

# THE REIGN OF JUSTICE

Philanthropic and humanitarian paper  
for moral and social uplift. Published monthly

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27, Route de Vallière  
1236 CARTIGNY/Geneva  
Switzerland Tel. 022 756 12 08

Subscriptions  
Switzerland, 1 year . Fr. 5.00  
Other countries . . US\$ 7.00  
Giro account: 12-656-7

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## A mirage that changes into reality

A desert traveller has nothing in view but a sandy waste of dunes and hills. He often has to fight against a rising anguish when he allows his mind to dwell on those vast stretches of dry land as day follows day without his ever catching sight of the smallest blade of grass. So that if, all of a sudden, he catches sight of verdant land on the horizon, he feels new life comes into him, and he shivers with gladness. But after walking an hour or two without coming any nearer to that "land of delight", he realizes, with profound disappointment, that it is only a mirage. He certainly has before him a reflection casting an image of a distant landscape, but one that is so far away that, as far as he is concerned, it might as well not exist at all.

There are no effects without causes. The mirage serves to remind the traveller that whilst the place he has reached is arid and deserted, the oasis of which he has seen the reflection actually does exist. It is the same in the case of the Kingdom of God, which has long been announced by the prophets. Considering how bad things are on Earth at present, it seems impossible for the state of things now existing to undergo a change. Yet the Kingdom of God has actually started to take shape on Earth, although, as yet, it is visible only to the eyes of faith of people who are quite sure of its coming. Such faith is shared only by those empowered by the Lord to introduce the Kingdom of God.

Very, very long ago, the prophet Isaiah saw, with the eyes of faith, Paradise restored. In a burst of enthusiasm, he exclaimed: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom like a rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing." In another place, the same prophet says: "Search the book of the Lord, and read...for He hath commanded it. ... He has cast the lot for them and shared out the land to them by line. They shall possess it forever, and they shall dwell in it from generation to generation." Those words are borne out by the prophet Malachi, who says: "Those who feared the LORD spoke often with each other, and the LORD listened and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared the LORD and hallowed his Name."

That Book of Remembrance has now been written. It is open to all who wish to consult it and be informed of God's magnificent purposes for all mankind. The time has indeed come when the cover that covers all people, and the thick cover that covers all nations, are torn

away and when knowledge of the Lord and of his ways, is going to cover the Earth as the waters cover the sea.

Most people today give no credit to those profound divine truths. But when they see, with their own eyes, the Kingdom of God being introduced, all those on Earth who are unhappy will hail it with shouts of joy and gladness. Now indeed is the time when, we are told, the Lord will wipe away tears from all faces and will drive away all care, all terror and all pain and groaning, and when even death shall be overcome forever.

Till now, all those promises have progressed no further than being a mirage, but henceforward, the reality is to appear in power and glory. Our dear Saviour came on Earth to preach and to illustrate the Kingdom of God. He showed, with deeds, that one day evil will be overcome by good, which will chase it away forever. He constantly illustrated that victory, not only in words, but in everything he did. When he appeared on the scene, all evil fled before him, the half-dead and the sick were healed. And when he called them out, even the dead were unable to remain in the graves. Our dear Saviour possessed this power because he, the Righteous One, had come for the very purpose of paying for the unrighteous by laying down his life as a Ransom for mankind, so that they, having lost life in Adam, might find it again in Christ. With the good things he did, he illustrated, on quite a small scale, what is to take place on a vast one in the Restoration of All Things, which, when its course is run, will have restored the Earth to the condition of Paradise, which it possessed in the beginning. By then, mankind will have acquired a character that will permit them to stay alive eternally. Till today, it has seemed that those promises were nothing more than a mirage, but they are now on the way to being gloriously fulfilled. God's plan has unfolded without a hitch since man's Fall, forever converging on this glorious apotheosis of God's Work: the restoration of the Earth, and the regeneration of man, happiness and life restored forever on Earth.

Good is light; evil is darkness. In the end, good will utterly defeat evil, because evil is in the minority in the universe. The truth is that only on Earth does evil exist, and in the atmosphere of the Earth inhabited by the fallen angels called demons. On Earth, there lives the human race, all breakers of the Universal Law and consequently lawless, felons who do evil and propagate it. Everywhere else in the universe, in which the Earth is less than a grain of sand, there is nothing but good.

