Virgin. (3) Her denial of election and reprobation and her misrepresentation of these doctrines. (4) Her denial of God's foreknowledge. (5) Her doctrine that there is a good spirit and an evil spirit in the souls of all men before they are born. (6) Her belief that the will of man is unlimited and that man must have some infinite quality whereby he

[1] See pp. 9, 14 f.



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questionable that in all the Churches she chiefly gave offence by her denunciations of clerics and all things clerical.

Yet this does not affect the fact that she was justly condemned. She had not only abandoned Christian dogma but had passed out of the region of evangelical opinion and even of evangelical sentiment. Except the bare dictum that God is love, since all men may be saved if they will exert themselves sufficiently, she asserted no Christian belief. Her doctrine of the Godhead was Sabellian or Modalist, and that in a shape which no Church has ever tolerated. Her Christology was so specifically Socinian, in its very phrases, that it is difficult to believe that she was unacquainted with the Socinian contentions, for the *vox signata* of Socinus was that Jesus "accomplished the most arduous work possible," and that "no work could be so arduous as to die in the way in which He died." While she spoke of Christ as "Saviour," she presented no steady idea of salvation. Although she tried to find a place, as did Arius and Pelagius, for some Pauline categories, she failed as flagrantly

as they did in the attempt. Of the Sacraments, the most that she can say is that Baptism may perhaps be justified, and that the Lord's Supper is helpful to those who are not in direct communion with God. There is no severity in saying that she rejected every important idea of Atonement, and failed to ascribe any unique office to Jesus Christ. She did not even lay stress upon His character and teaching on their ethical or spiritual side, turning away from the Gospel record to her own visions and dreams.

It next falls to be considered what substitute she found for Christian beliefs and ideas.

CHAPTER V

HER QUIETISM

To describe Mlle. Bourignon as a Christian Mystic is, it is by this time clear, thoroughly misleading. She was a deliberate Quietist. Yet even that designation of her is inadequate; so varied have been the tempers and the opinions to which it has been applied.

Quietism, which is more congenial to the Eastern than to the Western temperament, is not in any vital sense Christian. Indeed it is so much at variance with the distinctively Christian spirit that it found no place in early Christianity, but on the contrary came first into contact with the Church in the antichristian writings of the Neoplatonists.[1] Yet in St. Augustine the idea

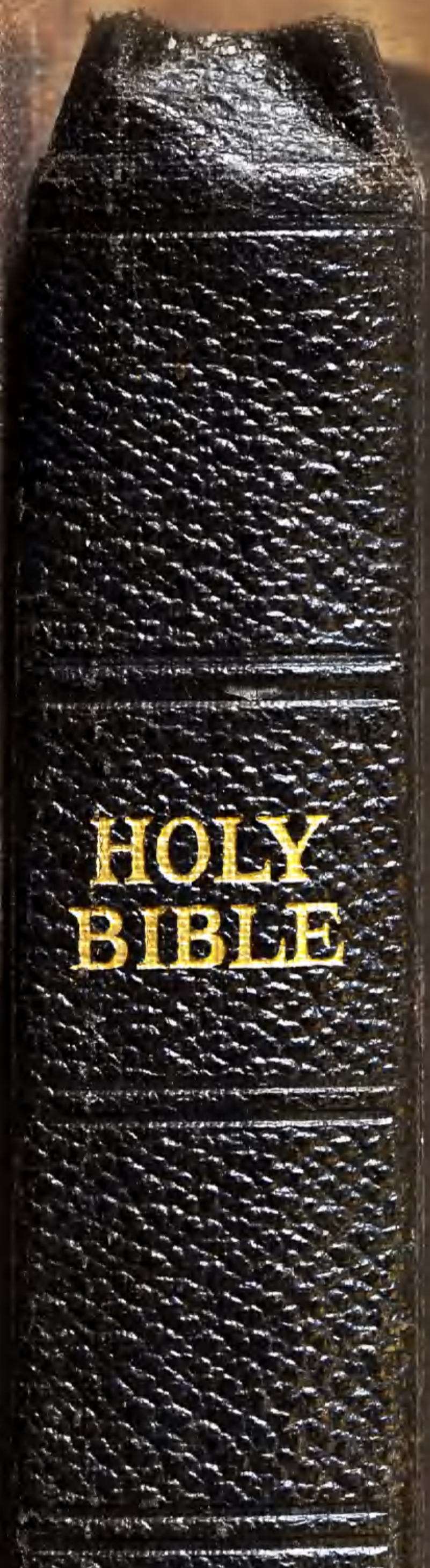
[1] See Caird's *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, ii. 210 ff.; von Hügel's *The Mystical Element of Religion*, ii, 90 *et passim*.

as she had lived, full of an explicit and deep love for the Kingdom of God and the Church. It is not too much to say with Dr. Inge that "the Spanish Mystics remained orthodox Romanists," who during the Counter-Reformation were called in by the Church "to stem the tide of Protestantism." Spiritual quietude and an immediate vision of God were no doubt among their aims, but they avoided the methods and showed few of the tendencies which have been distinctive of Quietism.

Yet it was among Spanish Mystics, contemporaries of Antoinette, that Quietism proper had its birth. In 1669 or 1670 Miguel de Molinos (1640–97), a monk from Aragon, settled in Rome and rapidly became popular as a sympathetic father-confessor and a skilful guide of persons in spiritual distress. Gaining favour with the Church authorities, he published, in 1676, a *Spiritual Guide*, which had a wide circulation in Germany, France and Spain as well as in Italy. The idea of the book was that Christian perfection may be attained by resting peacefully in communion with God,

and the means prescribed were spiritual conferences, prayer and the sacrifice of self-will. The quietness or quietude at which Molinos aimed was a condition of complete inactivity, in which external things were regarded as of no account. All the faculties, intellectual as well as emotional, must be completely suppressed except that one "intuition" which is fixed directly upon God. As the movement spread, it excited the suspicion of the Jesuits, for although Molinos and his adherents asserted the need of a spiritual Director and of frequent communion, they manifestly regarded church ordinances only as means to an end, and not indispensable means. In 1681 they were charged with heresy, and it was at this date that the term "Quietist" was first used in an invidious sense.[1] The impeachment failed, but when it was renewed in 1687, Molinos was found guilty under sixty-eight counts, the chief being that he had led monks and nuns to give up the use of rosaries, images and relics and to abstain from the Confessional. It was also alleged

[1] Von Hügel (ii. 140) says in 1682.



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that the indifference to outward things which he prescribed had resulted in immorality, the senses being allowed to take their natural course unchecked. He was sentenced to imprisonment in a cloister, where he died in 1697. His historical interest lies not so much in his personality as in the influence which he exercised upon Madame Guyon and Fénelon, the two most famous of Christian Quietists. But for the present narrative the noteworthy matter is that the movement to which he gave shape was an extensive and for a time an important one, by which the Roman Church was seriously perturbed. Baron von Hügel gives a considerable list of prominent persons who were put on trial as Quietists. In one year no fewer than two hundred of them were arrested by the Inquisition.[1] Harnack is perhaps right in saying that "the Quietistic movement had no powerful result in the history of dogma,"[2] but in the history of religion it had both pro-

[1] Von Hügel, ii. 141. Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, p. 234.

[2] *History of Dogma*, English translation, vii. 100.

minence and force, for it represented a genuine recoil from a Christianity which was wrapped up in ritual and hardened by unreasoning dogmatism, and an attempt to secure spiritual peace by individual surrender of the will to God. The Quietists were condemned by churchmen not, so to speak, "on the merits" but because their teaching was hurtful to Churches as institutions and tended to depreciate the worth of their ministrations.

The Quietism of Antoinette, however, had its own character and significance, arising from her strong personality and her distinctive ideas of religion. The best introduction to a definition of her view will be a few quotations from her writings.

Being asked by de Cort, with regard to Grace, whether the opinion of Augustine or of his opponents was the better, she replied:

"I hold that the opinion of Augustine is the better or, to speak properly, the less dangerous, because the purpose of it seems to be to persuade us that all grace comes immediately from God, in order that we may preserve nothing of ourselves, whereas the ordinary opinion rather inclines man to attribute grace to himself, as if it depended on his will . . .

but the minds of all those doctors were not free from the ideas of their acquired learning, and they therefore could not receive the light of grace, which is obscured when our own sense is mingled with it. It is necessary that all the faculties of the soul should be still, if we are to receive the pure light of the Holy Spirit."

"To be resigned to God, we must have no more self-will, to will this and not to will that; for a thing that we have resigned, we no longer hold or profess or desire to use. Resignation to God is a total dependence upon His disposal, as well for our soul as for our body, bridling our will in everything and desiring nothing, since His conduct is always better than anything for which we could wish. If it rain or be fair, if it be hot or cold, if we are at peace or at war, in adversity or prosperity, if our friends live or die, what does it matter? We are not capable of judging what is good for us, and to prescribe laws to Him is to insult Him. . . . If we were not void of understanding, we should not entertain a thought of contradicting anything that befalls us, for all turns to good to him who is resigned to God; and although men think it a happiness to have good desires, it is infinitely better to have no desires at all with complete dependence upon God, for ever so little a departure from this dependence hinders the working of His ordinances, and we become tutors to God, giving out our laws for His

"He who has truly yielded up his free-will to God will use it no more, but perform all his actions in dependence on God. If he eats and drinks, it is out of pure necessity; whether it be sweet or sour, he takes all as good, provided it be wholesome and sufficient for the maintenance of his life. . . . He expects only what it shall please God to send or permit, receiving prosperity and adversity with an even mind."

"Resignation consists in a cessation from all things, that we may receive God only. There needs no more than TO CEASE and TO RECEIVE; for all our cares and vexations or activities for the things of this life are hindrances which stifle the Operations which God would cause in our souls. We must be quiet and rest, that we may suffer the Holy Spirit to act alone."

"The resignation of our will to that of God supplies all things. We no longer need any means of devotion, such as Fasting, Public Worship and the Sacraments, because God works in us what pleases Him and we have no further need to act, requiring only to be still and passive. Our devotions are without ceasing and we are always at prayer."

"The spouse of God needs no commandments. She reposes always in the light of truth and never leaves it. She does not walk therein as a passenger, but sits in it as in her place of repose."

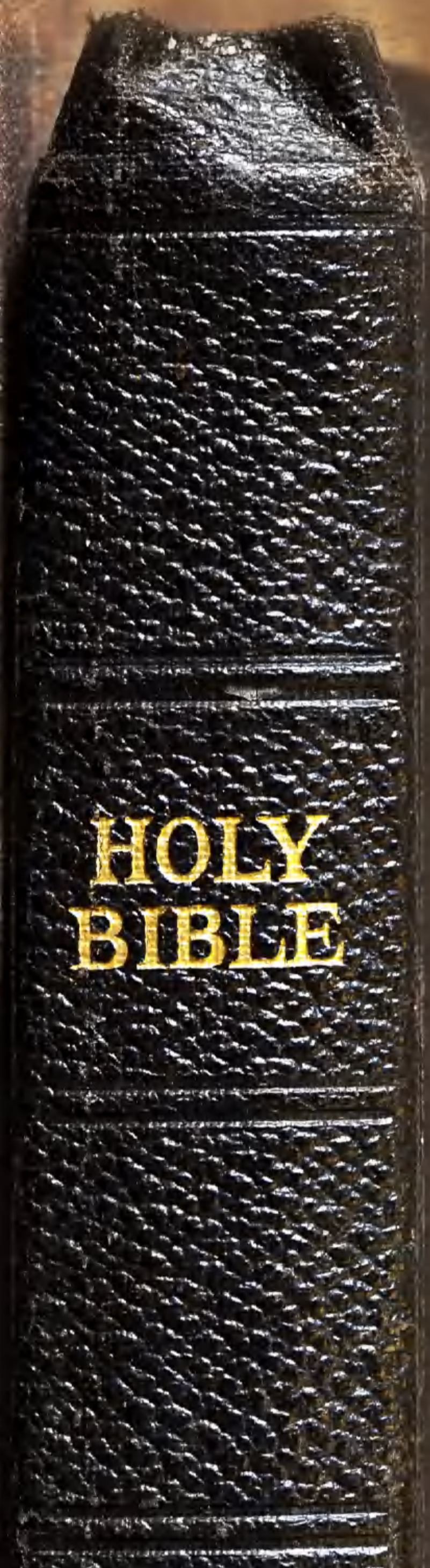
"I never profess any human sciences; I choose rather to be ignorant of them, and if I could gain in a quarter of an hour all the learning of the schools I should not employ even that fragment of time for the purpose. . . . God is wiser than all the doctors that ever were in this world, and we learn more by a small ray of His light than by a hundred years of very assiduous study."

"If my affections were still set on earthly things, I could not taste things heavenly and eternal, which give me full satisfaction and which I can also impart to others by my word and writings. If I had not mortified this corrupt nature, it were impossible for me to know mystical and divine truths which I have never learned. I conceive and apprehend them without any other means than a Recollection of spirit, wherein my soul is entertained with converse which is wholly divine."

