

### Chapter 3

If we had remained faithful to our holy destination, we should have all manifested the glory of our Eternal Principle in common, and each according to our gift. But since we can no longer doubt that we have failed to fulfill this supreme law, since we all languish and the Author of this justice could not leave us unjustly suffering and deprived, it follows that the abuse of our glorious privileges must have reduced us to the cruel necessity of offering only a manifestation opposite to that which was expected of us, and that instead of being witnesses of glory and truth, we can now only be witnesses of opprobrium and falsehood.

It follows, moreover, that the whole human family shares this punishment today, as it would have shared the rewards; each individual should offer a particular sign of this degradation, as he would have offered a particular sign of power in the triumphal order, each according to the gift which would have been his. It follows, I tell you, that each individual of this great family should offer a particular sign of this want and deprivation to which Supreme Justice has subjected us all in this world; and this so that at the sight of this sign which is so different from the one we should have worn, it could be said of us with insult and derision: *Ecce Homo*, behold the man; and that this title, so insulting to us today, would cover us with opprobrium and humiliation, revealing the bitter fruits that crime has sown in us, in the midst of the glory with which we would have shone if our name had retained its true character.

Now we need only cast our eyes over the state of men here below, to judge the extent to which this severe justice is accomplished. Which of us does not somehow pay this tribute of humiliation one way or another? Where is our strength? Where is our authority? Where is our power? Where is our light? Apart from indigence, disorder and infirmity and darkness, what other evidence do our various abilities present today? Are all the influences that we spread around us anything other than cadaverous? And is there a single man on Earth who doesn't present one or more signs of this important reprobation?

O man! If you are not yet advanced enough to shed tears over your misery, at least don't abuse yourself to the point of looking at it as being a state of happiness and health. Don't be taken in by the fascinations that seduce you. Don't act like a sick child who stops screaming at the sound of a rattle waved in front of his eyes and even puts on a calm, laughing face, as if the evil that gnaws at him was no longer to be feared as if the sight of that rattle had ended his pain for a time. If you close your eyes for a moment to these illusions which distract you, evil will soon make itself felt and, frightened by the danger that threatens you, you will recognize with what just foundation Wisdom seeks to warn you of your infirmities and to inflame you with the zeal of your healing. However, in spite of the rigors of the laws imposed upon us by the judgment of Justice, the consequences of our condemnation would be a thousand times milder than they are rigorous if we recognized the supreme equity of the One who judged us, if we thought how much the views He has on us could be profitable, and if we voluntarily resigned ourselves to the inevitable power of His decrees.

The principal advantages we would derive from it would be in the mutual example we would give to one another; for the infirm, languishing and dark state of our fellow men would be a visible instruction for us, continually reminding us of the degradation of the family of man; and on our side, offering to their eyes the same spectacle, we would render them the same service, by giving them the same instruction. Thus, warning each other respectively of our shame and humiliation, we would clearly recognize the justice of the condemnation we have drawn upon ourselves, and this would serve as the entrance to the path of our regeneration, which is the one which Supreme Wisdom is constantly striving to open for us, as being the only path which can bring us back to be close to that Sovereign Principle of Love Who formed us, and Who we have forced to banish us from the very domains He had entrusted to us.

Skillful writers, fill yourselves here with holy eloquence to paint for us with persuasive and encouraging colors the instructive picture of the human family, where all individuals would behave for one another as so many living lessons, and where the sight of their common distress would fill them with both a salutary horror of themselves and with a tender interest in the rehabilitation of all the members of this great family. Show us them feeding on the bread of tears, keeping close to each other the dreary silence of sorrow, breaking it at intervals only to make heard the interspersed sounds of penitence, so that man may say to man: 'My brother, it is on the man of lies that we have founded the reign of death that envelops us in its darkness. Let us no longer hide this man of lies in his own rubble and filth; let us strive to make him appear in the open, so that the crisp air might corrode him down to his roots, and the reign of death, being thereby shaken to its foundations, may crumble and be lost for us at the depths of its abyss.'