The only blot is the Earth, owing to the evil done there. Soon, however, even there, there will be no trace left of it, but only the remembrance as an object lesson for the whole universe, to show what a terrible disaster lawbreaking leads to, as also departure from the divine principles. These are summed up in the Universal Law, which requires each to exist for the good and the blessing of all.

During the Restoration of All Things, all who have gone into the graves will come out of them and go through the education indispensable for obtaining eternal life. Our dear Saviour illustrated these things by raising many from the dead, amongst others: Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus. Those people died a second time because the Work of reconciliation, which opens the way to eternal life for all men, had not then been completed. First, our dear Saviour had to give his life as a Ransom. After that, he had to call out of the human race and to educate 144,000 members of his Body, described in Revelation, who follow the Lamb wherever he goes, giving their lives, redeemed by the blood of Christ, as a ransom with their Master's.

The calling of those members has taken nearly 2,000 years. As we are repeatedly pointing out in our columns, this calling is coming to its close. The last members are about to make their calling and their election sure. When the very last of those 144,000 members has quite finished their sacrifice, that, which till today has been a mirage, will become reality in power, glory and majesty beyond our power to conceive of adequately.

For the present, the effects of that majestic Work are making themselves felt in the calling up of the Host of the Lord. They are the people spoken of by Malachi the prophet, who love God and wish to do his will. They consult the Book of Remembrance (The Message to Humanity) and understand what is taught there in the Lord's Name. They fall into line to become those of whom the Lord speaks, also through Malachi the prophet, saying: "They shall be mine on the day I am preparing. I shall have compassion on them, just as a father has compassion on his son who serves him. Then once more, you shall see the difference between...those who serve God and those who do not."

That time has come. The arrogant and those who do wickedly, those who do not fear the Lord, are preparing the frightful Tribulation for themselves, such as the Earth has never before witnessed. When you consider all the engines of destruction being manufactured in every country, it is not difficult for you to understand that the trouble which is on the way is unimaginable and without precedent. That is how the wicked are go-

### The wonders of my childhood rediscovered

THANKS to the very noble sentiments of my parents, my childhood was a very happy one. Mother, who was very sick and gradually became impotent, was never heard by any of us to complain. I do not remember her without a smile and the wish to make us happy. As for my father, he was a man to whom the family spirit and his duty were no vain words. He would nurse mother with untiring love and was ever ready to give a hand with the housework after his working hours, although his work was very demanding. My brother, six years older than me, was so fond of me that if it had been possible he would have given me the moon to see me happy. We would go miles and miles together on his motor-bicycle, and how we travelled to all sorts of places! Much care was lavished on me also by a very kind woman who was very

pious. She would ever be telling me about God, telling me that He was a sure guide. I had a profound belief in what she told me, and would take God to witness in everything I undertook, and He truly was a Friend to me.

The only fly in the ointment of my childhood was the fact that I had very delicate lungs, which frequently forced me to take to my bed. Owing to this, the moment I was able to be up and about, I would be seized with a veritable frenzy for living, a frenzy which remained with me throughout my adolescence. I was determined to see everything, to know everything and to do everything. Really I could easily have been mistaken for a whirlwind! I would for ever be seeking another job, a fresh occupation, go to all the entertainments within my reach, travel from one place to another, by every means of transport available. I also had a great passion for dancing. I was indefatigable. My parents allowed me full liberty, but did not at all ap-

prove of my late nights; however, this was the only point on which we did not agree.

In the course of this hurly-burly existence, I came to notice many things that shook me profoundly. Having remained very naive, I believed only in the "marvellous". So that the discovery of a world which was ugly, vicious, perverted, was a great shock to me. When my brother was overtaken by blindness, this also affected me profoundly. Fortunately, a double operation restored his sight.

Owing to my having very dear friend caught up in the war with Indochina, I was initiated into the harrowing experience of the horror of being ever in expectation of the worst news, the horror of that war in which men had been turned into moles. I was unable to make sense of it all, and still less of what God was about. In the religion in which I was brought up, you were for ever hearing: "God gave, and God taketh away, blessed be the Name of God!" This kind of omnipo-

tence baffled me and failed to correspond with the picture of a friend, the friend of my childhood, and the fear of punishment was born in my heart.