"I discover all truths in the interior of my soul, especially when I am *recollected* in my solitude in a forgetfulness of all things. Then my spirit communicates with Another Spirit, and they entertain one another as two friends who converse about serious matters. And this conversation is so sweet that I have sometimes passed a whole day and a night in it without interruption or standing in need of meat or drink. . . . Yet it is not to be imagined that these divine conversations give any material nourishment to a person, or that he sees any bodily

substance or hears external words. For no such thing ever happened to me, though I have heard some in Holland affirm that they saw lights and heard voices and were awaked in the night by angels in human shape. . . . If I saw an angel in human shape, I should suspect and fear it might be a devil. I am so much accustomed to hear the inward voice of God that I make no account of anything that is perceptible by the outward senses. For that is extremely dangerous, since the devil as well as the Spirit of God can form voices and bodies in the air. Therefore I fix upon the solid truths and not upon dreams or visions, although I have had sometimes dreams and visions in spirit which came from God, of the truth whereof I have been convinced when the things I saw or dreamed came to pass and had good Operations in my own soul and the souls of others. But to depend on dreams and visions before they have produced their effects is to lean upon a broken staff. We must always judge of the tree by its fruits, and of the Holy Spirit by the effects which He próduces, for He never resides in a soul without producing in it all His fruits and replenishing it with His gifts."

"I must submit, sir, if God will declare His marvels by me, I cannot hinder Him. If He will speak by a stone or wood, He ought to be heard with respect. I have not sought nor asked for these things. They have been poured into me insensibly. When once



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now and then sounds like an echo from St. Teresa. Yet her conception was distinctive. It left no room for the erotic raptures of the celebrated Castilian. In her girlhood she had indulged in dreams of her affiance to the Crucified One and expressed her love for Him with unbridled fancy. But with her maturity that mood completely vanished, as completely as did her spiritual satisfaction in frequenting Holy Communion. Jesus Christ had become a person with whom she was more or less on a footing of equality. It is impossible to think of her as taking Madame Guyon's plan—sewing into her breast a piece of parchment bearing the name of her husband Jesus Christ and accepting as her marriage portion the crosses and contempt which fell to Him. While she wrote about Him with respect, it was rather in Mohammed's style, for she hoped to bring about the Redemption which He had failed to accomplish. Her devotion, far from being specifically Christian, was vague in its tenor and trend, consisting largely in negations. The God to whom she turned in her hours of Recollection was

barely personal, in spite of what she says in one of the above passages about "the converse of two friends." All that is not God, she says again and again, is *nothing*. We must divest ourselves of earthly things "by reflecting that they are *nothings*, until, realising that they have disappeared and that God alone remains, we ourselves are swallowed up of Him."[1] No doubt such language suggests a pantheism devoid of any spiritual element. Yet only those who regard as worthless the theosophies which found favour with the best of the Gnostics and Neoplatonists, and who take no interest in modern theosophies, will consider Antoinette's ideas of Recollection and Resignation to be unworthy of notice. She was, in fact, the only unswerving Quietist of her times.

In this respect she stood so much by herself that, as was indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the application to her of the term "Quietist" is apt to be misleading.

[1] So Mechthild of Hackeborn (about 1240 A.D.) said, "My soul swims in the Godhead like a fish in water" (Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, p. 365).

Quietism such as hers, while not in itself Christian, is a vital element in all religion and also a method of securing real independence. The approach of the soul to God, in detachment from secular influences and in solitude, leads to the only assurance as to truth and duty which can rightly claim to be absolute. The Quietist, strictly so called, is on far firmer ground than the Mystic[1]—the ground of Augustine's immortal saying, "Deum et animam scire cupio. Nihilne plus? Nihil omnino." His theosophies are no more than the decorations of the temple in which he seeks for truth. The Mystic, with his vision of human persons spiritualised and his fancies of things miraculous, is but an earthly dreamer, even when his dreams shape themselves in accordance with

[1] Ritschl, in his incisive scrutiny of Mysticism, fastened upon the fact that the Mystics of the Netherlands kept clear of Quietistic ideas, but he failed to recognise that this was their weakness, the real cause of their sporadic and ineffective course. The best of them were schismatics. He rightly admits (*Geschichte des Pietismus*, ii. 411) that Bourignon, with Böhme, was an exception. Dr. Inge recognises that "the most consistent Quietists were perhaps those who brought the doctrine of Quietism into most discredit" (*Christian Mysticism*, p. 243).

labour, and oblige us afterwards to fall back into luxury. The devil also profits by our excess in prayer, which, when it is too vehement, hurts the head and often brings confusion into the management of our affairs. I have known women so addicted to devotions that they would neglect their families in order to go to church frequently, and, withal, they thought they did well, not discovering the cunning of the devil; for God is a God of order, not of confusion. . . . If we were in a right disposition, we should have no need of fastings and watchings. It is not in the flesh but in the will that sin lies, and it is the will that needs to be constrained. The flesh is as a horse, which ought not to be whipped when he goes willingly." [1]

Most noteworthy is it that in her seclusion her mind was chiefly occupied neither by religious fancies nor by abstract speculations, but by earnest and in many aspects valid criticism of the beliefs and practices of her neighbours. She wrote voluminously and rapidly, letter after letter, conférence after conférence, explication after explication, and she frequently repeated herself;

[1] This was a strain of her ethical teaching which John Wesley desired to impress upon the members of his Societies.

but she always had her eye on the world—on "men nowadays"—and pressed home her criticisms with real incisiveness. The only exceptions to this are her imaginings with regard to Adam and with regard to the Last Things. These were intensely, almost abominably realistic. She draws ghastly pictures of the smoke and smell which sin will produce when concentrated in a hell upon earth, and of the agonising struggle of the wills of the lost, eternally free yet eternally unable to resign themselves to God. Yet these were not, in her own view, essentials of her teaching. They were "accessory sentiments"[1] which her disciples were at liberty to ignore. What she received directly from God was, on the one hand, insight into the wickedness of contemporary Christianity and, on the other hand, specific guidance as to her own practical conduct.

Further, she habitually contends, as in the passage quoted above, that Resignation and Visions must be tested by an ethical standard. In this contention she is at one

[1] See pp. 86, 125.

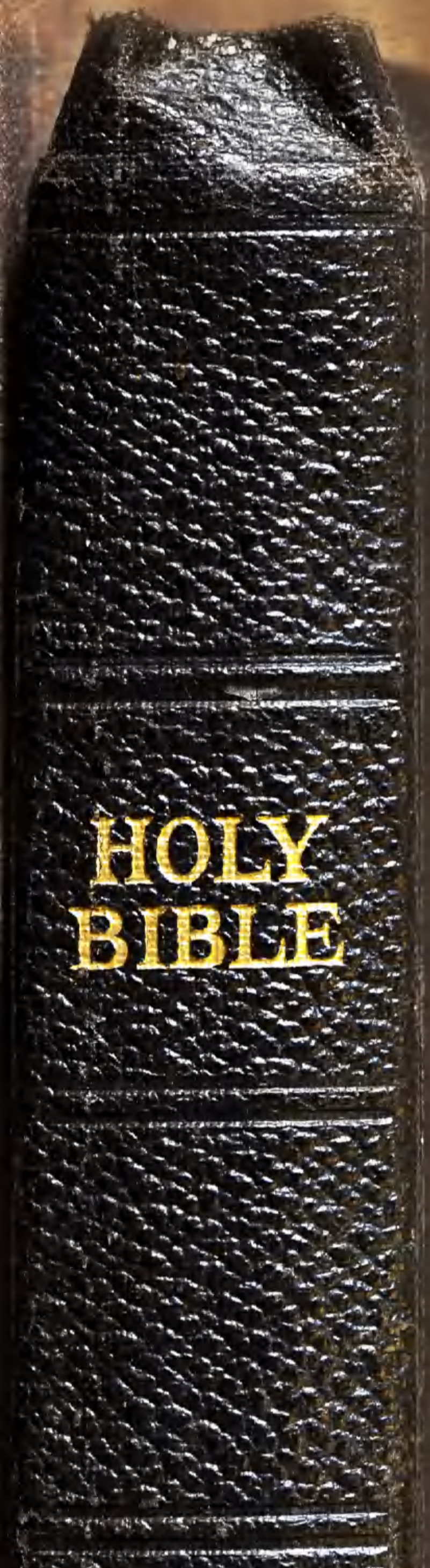
with St. Teresa, whose very words indeed she uses.[1]

"The test of our Motions is that they lead to the glory of God and to the advantage of our neighbours, spiritual and temporal. Many say that they are wholly for God, although there are no appearances of it; the marks that must be given of conversion and of real blessedness are set down in the eight beatitudes. . . . The gift of inspiration must be vindicated not by outward signs nor by the suffrages of men, but by the fruits of the Spirit. . . . God's will is revealed in His law and particularly in the doctrine of Jesus Christ."

Yet it was precisely here, on the ethical side, that her teaching most signally failed. With the doctrine of Jesus Christ she had but a meagre acquaintance. She has been charged, as we have seen,[2] with untruthfulness on the ground that, while denying that she reads the Bible, she frequently quotes its words and even expounds its teaching. But her quotations are so loose, and her expositions so sporadic, that they rather confirm her assertion that she "owes

[1] von Hügel's *Mystical Element of Religion*, ii. 48.

[2] See pp. 33, 34, 91.



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fails to give charity any content or significance. She frequently and frankly avows that it is dangerous and even wicked to pass a kindly judgment upon neighbours or to give attention to their good qualities and good actions. Our safety, she says, lies in detecting and exposing men's faults and offences. Her own persistent purpose is to set forth her strictures without any merciful abatement, and she is eager to persuade her disciples that all men, especially their own kindred and friends, are in league with the devil. As to charity of a practical kind, she definitely prohibits the giving of help to the poor and similar religious exercises and avows, with a sad pride, that she herself has long abandoned them, having discovered through bitter experience that they lead only to mischief. She speaks of her kindness to the destitute children of Lille as having been a well-intentioned blunder, and expresses serious regret that when she dies she must leave her money to some one. Indeed, the only connection in which her idea of charity becomes influential, is when she uses it in the tech-

nical sense which Francis de Sales had given it for Roman Catholics—viz. tolerance of the faults of the Church and of the sins of churchmen.[1] More than once she advises her Spiritual Children not to leave the Church of their infancy on the ground that to do so would be "uncharitable." Yet, as we have seen, she did not maintain this view consistently, and she regarded Francis de Sales as an untrustworthy casuist.

The other startling and disagreeable result of her Resignation was her overbearing belief in her infallibility. No doubt that belief arose from a sincere conviction that she had direct guidance from God. Yet her sincerity, which in this matter her enemies never challenged, only heightened and broadened her claim to divine illumination. Upon this illumination exclusively she founds her title to teach. The one qualification of a teacher is perfect union with God, and such union she enjoys. Although a sinner, she knows God's will perfectly, so far as is necessary for her and her Children. If they would only believe that she has

[1] Francis borrowed his phraseology from St. Augustine.

the Spirit of God, from whom no evil can proceed, they would not yield to the devil when he prompts them to contradict her. Although she reads no books, she has the assurance of her own sentiments when God is teaching her, and that assurance is all-sufficient. The decrees of Church Councils, so far as she is acquainted with them, are at variance with the teaching she has received from the Holy Spirit, and therefore they are not to be taken into account. Her illumination extends to temporal things. She can direct architects in house-building, doctors in medicine and lawyers in legal processes. She can cite passages from the Old Testament which she has never read, and interpret the sentiments and discriminate the character of persons three or four hundred leagues away. Of this last-mentioned gift she has had irrefragable evidence. "To a certain divinity professor among the Reformed, who never spoke with her save once, she wrote a long letter, embodied in *Le Tombeau de la Fausse Théologie*, which, she has been assured by some learned men, interprets the most

in this world hath regard solely to the good and advantage of my neighbour, and I am moved only by Christian charity to give counsel, to write and to have my writings printed. . . . Nothing is sweeter or more easy than to submit to a person who is conducted by God, as you may do to your comfort."

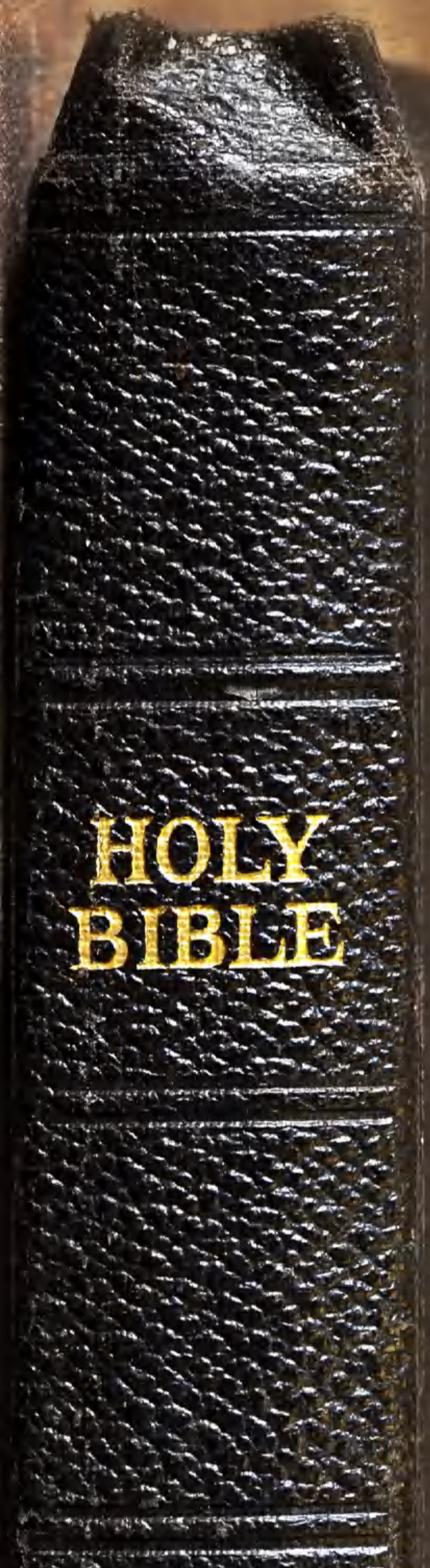
She does not always claim verbal inspiration. All her words "come not immediately from the Holy Ghost," but she has received from God skill sufficient to make her intelligible to those who are in darkness, and the substance of what she writes is infallible. About the terms in which she sets forth the truths of God she has no anxiety. She admits that sometimes she names Peter for Paul and one country for another, but she does not care to correct such mistakes when they are pointed out to her. Sincerity is more pleasing to God than eloquence, and it is enough for her to please Him. Yet, when instructing the faithful de Cort, she makes an unqualified claim :

"I send you the Preface with the Index which I have made. I find nothing to change ; it must be

printed as it is, as soon as the titles come. I am not used to do and undo, for God's Spirit repents not. He is as wise at one time as at another; we must acquiesce in what He has once inspired. It is only men that waste their time in committing blunders and mending them again. If He dictates more clearly afterwards, that is another matter. I do only what I am obliged to do, discharging my duty to God alone, from whom I have received all things."

