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# XXV.13 Most humble remonstrance to the inquisitors of Spain and Portugal

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An eighteen-year-old Jewess burned in Lisbon at the last auto-da-fé was the occasion of this little treatise, and I think it is the most futile one that has ever been written. When it comes to proving things that are so clear, one will certainly fail to convince.

The author declares that, although he is a Jew, he respects the Christian religion, and is enough attached to it to deny to princes who are not Christians a plausible pretext for persecuting it.

"You complain," he says to the inquisitors, "that the emperor of Japan is having all the Christians in his states slowly burned ; but he will answer you : We are treating you, who do not believe as we do, the way you yourselves treat those who do not believe as you do ; you can complain only of your weakness, which keeps you from exterminating us, and because of which we exterminate you.

"But it must be admitted that you are far more cruel than that emperor. You put us to death, we who believe only what you believe, because we do not believe everything that you believe. We have a religion that you yourselves know to have once been cherished by God ; we think God still loves it, and you think he no longer does ; and because you so judge, you punish by sword and fire those who harbor an error so pardonable as to believe that God [1] still loves what he once loved.

"If you are cruel towards us, you are even more so towards our children : you have them burned because they follow the inspirations they have received from those whom natural law and the laws of all peoples teach them to respect as gods.

"You deprive yourselves of the advantage given you over the Mohammedans by the manner in which their religion was established. When they vaunt of the number of their faithful, you tell them that they were acquired by force, and that they spread their religion by the sword : why then do you establish yours by fire ?

"When you want to make us come to you, we answer you by a source from which you glory to have descended. You answer us that your religion is new, but that it is divine, and you prove it because it has grown by the persecution of pagans and by the blood of your martyrs ; but today you assume the role of the Diocletians, and force us to assume yours.

"We implore you, not by the powerful God whom both you and we serve, but by the Christ who you say took on the human condition to put before you examples you could follow ; we implore you to do to us as he would do himself if he were still on earth. You want us to be Christians, and you are unwilling ?

"But if you are unwilling to be Christians, at least be men : treat us as you would if, having only these weak glimmerings of justice which nature gives us, you did not have a religion to guide you and a revelation to enlighten you.

"If heaven has loved you enough to make you see the truth, it has done you a great favor ; but is it for children who have received their father's inheritance to hate those who did not ?

"Now if you have this truth, do not hide it from us by the way in which you present it to us. The character of truth is its triumph over hearts and minds, and not the impotence which you admit to when you want to have it accepted through torture.

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"If you are reasonable, you should not make us die because we are unwilling to deceive you. If your Christ is the son of God, we hope he will reward us for being unwilling to profane his mysteries ; and we believe that the God which both you and we serve will not punish us for suffering death for a religion he formerly gave to us, because we believe he has still given it to us.

"You live in an age when natural light shines brighter than it ever has, when philosophy has illuminated the minds, when the moral of your Gospel has been better known, when the respective rights of men over each other, the ascendancy which one conscience has over another, are better established. If therefore you do not shake off your ancient prejudices, which, if you do not realize it, are your passions, you must admit you are incorrigible, incapable of any enlightenment or instruction, and it is a wretched nation that gives authority to men such as you.

"Would you have us tell you our thinking candidly ? You regard us rather as your enemies than as the enemies of your religion ; for if you loved your religion, you would not let it be corrupted by gross ignorance.

"We must warn you of one thing, which is that if some day someone dares to say that in the age in which we live the peoples of Europe were civilized, you will be cited to prove that they were barbaric ; and the notion they will have of you will be such as will disgrace your age, and bring revulsion on all your contemporaries."

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[1] It is the source of the blindness of the Jews not to realize that the economy of the Gospel is in the order of God's designs, and thus that it is a consequence of his very immutability.