Then began a period which I shall never forget. When the war with Indochina came to an end, the man whom I had always looked on as my fiancé had utterly disappeared. As everything over there was in most complete confusion, nobody knew who had been killed and who taken prisoner. Then I met a young man with whom, unfortunately, I fell passionately in love, and this passion proved to be mutual. However, I was quite sincere and told him that in principle I was not free since I did not know whether the man I was engaged to was alive or not. This unsatisfactory situation continued till I was informed of my fiancé's repatriation in Algeria, of the man whom three years previously I had promised to wait for. He was very sick and wretched, having survived several months of frightful

ing to destroy one another. Those, on the other hand, who fear the Lord will be under his wonderful protection. Since they place themselves on the side of good and wish to go on living, they will be protected by the good they do, and evil will not be able to get at them.

The Ransom paid by Christ also has the power to recall to life those people who destroyed themselves with their own wickedness. They will be recalled to life in the course of the Restoration of All Things in the Kingdom of God on Earth. They will be taught and educated in accordance with divine ways, and will be given every opportunity to think better of things and to mend their ways. They will be given all freedom to choose good and to inherit eternal life, or deliberately and wilfully to choose evil, which leads to the Second Death, from which there is no return. In which case, it will be of their own free will and knowing what they are doing, that they will choose the way of destruction.

The fact is that divine ways are always those of full liberty. The Lord has provided for a splendid salvation for everyone: perfect regeneration and everlasting life in Paradise restored. But this magnificent state — which He offers to all men, and which cost his beloved Son sacrifice, pain and death on the Cross — will never be thrust on anybody. Anyone who wants to live and to be happy, will be given every possibility and the sovereign assistance of divine grace, but he will be allowed a free choice. God, indeed, does not want any slaves. He wishes to only have sons who worship Him in spirit and in truth, which means that they love Him and apply their whole hearts to keeping his Law, voluntarily, with conviction, and out of enthusiasm.

Divine ways are ineffable and sublime, and are entirely pervaded by love, nobility and devotion, and by inexpressible affection. The principles of the Kingdom of God are wonderful in wisdom. They mean health to all who respect them; they are the joy of their hearts and are life for ever and ever. Such are the glorious principles now being proposed to mankind. What appeared to be a mirage is now becoming reality and is to be powerfully expressed and to make its appearance in concrete form.

Therefore, all who wish to may join the magnificent body of the Host of the Lord. It is made up of people who are quite convinced and who possess faith because they submit to the divine Law. They know that since they are under the Almighty's protection, by fulfilling those conditions, they need no longer die and may now leap forward towards eternal life with assurance. For those stalwart warriors of the Kingdom of God, the mirage is already beginning to turn into reality, owing to their perfect submission to the divine principles.

## Fukushima, no end in sight...

The following article written by Olivier Cabanel was published in September 2016 in the Swiss French-language magazine *ContrAtom*, which is produced by the Swiss anti-nuclear association of the same name:

### Fukushima concerns the whole world

*The 11th of March 2016 marked the 5th anniversary of the "Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster", but — despite the concealing statistics from TEPCO [which is the Tokyo Electric Power Company, and which is the plant operator of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant], and despite the cover-up by the nuclear-lobby groups — the devastated nuclear power station continues to spew out its poison, and there is enough of it for the whole world.*

*According to an assessment by IRSN [which is the Institute for Radiological Protection and Nuclear Safety, and which is a public authority under the control of the French Ministry of Defence], since October 2011:*

*"The contaminated water flowing out of Fukushima represents the largest escape of artificial 'radionuclides' [radioactive substances] into the ocean that has ever been measured."*

### Which radionuclides are in question?

*They are mainly the ones that stay in nature [in the environment] for the longest time: strontium-90, plutonium, and caesium-137. It is known that the latter has a half-life of 30 years, which means that its radioactivity will last for at least 200 years, and scientists have evaluated its "short-lived" radiation at 35,800 TBq (terabecquerels), in which 1 TBq equals 10 to the power of 12 becquerels [a "becquerel" (Bq) is a unit of measurement of radioactivity]. 19% of the caesium-137 has spread out over the ground in Japan, and the other 81% has reached the waters of the Pacific.*