Absurd as this claim is, its significance may be misinterpreted. It does not bring her to the level of the ordinary fanatic who tries to palm off extravagances by the plea of special inspiration. There was nothing preposterous in the beliefs with which she said she was inspired. Those figurative and mythical expressions of her theology which she put forth as "accessory sentiments" were not the creed which she endeavoured to propagate. There is no evidence that they were accepted by the scholarly and devout men who became her adherents. Her visions of paradise and of hell had something of the same relation to her system as the imagined battles between Christ and Lucifer bore, in

the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, to the personal religion of the early Jesuits. She at no time urged any one to acquiesce in all her opinions, and, indeed, she was not anxious to secure assent to any positive doctrine. The one truth of which she was absolutely convinced was that her vigorous and vehement criticism of "men nowadays" was infallible. In her solitary musings she appeared to herself as an unerring judge, and her claim to be inspired was little more than a deliberate and proud refusal to justify her judgments by argument. "Nowadays," to use her phrase, we waver so much in our religious opinions that a teacher who was perfectly sure that she was right in her estimate of contemporary religion, and who ascribed that estimate to the Spirit of God, appears to us to have transgressed an ethical as well as an intellectual law. Yet looking back for two centuries we must certainly recognise that many of Antoinette's judgments were sound, so sound that they have become commonplaces. She believed that in conceiving and stating them she was inspired. It is



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CHAPTER VI

A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

1671

THE religious liberty afforded to strangers in Amsterdam was unqualified. Although Antoinette Bourignon was "persecuted" there for two or three years and finally forced to flee, the persecutions she suffered were not on account of the religious extravagances which have been described in the preceding chapters. It is true that her admirers have ascribed the difficulties which closed in upon her to the animosity of the clergy. Yet these difficulties were in themselves exclusively financial, and arose from speculative undertakings in which she was involved by her "spiritual child," Christian de Cort, and which in themselves would

have sufficed to alter the course of her life.

The business was a curiously tangled one. Until 1895 her own narrative, as given in her letters and summarised by Dr. Garden in his *Apology*, was generally accepted as accurate; but in that year Dr. von der Linde demonstrated that at some crucial stages she has misrepresented facts. In a volume of this size it would be impossible to traverse all the ground, but, indeed, a slight sketch will suffice for most readers. Those who wish for fuller information must be referred to Dr. von der Linde's pages,[1] which present a clear if not vivid picture of a little-known epoch in the social and religious life of the Low Countries and the Southern Baltic.

De Cort, the son of a respectable civic official at Bois le Duc, in North Brabant, was the senior of Antoinette by about eight years.[2] He was a priest, admitted in 1630,

[1] The writer does not at all accept either Dr. von der Linde's estimate of Antoinette's conduct or the depreciation of her purpose by Dr. Kawerau in Herzog's *Realencyclopädie* (1897).

[2] See p. 47.

at Louvain, to the College of the Oratory of Jesus. An eager, excitable man, with a love for novelties, he engaged, some ten years before he made Antoinette's acquaint-ance, in a strange enterprise which would have been impossible except in the Nether-lands, with their crossing of civic and political authorities and their homely ad-ministration of justice.

In the North Frisian Sea, opposite the west coast of Schleswig, lies the little island of Nordstrand, which, like many islands on the Baltic, has frequently had its dimensions altered through the advance and retreat of the sea. In 1634 it suffered from a disastrous inundation, which reduced the number of its inhabitants [1] and for the time ruined its industry. In those days it was a possession of Holland, although the Dukes of Holstein had signorial rights over it. The Dutch being absorbed in their momentous national struggle, the re-em-bankment of the island was undertaken in

[1] The population was reduced to 1,500. At present (1908) the island has 2,000 inhabitants, mainly of the Lutheran Communion.

following years, de Cort made considerable purchases of land on Nordstrand, partly as Director, partly as agent for individual investors at Malines, and carried this so far as to become seriously embarrassed. Finally, in 1664, he made over tithes, rights, lands, properties and furnishings to the resident Fathers for 76,700 gulden, on condition that they should also take over the debts by which the various properties were burdened. In the deed of transfer there was no mention of this condition; and, when the deed was executed, the Fathers disclaimed all liability for the debts. De Cort, being practically bankrupt in 1667, petitioned the High Court of Justice at Malines to cancel the transfer. His stupidity and carelessness in the transaction would be incredible, were it not substantiated by the fact that the High Court granted his petition and cancelled the deed, on condition that he should repay the 76,700 gulden within a year and six weeks.

It is impossible to say at what stage, or in what way, Antoinette became involved

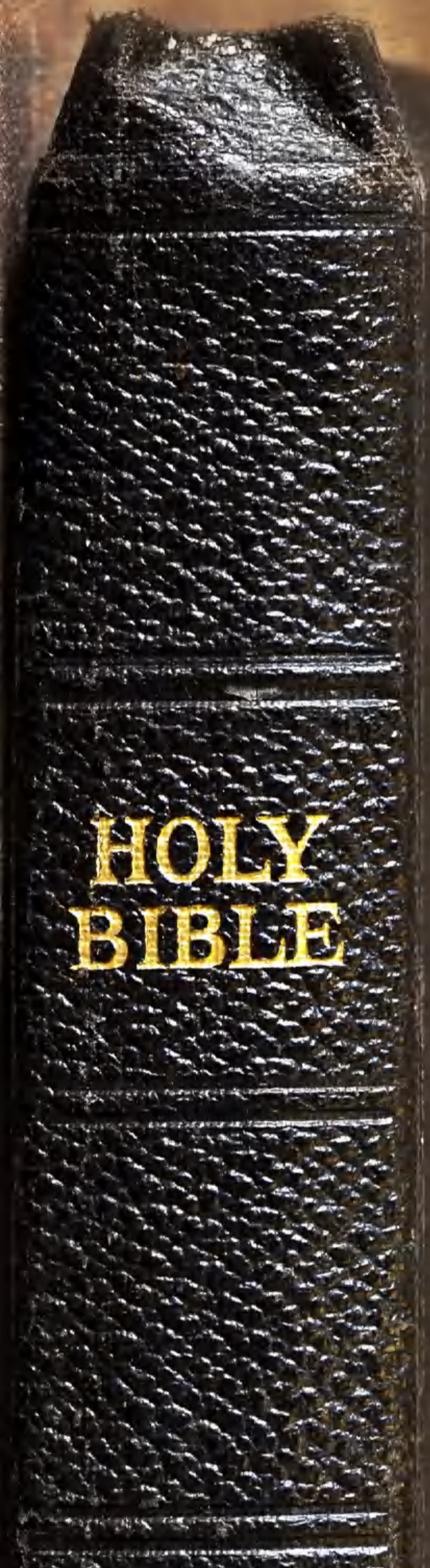
in these proceedings. She was one of the principal shareholders in the Company. Her name also appears in the list of separate purchasers of land in Nordstrand. Yet she took no part in the transactions, and was unaware of them while they were in process. Her severest critics never charged her with any carelessness in money matters: on the contrary, they habitually censured her for excessive shrewdness. When she found what de Cort had done, she blamed him severely for his reckless simplicity. Far from charging him with unfairness, she judged him to have been an unworldly, unbusinesslike man; and her judgment in this matter must be accepted as correct.[1] He idolised her so blindly that his enemies charged him with holding that there are four Persons in the Godhead, Antoinette being the fourth. Accordingly, when he fell into this distress, she came to the rescue with a generosity which was in every sense chivalrous. By her help two-

[1] Dr. Kawerau gives no evidence for his suggestion that de Cort had attached himself to Antoinette for the sake of her money. (See p. 47.)

thirds of the requisite sum was procured, and it seemed as if he were to be set free from the consequences of his calamitous blundering.

But at this very time the calamity took a fatal shape, through the action of one of his creditors, Louis Gorin. Gorin is an important historical personage—the "Saint Amour" who represented the Jansenists at the papal court in those protracted controversies which proved so momentous in the history of Roman Catholic theology. To him de Cort had sold certain properties on Nordstrand, with an undertaking that they would yield to him at least eight per cent. The yield of the investment proved to be considerably less than that percentage, and with a rapidity which makes it almost certain that de Cort and his Company had become obnoxious to the authorities, de Cort was thrown into the Amsterdam prison.

Once again Antoinette showed herself to be a brave and generous friend. She espoused his cause openly and resolutely. At great risk to herself, she supplied him



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in the register of the Oratory chapel at Herrenhaus :

Sepultus est in sacello novo immediate ante altare Reverendus Pater Christianus de Cort, Director Nordstrandiae : Correptus apoplexiae exinde mortuus.

To Antoinette the loss was irreparable. De Cort was the one man who had shown himself consistently to be her Spiritual Child, as docile as her exacting standard required, but retaining his individuality and eagerly helpful in the publication of her writings. Yet she bore the loss calmly. When the tidings reached her, she was labouring under "a grievous sickness"; but, "having made her complaint to God, she turned quietly to the messenger, saying, 'Since it is the will of God to permit this, I am satisfied, and I desire not that it were otherwise.'"

These details about a subordinate personage are required in order to explain the development of her career. When de Cort's will was read, it was found that he had made her heiress to "all his properties and rights

in Nordstrand," and the heritage with its entanglements cost her the next nine years of her life. She was reluctant to accept it, as she well might be. It had no financial value. In her own language Nordstrand was "a place of no resort, to which none go but those who have business, inhabited only by poor country people and labourers of the ground." The properties were bur-dened to at least their real worth, and the legal title was disputable, owing to the indefiniteness in which the Malines law-plea had been left. The Fathers resident in the island were greedy, clever and unscrupulous. Ejecting de Cort's tenants, they laid hands upon houses which were hers by purchase, and actually ventured an attempt upon her life by an emissary whom they des-patched to Amsterdam. Surveying the situation, she gave notice to de Cort's surviving kinsfolk that she would surrender her rights to any one of them who would undertake to discharge his debts. None of them, however, could face the obligation, and providence seemed to constrain her. For two years indeed she hesitated, and the

Nordstrand Fathers persisted in their persecutions. Yet she was a woman not to be coerced by ill-treatment. The opposition of men was in her view equivalent to the favour of God, and she had not a shred of personal timidity. Besides, conscience slowly persuaded her that she was furnished with an opportunity which she dared not neglect. She was called to make Nordstrand a Home of Solid Virtue, a refuge for those who recognised in her teaching the Last Mercy of God. Accordingly, she formally accepted the legacy, despatched law-agents to Nordstrand to sift the claims upon the estate, and finally, in 1671, set out for Holstein, resolved "to obtain justice, if possible amicably," and accompanied by four or five of her Spiritual Children.[1]

This was the fulfilment of a plan which de Cort had frequently pressed upon her, but it was in a sense a departure from her principles and completely at variance with her preferences. She seriously disliked com-

[1] The idea that the motives of her enterprise were mercenary is irreconcilable with her action at every stage.

was drafted and solemnly signed at Haarlem on April 7, 1671, to the following effect:

"We, the undersigned, promise God our Father Creator to be willing to love and serve Him always as true children entirely without any reserve, and to employ for His glory all the industry of our souls and all the force of our bodies with all that God has given and lent us of this world, offering all in sacrifice with our body and our soul to be employed according to His holy will, which we hope to learn from Him and from His servant Antoinette Bourignon, whom we take as our Spiritual Mother, promising to obey her in all that she shall tell us as from God (*de la part de Dieu*), and to give effect to it as far as possible till death, without ever again trading or working to acquire the goods of this world, which we renounce absolutely and without reserve, to follow and imitate Jesus Christ. . . . that we may be renewed in His spirit and die to the spirit of the corrupted flesh, renouncing the devil, the world and our sensualities, to adhere to the will of our heavenly Father, in order that we may be able to live eternally with Him.