But how far man is from offering such a spectacle and prostrating himself before the indisputable justice which never ceases to thunder over him! The same Principle of Disorder that caused us to fall from our original position pursues us, accompanies us and animates us still in our degraded existence. Just as he disguised the mortal source of our error from us, he disguises its fruits and consequences for us every day. He is concerned only with prolonging its duration, so that by perpetuating our illusion he perpetuates the power of his reign which, unfortunately for us, consists only of our deceptions and our darkness.

He once persuaded us that we would not fall by following his seductive insinuations; now that we have followed them, he seeks to persuade us that we have not fallen, and to fill us relentlessly with the vigilant care of persuading all around us. Instead of allowing each of us to confess the particular sign of condemnation we bear, and the kind of deprivation inflicted upon us, he makes us watch only to impose on our fellow men this important object. And this active care which absorbs us, he has the ability to multiply it to infinity by the consequences of this very degradation and by these greedy multiplicities that devour us and which veil from us all the more our misery, and the humble paths that we should follow to take steps towards our regeneration.

Hence the care which men universally take to show themselves as lacking in none of those lights

and gifts which would have belonged to our true nature, if we had not dug so great an abyss between us and the truth; hence the perpetual care they take to hide the defects in their virtues, their defects in talent, their bodily defects, their defects of all the conventional advantages of political societies. The approval of our fellow men has become the only purpose and motive for our affections and movements; not for our betterment – as Wisdom had intended when, banishing us from His presence, He exiled us all to the same place – but on the contrary for our ruin and our complete destruction.

At one time, we wanted to pass for the Supreme God in the eyes of all regions. Being unsuccessful in that, for that reason we completely gave up our attempt, and now we are at least trying to obtain that sacred name in the opinion of our fellow men and to make sufficient impression on them by our superiority, that they might be struck by it when they look at us, and so that they to flatter our ears with this sweet name, *Ecce Deus*, Behold the God, instead of this terrible one, *Ecce Homo*, which would infuriate us by covering us with ignominy. We are like so many beings mutilated in all our limbs and who still pretend to beauty and to pass for regular beings, masking our deformities by all sorts of artificial limbs, no matter of what vile and fragile substance these artificial limbs are composed.

It is for this reason that the priest teaches blind faith in his character and his decisions, when he has neither true power nor true light in his hands. It is for this reason that the philosopher and the orator make up, through systems and forms of eloquence, for the fundamental principles they lack to establish the reign of truth. It is for this reason that legislators exalt the rights of peoples and the power of nations when they do not know the true foundations of political sovereignty. It is for this reason that the hypocrite procures for himself by his dissimulations and cunning the good name that he cannot acquire by virtue; not to mention here all the other errors, all the basenesses, all the injustices which everywhere compose the civil side of human associations.

Thus, in all these strange and corrupt ways, we substitute the salutary admission of our humiliation with the picture of a glory that is only the result of a lie. So, instead of the relief which men could respectively have obtained in their state of trial, there is no evil that they do not bring upon each other, and we consume our days immolating one another, whereas by following the true path which the sense of our miseries and infirmities should have outlined for us, we could have mutually resurrected each other.

In vain these abusive paths, in which man allows himself to be led every day, end in continual falls and continual disappointments; in vain the efforts he makes to destroy and cancel the humiliating sentence of his condemnation make it all the more shameful for him, by making him add new ignominies to those of his first degradation; in vain he feels that the means he employs are only suggestions which have no source deep enough to lead him to his true goal, and that all these remedies not themselves bearing the principle of life, are even more harmful to his spirit than the crude substances used by our pharmacies are to the health of our bodies; he nevertheless continues to pursue the path perpetually mapped out for him by his imprudence, and he still hopes that this humiliating title of *Ecce Homo* will be erased for him.