"And in consequence of those promises, I, the undersigned Antoinette Bourignon, receive all the undersigned persons as my Spiritual Children, promising to make known to them the will of their Eternal Father, even before they are willing to follow it, and to help and encourage them to do it

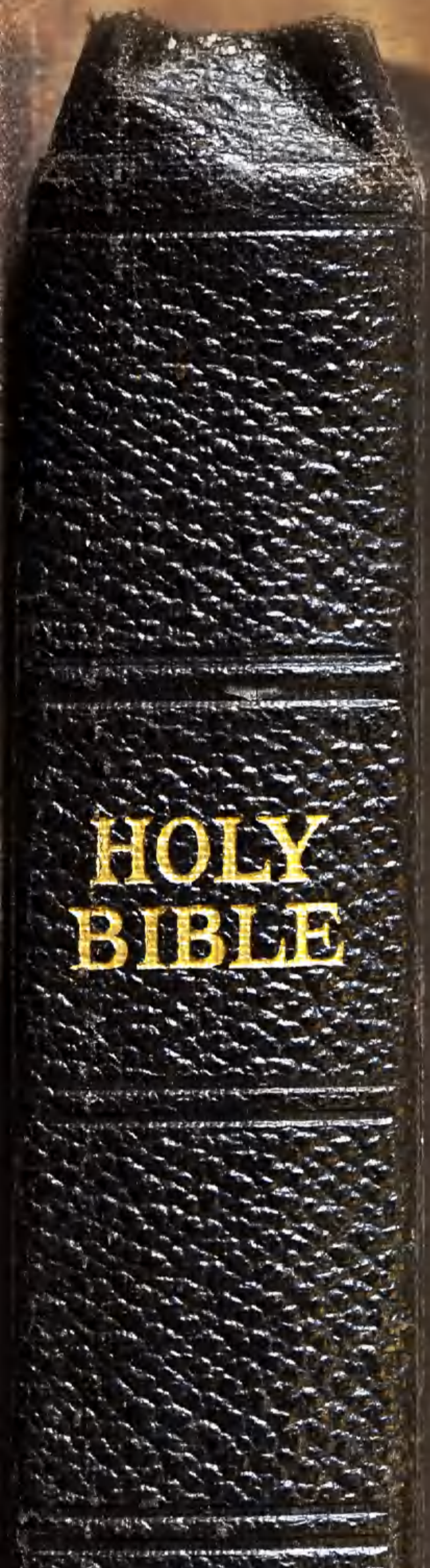
with all my power, and to take care of their bodies and their souls, such care as a true mother is constrained to take of her children, offering also to do the same for all those who shall truly share the aforesaid disposition."

To this covenant four signatures, besides Antoinette's, were appended, three of the signatories being men and one a woman.

It will be noted that the agreement, while making no reference to the Nordstrand scheme, includes no definite rules except the surrender of private property and the undertaking not to acquire worldly goods, balanced by her undertaking to provide for the "bodies" of her Children. Formal regulations of external conduct would have been inconsistent with her conceptions of the evangelical life. Yet one matter was made clear from the outset. The obedience to be rendered to her, speaking "de la part de Dieu," must be unqualified. She was at heart an autocrat, and she knew that autocracy was essential to her scheme.

The little company took ship to the town of Tönningen in Holstein; but they were

dogged by assassins headed by Patin, the Chief of the Nordstrand Oratory, and in a few weeks they hurried on to Schleswig, where for a year they enjoyed comparative comfort and safety under the protection of the Grand Duke.



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are irregularly distributed through the eight or nine publications in which her correspondence is preserved. To some of them the date and place of writing are not affixed, while in others the date given is demonstrably incorrect. The responsibility is mainly her own. She frequently concealed her residence, and sometimes she substituted the date at which a letter was published for the date at which it had been written. Further, in her correspondence, as printed, individuals are usually designated by initials, and the identification of them is sometimes a matter of conjecture. These facts will explain the omission of some historical links in the following narrative as well as the possibility of error in details. The interest of the events is, however, of a kind which is not dependent upon minutiæ.

Antoinette's distinct intention, when she sailed from Holland in 1671, was to proceed to Nordstrand, but she was aware that it was impossible for her to go there at once. Her first concern must be to establish her title to de Cort's estate in the law courts of the principality, and her selection of

Schleswig as her first place of residence was due to its convenience for that purpose. At Schleswig her company was increased by the arrival of some twenty recruits, chiefly Quakers, Jansenists and Mennonites, who were dissatisfied with their respective communions. These proved to be intractable and otherwise unsatisfactory adherents, and her flowing pen produced rapidly, for their correction and instruction, *Les Pierres de la Nouvelle Jérusalem* and *L'Aveuglement des Hommes de Maintenant.* Yet her energies were mainly employed in seeking for legal adjustments, the general character of which can be briefly explained.

The tithes and other disputed properties of Nordstrand had, it will be remembered,[1] been assigned by the Malines courts to de Cort on condition of a large payment being made to the Fathers, who were in possession of them. Antoinette so far fulfilled that condition as to deposit 50,000 gulden with the authorities at Amsterdam. She refused, however, to recognise any obligation except to those who would submit proof

[1] See p. 132

of their personal claim to the payment of money which had been due to them by de Cort. Her contention was that the properties, as having been part of de Cort's estate, now belonged to her, and that she was called upon to repay only his proved debts; whereas the Fathers seem to have argued that she was bound to pay over the whole sum specified by the Amsterdam court without any scrutiny, and that, unless the sum was paid, the properties were theirs. The question was on the face of it an intricate one, and the intricacy was increased by the fact that, while the law courts concerned were Dutch, Nordstrand was in the Principality of Holstein and the Kingdom of Denmark. Antoinette demanded a statement of the creditors' accounts, and the Fathers not only declined to comply with the demand, but disputed her right to set foot on the island. Their leader Patin, a strenuous and virulent man, showed a great deal of clever versatility in debating the matter of jurisdiction. He managed to bring over the Holstein magistrates for a time to his view, and then to

ment of her legal claim, being due to personal dangers, which fall to be explained in a later chapter.

Although she was in this way shut out from Nordstrand, she was not balked in her purpose of establishing a settlement there. Quite apart from de Cort's estate, she had property of her own in the island, consisting of many acres of land, several houses and a good deal of live stock. Indeed, the preposterousness of the attitude of the Fathers appears in this, that they could not challenge her ownership of these, while denying her right of entrance. Even before 1671, she had allowed two or three of her Children to occupy one of her houses, and now, when herself detained on the mainland, she developed that plan, sending over band after band of settlers to occupy her other houses and erecting them into a community or brotherhood united in "a common life." Most of them were single persons, either unmarried or separated from their spouses. A few married couples were lodged in separate cottages, but their ménage too was strictly controlled. The community

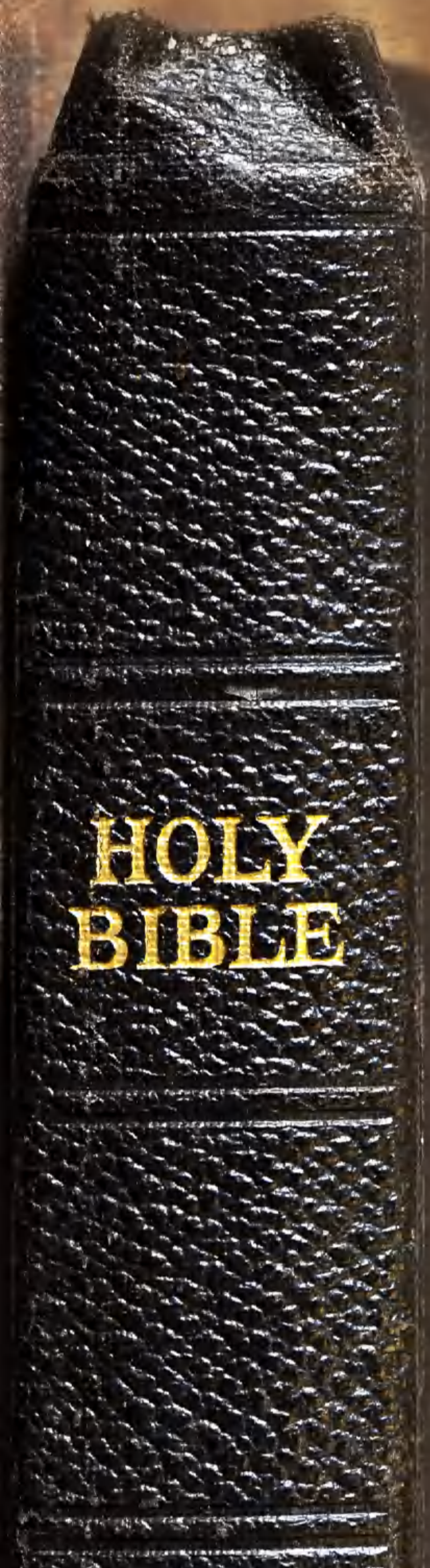
was superintended by a Directress who was in constant correspondence with Antoinette. The latter bore all the charges of the settlement. She even made a small weekly allowance to each settler from her own purse. The scheme was a very costly one for her. It is true that one of the conditions of the Brotherhood was that the members should on entering pay over all their private property into the common fund, and should engage regularly in pastoral and agricultural work. But this brought slight abatement of her expenditure, for few of them were persons of means and still fewer were capable of productive labour. Yet she never complained of the cost. Her own words on this matter may be accepted as a genuine statement :

"If I were guided by avarice, I might get much more for Nordstrand than can ever come from my dealings with that little island. I desire to possess it for no other reason than that I may assist those who have a mind to retire from the world, to become the disciples of Christ and to live there according to the Evangelical Counsels. For myself I have no need of Nordstrand nor of any other

public place, seeing that a little chamber would suffice me all the days of my life. Yet, seeing that I was not created for myself alone but also for assisting my neighbours, I will lay hold on such occasions as God affords me for the better assisting of them."

The regulations by which the community was bound were altered from time to time. A few of them may be quoted in the shape which they had reached in 1675.

Intercourse, friendship and correspondence with the world are prohibited. All must work as hard as possible, in order to complete the penitence laid upon Adam by God. Members are not allowed to adhere to any sect or special religion, or to follow the injunctions or usages of any. They must belong only to "the Christian Church," which is the fellowship of the holy, and outside which there is no salvation. The rich must not be preferred to the poor, nor the young to the old, nor any one nation or religion to another. Virtue must be the one concern, with a purpose to lead an evangelical life. No one must join the Brotherhood as a teacher, to introduce customs, laws or new lessons. No one must receive gifts from relatives or friends, lest there be loss of liberty in speaking truth. All must bend without reserve to the laws of evangelical



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doctrine of Resignation to the divine will as disclosed to her alone.[1] Her insistence upon her authority was passionate as well as unfailing, and she believed her passion to be inspired. "My anger against my rebellious children," she wrote, "is no less divine than my love for them."

One quaint phase of her arrangements illustrates the genuineness of her belief in her own doctrine of spiritual enlightenment. She absolutely forbade any regularity in religious exercises, on the ground that it would foster formalism. When she heard that one specially devout Brother was addicted to fasting, she was exceedingly angry and wrote to him that his fasts were devices of the devil, who was bent upon persuading him that he could fast more than others. The prohibition extended to united and systematic prayer. Some pious women proposed to hold prayer-meetings at fixed hours, but she interposed with a vehement veto. Things spiritual, she said, must on no account be arranged, lest they should lose spontaneity. If they agreed to pray at

[1] See p. 121.

certain times, they might find, when the times came round, that their souls did not rise to God, and to kneel before Him without elevation of the soul is wickedness.

She rarely wrote to her Children about their souls except in this negative strain. She gave them no room for the cheerfulness of positive beliefs, the eagerness of intelligent endeavour or the quiet delight of voluntary surrender and service. Most of her letters to them are occupied either with dissertations on the conditions and movements of her own soul or with the enforcement of trivial and even sordid domesticities. Indeed, one of the reasons for the oblivion to which her ethical acuteness has been doomed is that she herself buried it amidst details, which have very slight interest even biographically.

As might be expected, her Children rebelled under this exacting and unreasoning tyranny. None of their letters of complaint have been preserved; but her replies show that most of them were respectable and fairly intelligent people who, after some experience of distress and failure in the

world or of discord with their kindred, had been led to join the community by the prospect her writings held out to them of a disengaged, simple and devotional life. They seem to have had no specific religious opinions, and they showed no disposition to criticise her doctrine. They were willing to recognise her authority generally, and indeed were anxious for guidance; but the incessant toil on which she insisted, in the fields and in the house, being unrelieved by any positive religious ideas or exercises, proved to most of them to be disappointing and distasteful. Some withdrew silently; others carried loud complaints to Holland and to Germany. This led her to impose a regulation that none should be admitted to membership without a year's probation. Thereafter those who were once enrolled proved tolerably steadfast, although they murmured and, against her orders, formed pathetic little circles for mutual encouragement. All their plaints and peccadilloes were reported to her by the Directress, and she would let nothing pass unchallenged. One woman is careless in washing dishes,

published at great risk, as will be seen later, to her own personal safety, and were circulated in at least four languages as religious literature. She learned, for instance, that some women grumbled because they were not allowed to have both butter and cheese with their bread, nor to eat between meals; and she poured out upon the grumblers a stream of reproachful and angry argument, demonstrating, by reason and by special revelation, that butter is sufficient without cheese and cheese without butter, and that the desire to eat between meals can have arisen only through the craft of Antichrist. She also frankly avows her parsimony and justifies it elaborately, proclaiming that, as an illuminated person, she is bound to be careful of every pin and to see that not a doit or stiver falls into the hands of the poor.

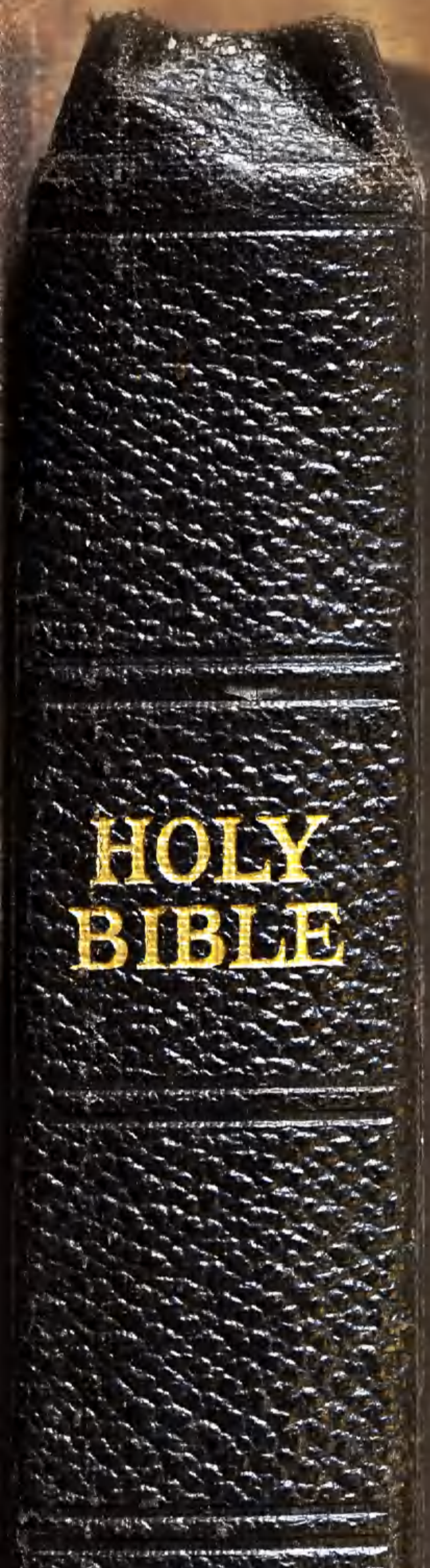
Gradually the failure of her scheme became apparent even to herself. As early as 1673 she put out cautious inquiries as to the willingness of the Labadists to take the island off her hands by purchase. In 1675 she wrote that, if Nordstrand is not an

earthly paradise, that is through the self-will and rebellion of her Children. Thereafter her severe assertions that "the blindness of men nowadays" prevents them from following the True Light become more frequent. She begins to warn her Children that she will leave them to face the devil without her guidance; for, although at the bottom of their souls they desire to do well, they practically do the will of the devil in contempt of the will of God as disclosed to them by her. Her correspondence in 1676 shows that a crisis was approaching. One young recruit has broken down in health through over-work, in circumstances which reflect discredit on the management. Another, who has run away from the island, attempts to levy black-mail, threatening to publish an account of what he has seen unless she sends him money. Nature itself is against her. The Nordstrand calves have been drowned; the sheep will not breed. "All things go contrary to the will of God and to the orders which He has assuredly given me in things both great and small." At this very stage she was obliged for other

reasons to leave Holstein and to abandon any definite idea of vindicating her rights to de Cort's estate. It is not strange that she recognised the hopelessness of maintaining the Brotherhood. On August 16, 1677, she wrote to the Directress :

"I now positively bid you let out all of the lands for half of the increase and sell our beasts. The house you may give to any good man, reserving the little chambers for the brethren when they go back for the rent. Do so softly and without noise. Say that you are going to Schleswig and that you will come back now and then to Nordstrand. It is to be feared that God will again chastise the island for its injustice and then give it to us entirely, if it is the place where He is to assemble His children. Let us leave Him to Himself. He is a wise master, who can never fail to do all well."

Serious and unselfish attempts to lead a Common Life on an unworldly basis are never without interest and suggestiveness. The failure of this attempt may be ascribed to the fact that, although nominally, indeed almost boastfully religious, the spirit that pervaded it was not religious in any important sense. On the other hand, it may



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CHAPTER VIII

PERSECUTIONS

1671–77

DURING those six years Antoinette's life was one of incessant excitement and manifold hazard. Her contentions about Nordstrand were secondary and subordinate to a brave endeavour to secure the dissemination of her doctrine through the press, and she is entitled to respect, even to admiration, for her persistency and courage.

The liberty which she had enjoyed in Holland was not to be expected elsewhere in those days. Yet Denmark had as yet refrained from that ruthless repression of heresy which had become normal in Italy, France, England and Germany, and she hoped to secure toleration by a full and frank presentation of her views. To this she set herself as soon as she was settled

in Schleswig. Finding difficulties with the local printers, she sent to Holland for a printing-press, and proceeded at once to issue collections of her letters and new controversial treatises. Her most significant publication of this date is *Le Témoignage de Vérité*, which consisted mainly of letters and testimonials from theologians and philosophers of good standing, designed to exhibit "the Life, Character, Virtues and Teachings of the Maid Antoinette Bourignon." At no other period of her life would she have deigned to admit the value of the good opinion of others, but at this time she recognised that the future of her cause depended upon her persuading the public, and especially the magistrates, that she had a claim to toleration. When the Lutherans of Schleswig showed their hostility, she moved to Husum, a small town near the Royal Castle of Gottorp, or Gottorf, which proved to be a more convenient residence through its proximity to Nordstrand. There, too, however, she met with opposition, at first decorous but soon furious. The pastors of Schleswig and Husum united in obtaining

an injunction against her using her press, and lodged an indictment with the magistrates. The indictment came to nothing, but her printing-press was seized.

"The Duke," she writes, "too easily assented to the statement of the preachers that my writings are contrary to the doctrine of Luther, and he ordered a stop to be put to the printing, but the Procurator Fiscal went beyond his orders. He came to my lodgings and carried away not only my press but ten or twelve cart-loads of books. He searched the house, broke open doors and locks, took out of my chests whatever he pleased and, having burst into my chamber, would have had me pulled out of bed to find if books were hidden beneath me if he had not been afraid. . . . All these things he sent off to the Castle of Gottorp, and I cannot recover them."

Yet she baffled such attacks by sending her manuscripts to Holland, where they were printed and circulated not only in Dutch but in French and German. The anger of the pastors was intense, when they found that they were foiled. They denounced her from their pulpits as a papist and a witch, and issued violent pamphlets, which were quite pointless in their argu-

of Schleswig, and Ouw, pastor at Flensbourg, both Lutherans; but they were reinforced by weightier controversialists, Berckendall, pastor of the Reformed Church in Altona, and Yvon, a noted Labadist of Hamburg.[1] All these writers charged her with being "a Romanist," and they were so far justified in this because, as has been seen, she had openly avowed her adherence to the Roman Church. Yet the Roman authorities hated her as fiercely as did Lutherans and Calvinists, and joined with them in an all but successful attempt to assassinate her. So, on the Baltic shores the strife between Jesuitism and Jansenism with which western Europe was ringing was silenced for a time, in order that the wickedness of Antoinette Bourignon might be exposed and annihilated.[2] The spirit in

[1] Dr. Kawerau arranges her assailants thus: Furly in 1671: Berckendall in 1672: Yvon in 1673: Burchard in 1674: Ouw in 1675. But all of these men wrote against her repeatedly, at intervals, and her controversies with them overlapped.

[2] How unreasonably she was treated appears in this, that the Lutherans objected to her landing on Nordstrand because she was a "Romanist," at a time when her possessions on the island were in the hands of Roman priests.

which she faced such attacks is clearly shown in one of her letters addressed to a priest of Brabant :

"REVEREND FATHER,—

"I hear there is a Commission from Rome to examine my books, and that this is to be done in Nordstrand by a French priest of the Provinces of Brabant and a Jesuit of Friedrichstadt, who are my enemies. I desire you to request them from me to act discreetly in this matter, if they would preserve the honour of the Roman Church ; for if they act in passion, or accuse me of any faults without ground, I cannot be silent but am bound to defend the truth. If they are wise, they will not accuse me wrongfully, lest I be obliged to speak against them, as enemies of our Religion, that which they desire not to hear."

On her return to Husum there was something like a reaction in her favour, mainly, it seems, through the good-will of two men in high position, the Commander-in-chief of the Holstein army and the President of the Law Courts, with both of whom she was on terms of cordial intimacy. Probably through their mediation, she came into very friendly relations with the Duke of Holstein.

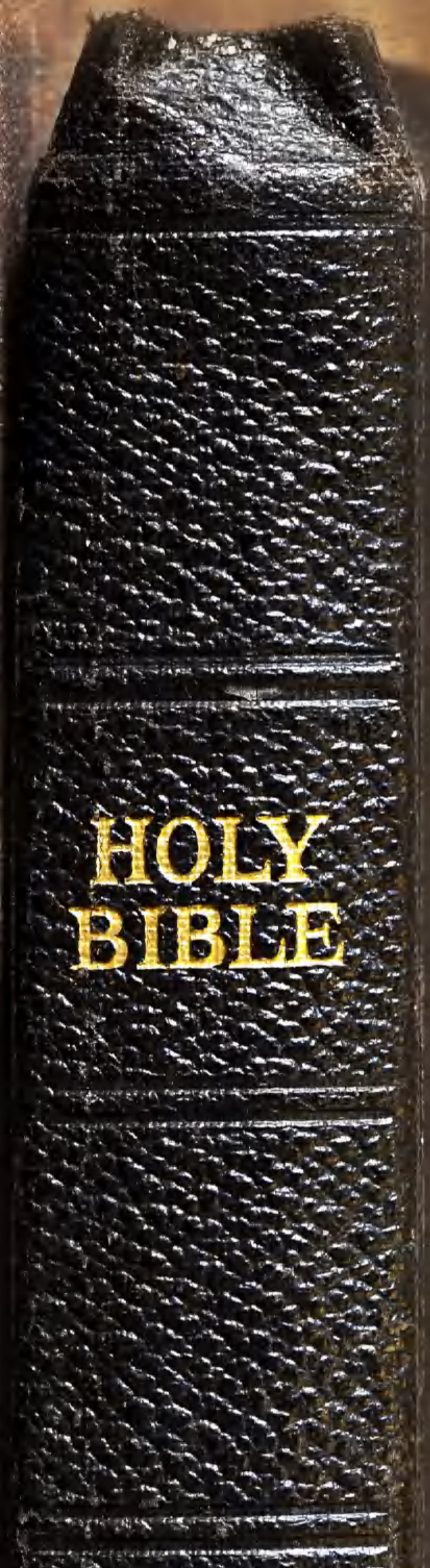
Although he forbade her to reply publicly to her Lutheran assailants, this seems to have been in the interests of peace, for he not only held her in respect, but presented her case favourably to the King of Denmark.

Acting on the advice of such men, she put forth a Confession of her faith, which deserves to be reproduced, not only for biographical reasons but because, after her death, it was prefixed to most editions of her writings. The English version is given here, since it was the basis of a good deal of theological controversy both in England and in Scotland at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It does not differ in essentials from the French original, as printed at the close of this chapter.

Mrs.[1] Antonia Bourignon's Confession of Faith, publicly presented by her to the Court of Gottorp, to oppose the malicious reports which some had industriously raised to make the purity of her doctrines and sentiments be suspected:

1. I am a Christian and do believe all that a true Christian ought to believe.

[1] This use of "Mrs.," which was a courtesy title in England in those days, seems to be the foundation of the erroneous notion that she was married.



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is true God evades the question of the divinity of the *historical* Christ, and is in line with the Socinian theory that He was deified after death. As to her declaration that she did "not doubt of" any one of the articles of the Apostles' Creed, it was notorious that to each of these articles she had in her writings given a significance repudiated by all Christian Churches; and, similarly, her avowal of belief "in all the Holy Scriptures" might quite reasonably be contrasted with her elaborate contention that truly "resigned" persons had no need of the Bible, and with her boast that she herself knew, through divine enlightenment, all that the Scriptures contained. One of the well-known features of that generation was the readiness of the unorthodox to accept creeds "in a sense," or with reservations, and the general judgment of churchmen was that Antoinette, while anxious to secure the protection of the civil authorities by asserting generally that she held Christian beliefs, had failed to answer the charges brought against her, and that her opinions must be estimated by the explicit

statement of them made in her publications, none of which did she disavow. Accordingly, her Confession made no more favourable impression upon Lutherans than her reiterated boast that she adhered to Rome made upon Romanists, and the effort of her aristocratic friends to vindicate her orthodoxy completely failed.

The final collapse of her cause in Holstein cannot be very distinctly traced. It appears to have been sudden, and to have been due to concurring causes. In 1675 she lost her possessions at Lille. War having broken out between France and Holland, her malignant step-mother successfully urged that a Dutchwoman's property—Antoinette had been naturalised at Amsterdam—must be regarded as "confiscate." When she was thus reduced to penury and almost to starvation, her principal supporter, the Commander-in-chief, fell out of favour at the Danish Court. In 1676 Duke Christian Albert of Holstein was banished by the Danes, and the King of Denmark made a progress through his dominions. When he reached Gottorp, he complied with the eager

pleading of the pastors and gave orders that Antoinette should be imprisoned. She fled from the principality, attended only by a girl, and in March 1676 took refuge in Hamburg, where she lived in straits for fifteen months. It was during her stay at Hamburg that she gave instructions to her adherents to abandon Nordstrand.

But Hamburg, although a Free City, was not a harbour for a heretic like her—so indomitable and pugnacious. Her personal life was secluded and almost stealthy, but she continued to write and, through the help of certain wealthy friends, to publish her writings in Holland. Besides, she secured at Hamburg some prominent and even illustrious disciples. Yet the city was steadfastly and severely Lutheran, intolerant of schism. In the spring of 1677 she was impeached before the magistrates as the founder of a new sect. An order was issued for her arrest. Through a providential absence from her lodgings, she escaped the police-sergeants, and for some weeks lay in hiding, from which she wrote to her friends that it was "better to remain

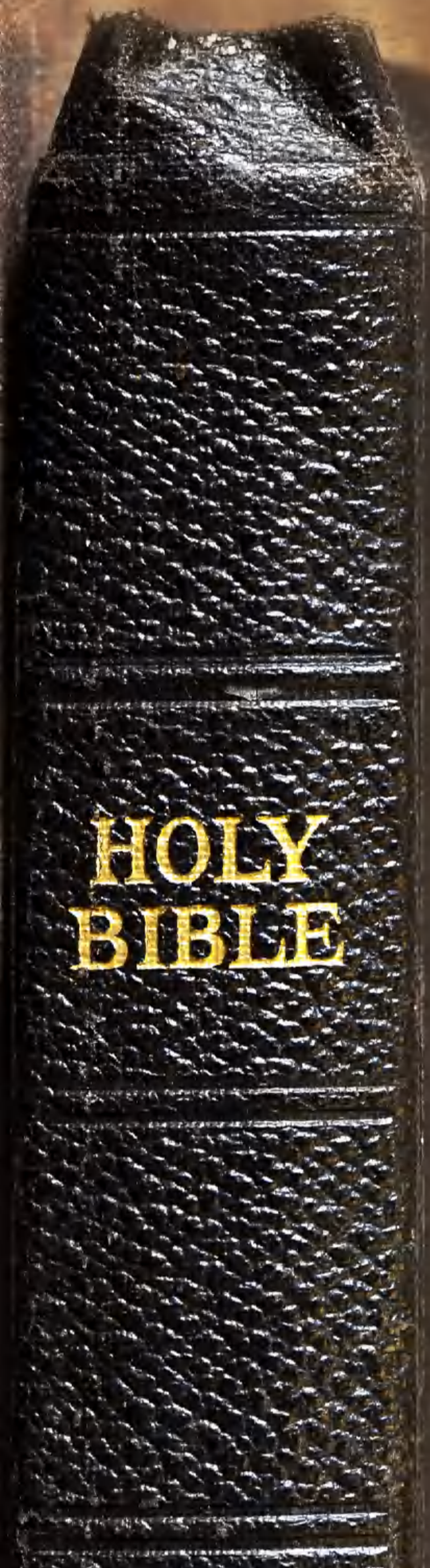
endeavoured to persuade him to join the Roman Church, holding out assurances of the comfort supplied by the Confessional. But in 1673 Swammerdam began to correspond with Antoinette, and a year later joined her at Schleswig, where he proved a valuable ally both by translating some of her writings into Dutch and by presenting her plea for liberty at the Court of Denmark. Those of her letters to him which survive are chiefly occupied in confirming his belief that scientific pursuits are spiritually worthless, and in dissuading him from joining the Roman Communion. The vigour with which she asserts the deterioration of Rome and the futility of Sacraments would, even if it stood alone, suffice to explain why Romanists hated her in spite of her declarations that she had not left their Church. Yet the letters as a whole are dignified, reasonable and free from extravagance. Although now and then Swammerdam hesitated as to some of her doctrines, he undoubtedly must be reckoned one of her most cordial and deferential disciples.

Pierre Poiret (1646–1719), a native of Metz, was ordained pastor of the Reformed Church at Auweiler in 1672, but was driven into Holland by the War in 1676. Historians of Mysticism designate him the only Calvinist of that generation who had a Mystic temperament, and speak with admiration of his *Life of Madame Guyon* and his edition of her *Opuscules*. But he was not a real Mystic, and had less sympathy with Madame Guyon than with Mlle. Bourignon, whose acquaintance he made in 1676, when her persecutions were at their worst. He was an independent if not an original thinker, as he showed in his disquisition, *L'Economie Divine*, an elaborate reasoning-out of Cartesian principles in the domain of the spirit, which secured well-deserved attention when it was translated into English.[1] Poiret's attitude towards Antoinette was too critical for her taste. Yet he proved to be her most important friend.

[1] The translation was published in six volumes in 1713–6. Wodrow in his *Analecta* (ii. 349, iii. 473) repeats wild stories about Poiret's having been suborned to write through a "deep-laid plot of the Jesuits."

Seeing that her writings had been badly edited and badly translated, he gained permission from her, in 1677, to edit a revised edition in French, and began work at once, although the undertaking was not completed till six years after her death. He was far more than a mechanical editor. To some of her publications he appended interesting Explanatory Letters with the signature "P. P." In 1685 he contributed a memoir of her to the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, and, generally, he must be largely credited with the posthumous celebrity which she attained. Yet it must also be said that he set upon her reputation the stamp of his excessive prolixity. Just as his own writings had a verbosity which deprived them of point and influence, so in editing her works he included scores of worthless letters, tiresome in their repetitions and trivial in biographical details.

Besides Swammerdam and Poiret a very considerable number of her adherents were persons of intelligence and culture. To the admiration in which she was held by



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and Recollection of her spirit), he would take up the paper with her permission to read it, and would find that it had been written so swiftly that there were yet ten or twelve lines fresh and wet."

NOTE

TEXT OF HER CONFESSION OF FAITH, AS FIRST ISSUED

1. Je suis Chrétienne, et je croy tout ce qu'un vray Chrétien doit croire.

2. Je suis baptizée dans l'Eglise Catholique, au Nom du Père, au Nom du Fils, au Nom du Sainct Esprit.

3. Je croy les douze articles de *Credo*, ou le Symbole des Apostres ; et ne doute en aucun Article d'icelui.

4. Je croy que Jésus Christ est vray Dieu, et qu'il est aussi vray Homme ; et qu'il est le Sauveur et Redemteur du Monde.

5. Je croy en l'Evangile ; aux Saincts Prophètes, et en toute la Saincte Escriture, tant le Vieux que le Nouveau Testament.

Et je veux vivre et mourir en tous les poincts de cette Croyance. Ce que je proteste devant Dieu et les hommes à tous ceux aux qu'il appartiendra.

En foy dequoi, j'ay signé cette mienne Confession de ma main, et cachetté de mon cachet.

En Sleeswicq le 11 de Mars 1675.

ANTHONNETTE BOURIGNON.[1]

[1] The signature alone, according to Dr. von der Linde, was in her own handwriting. She usually wrote her Christian name "Antoinette" or "Antonia."

CHAPTER IX

SAMPLES OF HER LATER STYLE

THE BEING OF GOD

He who knows God will always know himself, and he who knows himself will assuredly know God, for the one is linked with the other. A serious Recollection of spirit will teach us this. We speak of Him as if He were some phantom of paradise, as an imaginary thing, and of ourselves as temporal and transient. Where is the man living who can comprehend what God is or in what place He abides? We must not be so simple as to suppose that He has any particular abode, for nothing can contain Him, who is greater than all things. We say that He is in the heavens, but the heavens are His creatures. We say that Christ is on the right hand of the Father, whither He has ascended. These are all words to signify in our gibberish our own conceptions, whence we often form wrong judgments; and in this, as in other things, the learned fill our minds with the ideas of their imaginations, which are of little use for our salvation, and

could ever make such a masterpiece? Must not this proceed from the fountain of all wisdom, from which the wisdom of all men is derived and which we admire without knowing the author of it, except by the Operations which we experience in our very selves?

DISENGAGEMENT FROM SELF

"I asked her," wrote de Cort, "to what place I should retire, since she would not allow me to follow her. She said to me:

"'Sir, you will be well enough in any place provided you are with God. There is no part or place that can sanctify you, but rather a disengagement from yourself. The world is great and God is everywhere. It is not meet to affect a particular place: better for us to move to one place or another. Since we are pilgrims on earth, let us walk always towards our Centre without considering in what place we are lodged for the so small time that our life will last. Jesus Christ had no house of His own, yea, not a stone whereon to rest His head. The more disengaged we are, the more truly shall we be united unto God. And this is the only reason why I do not desire your company, because I am nothing but a mere creature as you are, not a God to whom you ought to look for all things.'

"I said to her that her company had done me great good, and that I had reason to desire it as a

true means of attaining to union with God. She said to me :

"'Sir, so long as you rest upon any means you will never arrive at the end. Means are good to be made use of, as we would make use of a road to travel to some place ; but they are not good to be relied on. Many souls are deceived in this, having stopped in the midst of the race and never found God because they rested upon the means. However holy and perfect the means may be, they are never God, and we ought not to rest but upon Him alone. The devil has likewise so many Holds, when he finds us wedded to anything. He makes a Mercury of every wood, but when we are free of matter and adhere to God alone, he cannot take hold of us on any side.'"

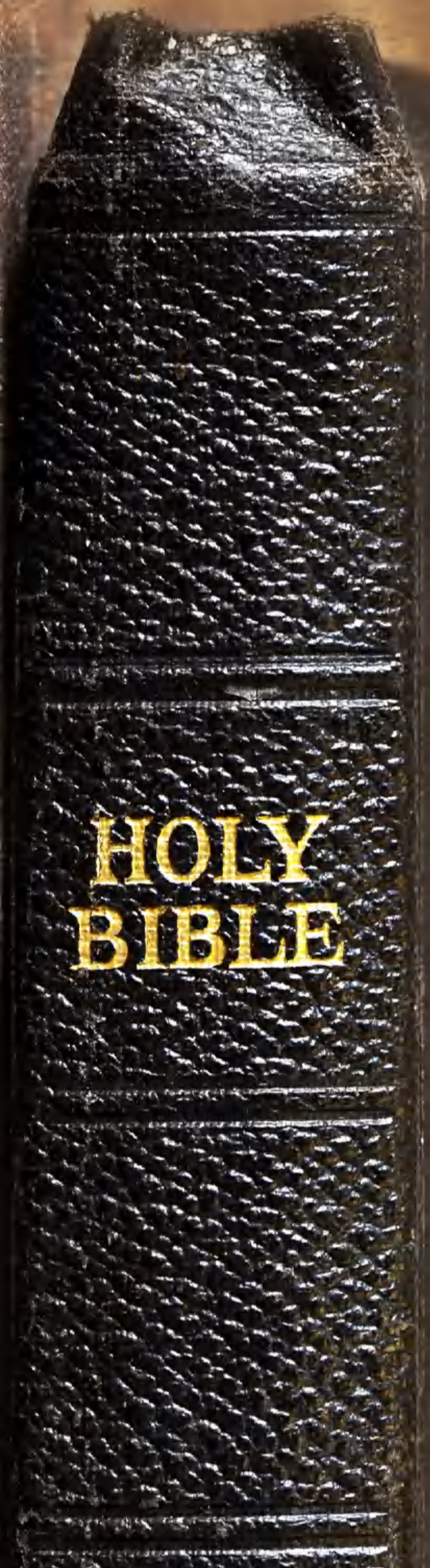
OUTWARD ORDINANCES

I have conversed with the most pious of the Religious, who could not imagine that there is another way of salvation but the observance of their rules, and who thought that they were pleasing God by maintaining the honour and profit of their Order. For my part I judge this to be so far from a dependence upon God, that I think it to be a real means of taking them away from it : for when we are tied to rules, and study to observe them well, it is always the person that acts, and the desire for honour and profit is really a desire for

our own honour and profit, which is not only a vice but a false virtue deceiving men to their ruin. Though I assure such persons that there is no way of salvation but that of resigning their will to God, they will not bear that note, insisting always on the first tune they have learned. They think that they are resigned, because they have left the world to enter a religious Order; and they apply themselves to their Rules: they repeat their offices and obey their superiors, resigning themselves to men their equals rather than to God, imagining that He is served with reverence by a great many bowings of the knee and a great many common prayers . . . remembering not that these outward things are but grievances, when they do not flow from an abundance of inward sentiments. . . . All Christendom is full of this blindness, and men believe that God is served by outward things, although it is certain that He needs only the consent of our will, to take His pleasure in us.

TRUE PRAYER

Christ says that we ought always to pray, and never to cease: so that Christians are called to pray at all times, and not only when they are in church, as these guides persuade them, who know not what prayer is, prescribing a certain number of offices and beads and other trifles which they call prayers. Prayer consists in an elevation of



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to resist their vicious inclinations and break down the opposition of the will to grace, that they may receive inward light in greater abundance which flows in unto their souls from the abundance of grace, so that they can no longer resist it; for, their sins being removed, grace has its full operation, dilating itself through all the parts of the soul and there consuming all that is imperfect, even the slightest inclinations to evil, so that it inhabits and governs all the faculties of the soul without any hindrance, and deifies it at last by the Resignation which it makes of its own free-will into the full power and liberty of its God who gave it.

THE BOY AT CONFESSIONAL

True repentance does not require the going often to Confession, as these casuists very unreasonably teach. For there can be nothing more remote from reason than to write in catechisms that to serve God well we must confess often. This is to teach indirectly that we must sin often. If the Church ordains confession to be made once a year, this can only be for those who have something once a year to confess. . . . In this matter, only a tolerable degree of sense is required to discover the cheat. A boy of ten years, confessing himself one day to a Pastor, was admonished by him at each sin not to commit it any more, and this the boy promised. But his confession being ended, the Pastor said to

him, "See, my child, that you fail not to return again to Confession." The boy having thought of it a little, says, "Sir, I cannot well understand what you mean, for when I declared my sins you told me that I must not commit them any more, and now you tell me that I must return again to Confession. How can I do both these things? If I am to sin no more, I need not come again to confess."

This is so clear, then, that a child can discover it, and yet many men of sense follow such seducers blindly, thinking they do well. Are we not fallen into the dangers foretold by Christ, when a great number of confessors would rise up to deceive many? False christs they are, since they bear His name, yet follow not His doctrine in everything.

SADNESS IS FROM THE DEVIL

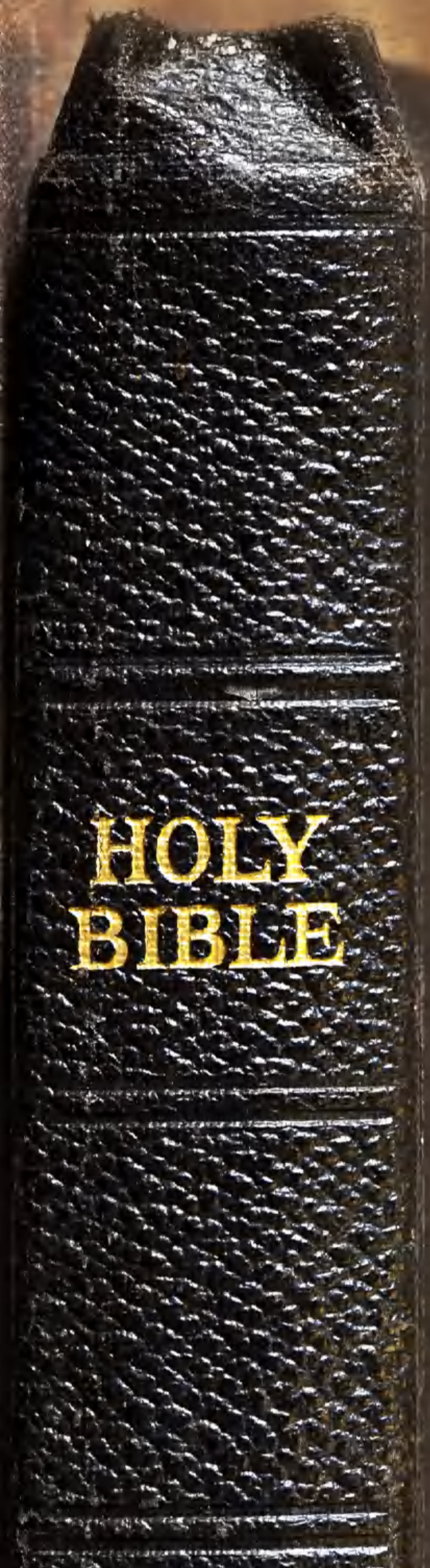
You must not, my Child, give place to that languishing feebleness of spirit because the devil has power to tempt men, since it is not in you to take that power from him; he has too long possessed it. . . . Being created free, he had power to do all the evil he pleased, and he desired to be equal with God, which was a greater evil than to tempt innocent Adam; and the evil he does now in tempting men is less than that, seeing that they are corrupted by the first sin; and when he tempts those who have so often consented to him with a deliberate will, the evil he does is still less. There-

fore you have no ground to fret because he tempts you. The sadness which you feel comes from him. . . . For he knows well that a grieved and discouraged person is not well fitted to resist his temptations. These are the extremes into which he always seeks to make us follow. It is true we ought to regret that we have voluntarily given him so much power to tempt us, and we ought still to lament our bye-past sins; but we must not rest in these griefs, seeing that they would hinder the graces of God. It is better to approach God by love and amendment of life than by melancholies, which proceed from the devil. Sadness is one of his qualities which a man who seeks after true virtue ought to despise. . . . It is a good sign that you perceive and feel the temptations of the devil, for many do not feel them, following him in everything blindly. Would you willingly be seized with that lethargy? Would you wish that the devil should tempt you no more? That would be an evident sign that he had you in his power. But God has delivered you from this danger in making you know and feel temptation. . . . I see by the eyes of the Spirit that he moves your passions as soon as I open my mouth to speak, and that your inward emotions are stirred up to oppose and contradict me. This cannot proceed from yourself, because you are convinced in conscience that the Spirit of God governs me. Never be weary in that belief. He sees that, if you follow me well, you shall

lightens; but evil, in that it burns and smokes. Water is good, in that it refreshes and quenches thirst; but evil, in that it is crude and cold. The air is good for respiration, and in that it purges away bad vapours; but evil, in that it has tempests. The earth is good, in that it brings forth fruits; but evil, in that it is miry and brings forth pricking thorns and thistles. Gold and silver and other metals are good, in that they serve for the convenience of men; but evil, for their heaviness and obscurity. All the plants and fruits of the earth have something of good and something of evil. So also have all the beasts of the earth, air and water; and man especially is made up of good and evil: so that there is nothing lovely but God alone, in whom there can never be any evil and out of whom there is nothing good to be loved, all being accompanied or mingled with evil. . . . Yet man must needs love something; for he may sooner be without life than without love. Death puts an end to his love of earthly things, but love which is in his nature can never change. . . . He who loves creatures loves objects which are made up of good and evil; for God created them all good, but the devil by his subtle malice strewed evil among the good, when he gained the will of man, who consented to this mixture of good and evil. For God, having created man free, would not prevent him from using the liberty which He had once given him. Man is free during all his life, which is his time

of trial, to choose whether he will love God, or the devil, or earthly creatures; and there is no doubt but God is the most loveable object, since in Him there is no evil. . . . Oh what quiet, what joy, what contentment has a person who loves God even in this world! And how greatly shall this happiness be augmented in eternity! What disquiet, grief and trouble has that man inwardly who loves the devil! Let him do all the evil he can, he is never satisfied nor content. His conscience can never be in quiet, and he can have only a false and seeming joy because of the sadness that sin infallibly brings along with it. . . . It is the same as to love of the creatures, for we cannot love them without loving the evil which is made with them. They have no power to make us happy either in this life or in that to come. If we love riches, which are so much loved nowadays, we are their slaves because of the toil we must take to get them and the cares and vexation we have to keep them. Nor can they afford us anything but a little nourishment for our bodies and clothes to cover them, which a poor man can have also, and with less care. If we think ourselves happy because we can satisfy our taste in eating and drinking deliciously, that is only a greater misery, for it causes infirmities and diseases from which they who live soberly are free. And if we love any human creature we are still more miserable, seeing that we sell our liberty and make it subject to the

passions and inclinations of another. There is then no happiness for a man who loves the creatures, since they cannot make us happy in this world, and far less in eternity. Nothing but the love of God is lovely and profitable, whence we may conclude that it is not only possible but needful for us to love Him.



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chine des Archimedes; Linien der Roulette; Die Verdoppelung des Altars des Orakels des Apollo; Démonstration de la Quadrature du Cercle.[1] Antoinette lodged in this man's house during her stay at Hamburg, and found in him an awe-struck admirer. He came into collision with the city clergy in some local church affairs, and at their instigation was called upon to take an oath that he would never fight against the Republic of Hamburg. This he refused to do, saying that he "did not know what God might command him in the future." His refusal cost him his office, and he became dependent for means of living upon his Spiritual Mother. When she was forced to leave the city, he followed her gladly as the Light of the World.

Equally devoted in admiration of her was Baron Dodo of Knyphausen, an East Frisian nobleman, the possessor of large landed estates and considerable political influence. He gave her invaluable help in the publication of her writings, defraying

[1] A Dutch translation of this work is to be found in the Hamburg Public Library.

the entire cost in some cases. In fact, in 1676 he all but secured the famous firm of Elzevir as publishers, and about the same time he intimated to her that thence-forward he would consecrate his whole energy and all his property to her service. Far from being shaken in his loyalty by her banishment, he at once tendered her a residence in the immediate neighbourhood of his castle at Lütetsburg, or Lützburg. The generous offer was promptly accepted, and for two years Lütetsburg was her home.

It seemed at first as if the scheme of Common Life, which had failed at Nord-strand, was now to be carried out with good prospect of success. She was established in a roomy château under the shelter of the lord of the manor. Not only was she absolute mistress of the château: a neigh-bouring house was set apart as a lodging for her adherents, and other buildings were begun. It is true that she was still pro-scribed and that some concealment was required. She was known as "Madame de la Porte, Directress of the Baron's Poor-

house," while her adherents were registered as the Baron's servants. But even this slight hindrance to her work seemed likely to be removed. The dukedom had passed into the hands of a princess with whom she was intimate, and the removal of the proscription was all but promised. It was in those circumstances that she penned the Preface to the last and most characteristic of her writings, *Le Renouvellement de l'Esprit Evangélique*, defining her relationship to all the Churches with the decisiveness of a teacher who has a secured position. "The Baron," she wrote in her first summer at Lütetsburg, "feels the truth of God in his soul: he is a man who can stand on his own legs."

But in a few months all was darkness and confusion. Trouble arose through the wife of Knyphausen, who at first shared his devotion to Antoinette. But the latter from her earliest days had found it almost impossible to be on amicable terms with persons of her own sex, and since she left Brabant she had frequently been charged with withdrawing men from their wives.

fault roused angry excitement among the peasants, and, generally, her position became critical. In letters written in 1679, she speaks of Holstein as "a country which rejects the prophets of God."

But it was through Bertrand de la Coste, formerly her adoring Child, that ruin came. He began by rebellion against the domestic arrangements, complaining that his linen was badly washed and that he was sent out to drink in a tavern instead of being supplied with wine and beer in his room. Then he became "enlightened." He indulged in high imaginations, laughing wildly and shouting in his dormitory. He discovered that he was Moses, and exhibited two bald places on his head where horns were growing. Thereafter he became the child of the woman in the Apocalypse. Finally he posed as the first-born son of Hermes, who had been sent from heaven to point out the errors of Euclid. Master he was, not only of mathematics but of the Divine Sciences, and indeed equalled God in knowledge. Poor Antoinette! Hitherto she alone of the company had been inspired,

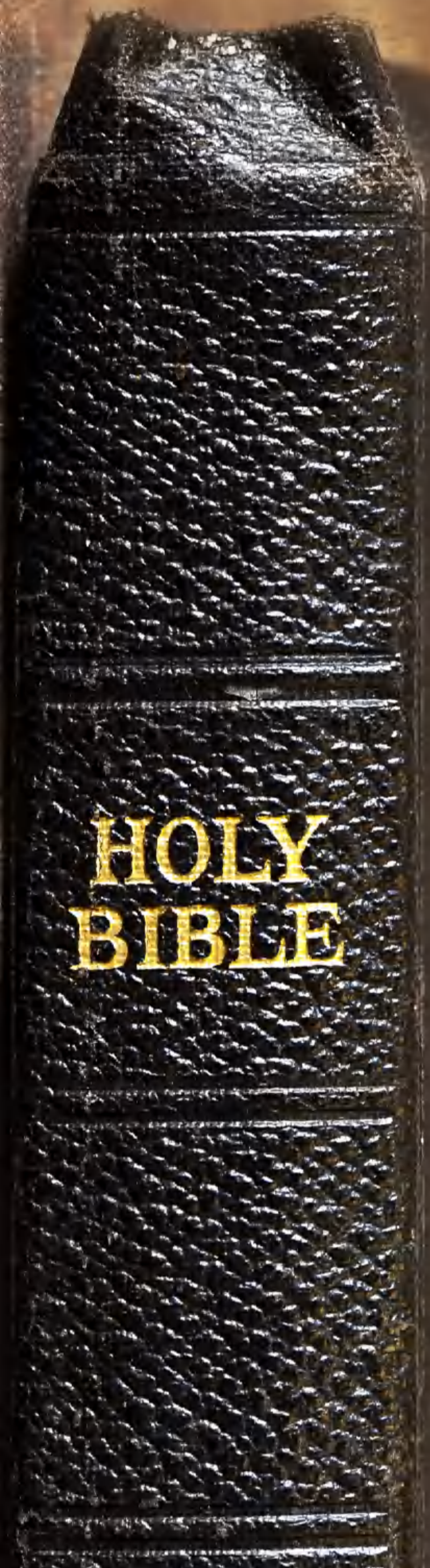
but now her Child had outstripped her in Enlightenment.

It must not be thought that de la Coste had lost his wits. At every stage he behaved like a thorough scoundrel. Although she had been supporting him out of her own purse for two years, he demanded, with threats, a payment of 4,000 rix dollars. He wrote to the Princess that Antoinette was a witch. With little difficulty he persuaded Count Knyphausen and the jealous Countess that she was working mischief among their tenants, and he lodged with the Consistorium of the adjacent town of Norden a formal declaration that she was an impostor in league with the devil. With his own eyes, he alleged, he had seen her contracting and enlarging her bodily stature; he had seen her clothed in purple, brilliant as the sun and emitting rays of light. The indictment, a strange production which Dr. von der Linde has unearthed, ends thus: "On these and other manifest grounds, I conclude that she is a wicked creature who ought not to be tolerated, a witch who has intercourse with the devil, and whom for

the glory of God this honourable Court is called to apprehend." The Consistorium, thankful for a plea for dealing with so notorious a heretic, proclaimed her to be under the ban; and the sentence was transmitted to the National Minister of Religion.

At this stage the confusion of her financial affairs became desperate. She had, as has already been stated, lost her property at Lille. Her enemies, seeing her defenceless, now seized the properties which she had acquired at Flensbourg and Schleswig. She made an attempt to sell to Knyphausen her rights over Nordstrand for 60,000 gulden, on condition that he should undertake to pay de Cort's debts—an attempt which has been most unfairly represented by her hostile biographers as a piece of trickery. It would have been a legitimate transfer, although attended by risks to the purchaser.[1]

1 Dr. von der Linde represents her as having concealed from Knyphausen a legal decision in the case which had been published and registered eight years before—an all but impossible concealment in view of the publicity of the whole business. Professor Kawerau, although he endorses most of von der Linde's charges against her, admits



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take this from His hand and receive with thanksgiving the daily increase of His graces and lights."

The tidings reached her that a band of seven or eight Germans had come to the neighbouring inn with instructions to have her burned. As she lay a-bed, two neighbours accompanied by a stranger broke into her room, searched her boxes and cupboards for implements of witchcraft, and withdrew only through fear of infection. In February 1680 some soldiers arrived from Hamburg, alleging that they were in search of a criminal whom she was reported to harbour. Although their search proved fruitless, they lurked for some days in the bushes in front of the house with "their carabines pointed at her windows."

Amidst those excitements, she conducted herself with courage and even with dignity. To Knyphausen she wrote a succinct and calm narrative of events, describing the plight in which she lay, and telling him that she was willing to withdraw from his territory altogether, if that was his desire. With a directness which must have

been unpleasant reading for a scrupulous but weak-minded man, she reminded him of his promises and claimed from him a definite statement of his intentions. Still more admirable are her letters of this date to several persons recently converted by her writings, who desired to make their home with her in spite of the dangers involved. The following, dated March 10, 1680, illustrates her tone:

"SIR,—

"I see the very great desire you have of forsaking the world in order to devote yourself to the service of God, which is a very good resolution; for I cannot see by what means any one can be saved if he follows the course of this world, where every one walks in that broad way of which Christ says that it leads to perdition. As to your entreaty that you may have converse with me, I am sorry that I cannot grant it, because I require to keep myself concealed and unknown, on account of my enemies, who seek to take away my life. If they knew where I am, I believe that I should not escape, and therefore I beg you not to desire of me a thing so dangerous. But you may read my writings to your heart's content, and by them converse with me every day, for what I write and what I speak and what I practise is all the same. I am a simple

creature, just like others, who affect no gestures nor words of devotion, which often savour of hypocrisy. If God wills that I should speak to you personally, He will bring it about in His own time. To Him I commend you, and I am, sir,

"Your very humble servant,

"ANT. BOURIGNON."

In September she was informed by express messenger from Hamburg that Knyphausen had agreed to arrest her in compliance with the indictment laid before the Consistorium and endorsed by the Minister of Religion. The specific ground for the arrest would be incredible if it were not attested by documents. "She had power to contract and enlarge her person (*sich verkleinern und vergrössern*)." It was not as a heretic, but as a witch, that she had given fatal offence.

When this news arrived, she knew that she must leave Lütetsburg. Piling her goods on a cart, she made for Gröningen, and thence for Franeker. In a letter dated September 29 and addressed to Poiret, she writes:

"I have at last been forced to fly from the persecutions of my enemies. It is pitiful to see how great

continue your pious design by making the Gospel of the Kingdom known, for which I thank God, and wish that I may find fit persons to publish it all over the world. God abounds to me always more and more in His lights. This is the devil's reason for inducing the wicked to persecute me and disturb my quiet: which, however, they are unable to do, for God breaks all the weapons prepared against me, as the prophet has foretold. I still duly discover all ambushes laid against me, and I shun them softly and in peace. You may write to me, but secretly: I am with a faithful friend who understands no French. It is a pity that that man has married a wife who hinders him from serving God, wherein you have a great advantage, for they are all Eves, who draw back their husbands from converse with God, as did our old mother Eve. Congratulating you that you are delivered from this brood, I always am, sir,

"Your very humble servant,

"WHOM YOU KNOW."

It would be agreeable to think that this letter was her last, for, apart from its reflections upon the daughters of Eve, it breathes a spirit of resignation and trust. A fortnight later, however, she wrote very angrily to one of her Children, abusing him at great length for having paid a letter-

carrier in advance, and so having tempted him to appropriate his fee without delivering the letter. In human nature she had absolutely no trust. The last words she wrote were: "Take care of your money; a true Christian possesses money as though he possessed it not; that is to say, he uses it only in things strictly necessary."

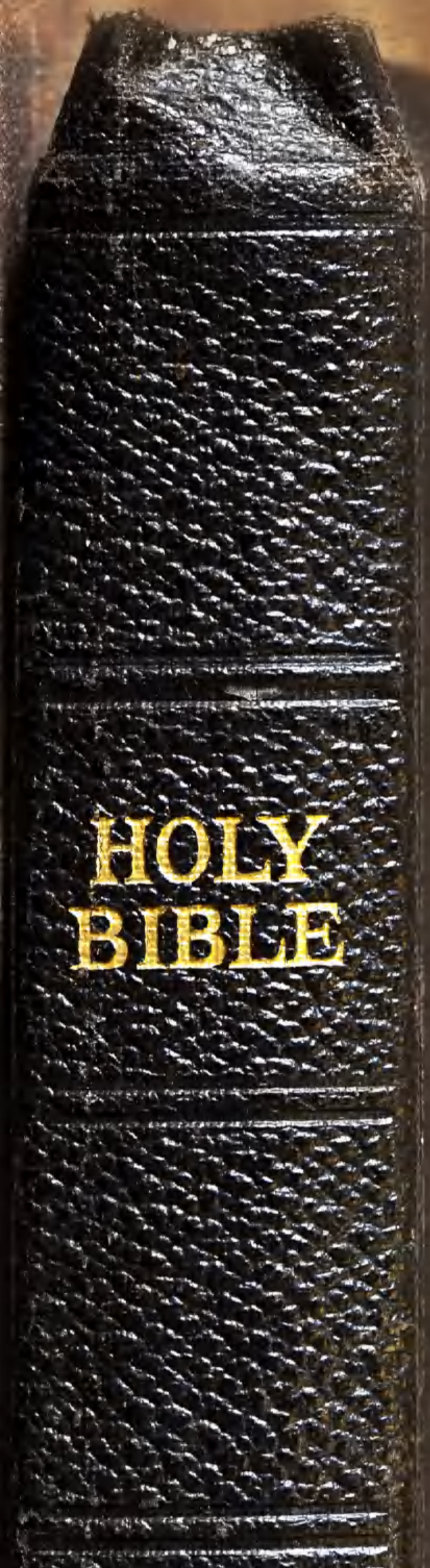
At Franeker her health failed finally. Hearing that she was in danger, the loyal Poiret hastened to see her, but before he arrived she was dead. Her last spoken words were: "If I die, it is not the will of God; for the mission He has given me, and what I was bound to do and to write, I have not yet completed."

She died at Franeker on October 30, 1680.

CHAPTER XI

HER PLACE IN HISTORY

ANTOINETTE'S death-bed declaration that she had not "completed her mission" is significant as a confession of failure. The account of her writings which has been given in this volume has probably sufficed to show that, in spite of her deficiencies as a teacher of ethics and a guide in devotion, she had thoughts about God and conceptions of truth far above the level of those which prevailed around her. She failed, however, to present these so as to make a lasting contribution to religious thought or life. Even over her contemporaries her influence was mainly negative, in promoting separatism, if not schism, and giving shape to a vague dissatisfaction with the Church. It may be said that this was because her



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ground. The ethical and social ideals which churchmen favoured and promulgated were at variance with the Gospel of Jesus. In no writings of the period, not even in those of George Fox, is all this made clearer than in hers; and, as in the case of Fox, her criticisms are confirmed by the treatment which she herself received.

Her freedom from bias and partisanship had more than a negative character. She set forth a fundamental religious truth which was neglected by Romanists and Protestants alike. While she exposed their errors with stringency and pungency, she recognised, in all her writings, that the individual soul and life must be brought into relation to the law and love of God. It was something to insist strenuously and fearlessly for a lifetime upon the truth that every one, by self-denying aspiration and without official help, can reach peace with the Eternal Being, with conscious enjoyment of His light, and that neither nature nor grace abates human responsibility.

It was this that gave her writings special

influence in Scotland and among English Wesleyans.

In Scotland, after the Revolution Settlement, religion was singularly dry, harsh and pedantic, and it was then—not during her lifetime, but between 1695 and 1715—that "Bourignonism" gained numerous Scottish adherents. There probably never was a time when Presbyterianism showed less of its strength or more of its weakness, nor a time when Scottish Episcopacy and Scottish Romanism had so little spiritual vigour. It is easy to understand how young schoolmasters, students and men of kindred occupations welcomed her as a deliverer from the bonds of their respective Churches.

So, thirty years later, John Wesley recognised the verve and force with which she assailed predestinarianism, and, with his robust and almost reckless eclecticism, placed in the hands of his adherents portions of her writings which emphasised vividly the value of conduct and contended effectively against antinomian conceptions of grace. It is doubtful if religious

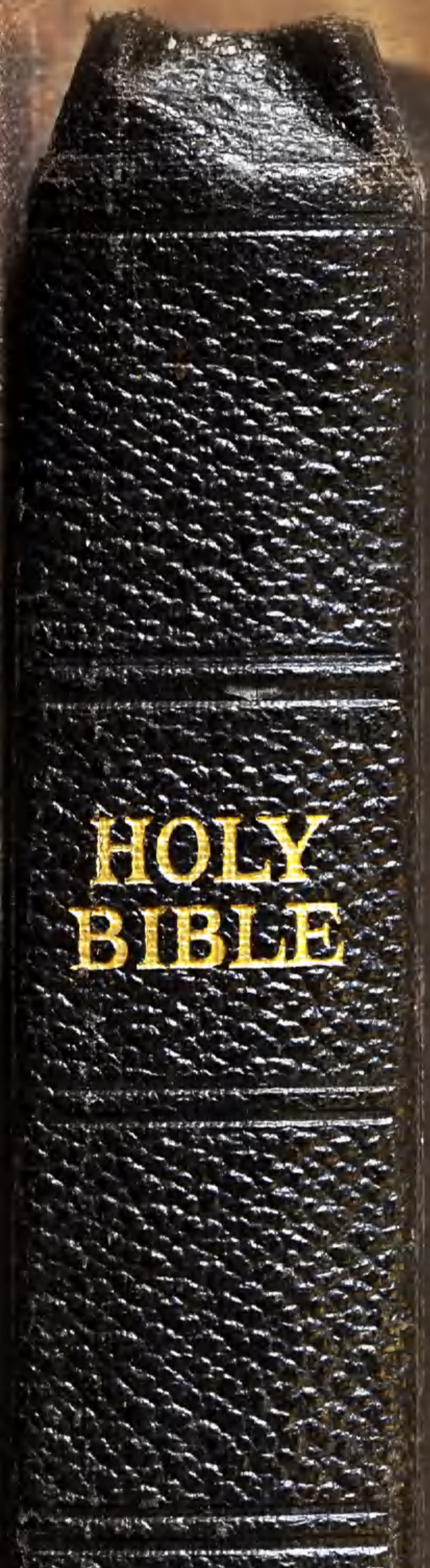
teaching which is mainly occupied with strictures upon contemporary life, and gives no place either to evangelical beliefs or to ecclesiastical authority, has ever had permanent value, but it may none the less be extremely serviceable for a generation. Antoinette was a teacher for those times.

Equally significant historically and far more interesting are those aspects of her doctrine which have been described as her "Quietism." It has been pointed out that these were in line with a widely spread religious movement, and they have a title to be considered apart from her Visions and her claim to special inspiration. Although the pretensions and the pride which accompanied that claim, combined with the absurdity of some of her Visions, ruined her career, any reader can adopt John Wesley's plan and draw a pen through the passages in which they are asserted without impairing her theory as to the approach of the soul to God. German writers who have thought it enough to style her "eine Schwärmerin," and to quote examples of her ridiculous dreams, are as far

the plan of the Ever-living One whose mercies are adapted to the changing needs of His creatures and who discloses Himself to them directly when they turn away from the world and wait for His light. Her idea that she alone in her generation was the recipient of that light spoiled her personal character and contracted her religious influence. Yet her central belief was unimpaired by her eccentricities and unabated by her misfortunes.

The sincerity, integrity and courage with which she adhered to a belief so great and large lend interest to a personality which in itself was faulty and disagreeable, and impart some dignity to adventures otherwise insignificant. She gains distinction from the darkness which surrounded her. The indignation of churchmen that she should presume to approach God without church aid, and the stupid savagery with which they attacked her, as a critic of their customs and dogmas and the possessor of demonic powers, without any intelligent measurement of her doctrine, would suffice to raise her to the position of a Christian

martyr, if her witness had been decisively Christian. Even as she was, her figure is picturesque and suggestive; and she had an experience all her own—pathetic if not tragic. In her life, as in her writings, she revealed a forceful character struggling in loneliness against all religious limitations.



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