*If it is true that it will take decades for these toxic substances to reach the bottom of the ocean, they will nevertheless first contaminate the plankton on the surface, and even if the radioactivity is below the official level of harmfulness to organisms in the ocean, the fish feed on the plankton full of caesium, strontium and plutonium...and humans eat the fish that are full of these radioactive substances.*

*Strong doses of radiation to humans cause serious problems to the immune and the reproductive systems and cause brain damage and kidney disease. A weak dose can lead to cancer, to deformities and to problems with the body's systems, such as the circulatory system. Regarding strontium-90, it has a half-life of almost 29 years, and it has the tendency to deposit itself in bones and teeth and to increase anaemia and cancer.*

### Plutonium is the most dangerous

*Its half-life is more than 24,000 years, and thanks to the French company Areva, which supplied the Fukushima power station with radioactive mixed oxide nuclear fuel [MOX], especially for Reactor 3, one of those that melted, the radioactivity is so high that no human is allowed to go near it without risking their life. This plutonium continues to escape into the air, the water and the ground, without the possibility of stopping it.*

### We have been forewarned...

*Of course, TEPCO claims that it is doing everything possible to stop this deadly environmental contamination, but the construction of an underground "ice wall" [a frozen-soil barrier] has been delayed, the ground water is severely contaminated, and radioactive water is escaping from all sides and running into the Pacific.*

*The ice wall, whose construction was decided on after the disaster, is so complicated that after five years it is still not in working order, despite the plant operator [TEPCO] announcing that this would be the case in 2016.*

*It is a matter of freezing a length of 780 metres of ground, with the help of underground pipes, to a depth of 27 metres, so that the escaping radioactive waste water can be reduced to 10 tonnes per day instead of the current 100 tonnes.*

*The second last stage of construction, which consists of installing cement plugs at the exits of the enormous tunnels that are full of radioactive water, was finished in July 2015, and the last stage should have begun in March 2016.*

*But some confusion remains: in fact, in November 2014, TEPCO conceded that the ice wall had failed and admitted that sealing the underground tunnels was unsuccessful, in both Reactor 2, where there are 5,000 tonnes of water, and Reactor 3, where there are 6,000 tonnes of water, and that this water is extremely radioactive.*

*But many people think that this ice wall is wishful thinking. Today, another attempt is being made by using robots, despite the previous failures. The extremely powerful radiation affected their electronics, and all the robots that were used could not complete their tasks.*

*There are three types of robots, mounted on caterpillar tracks, used in 2016, which have three different tasks: one pumps high-pressure water, another pulverizes dry ice, and the last one sucks up everything...*

*But this apparent state-of-the-art [nuclear-power] technology — be it Japanese, French, American or Russian — is obsolete, because it has obviously created a monster. TEPCO and the IAEA (the International Atomic Energy Agency) can only hope, and the worshippers of the "atom god" do not know what else to do.*

We are stunned by all the consequences of a nuclear catastrophe. Such an experience should actually make humankind wiser and lead it to give up something that represents a dreadful worldwide danger. All the more so, since the consequences of an accident are not just momentary, but are prolonged over many years, with devastating effects on the environment and on human health. With all the nuclear power stations that are in use in the world, of which a large number are old, the survival of humankind is directly threatened. It is time to admit that this type of electricity generation is not sustainable. But humankind believes that it is strong. It thinks that it can control everything. Its pride knows no limits, and in its blindness, it overestimates its own possibilities. Apostle Paul characterizes it like this: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools." Romans 1: 22.

The need for energy continues to increase, not only through the strong growth of the population, but through the demands of increasingly excessive human selfishness. Nowadays, electricity is needed for everything, whereas previously, the need for energy was much lower, people were satisfied with less in life. Today, everything is done automatically and electronically, by remote control, computers and so forth. If electricity is useful to humankind, because it spares it some tiring work, there is also flip side to the coin. Humanity has, in all the aspects of life, become completely dependent on electricity. One cannot get by without it, and if one day there is a general power failure, then there is panic because nothing works, neither the factories nor the computers nor the banks... Briefly said, it is chaos.

Our modern society sets us various traps, and it furthermore pollutes the world and threatens our lives. But who worries about this? Only a few. As long as no accident happens very close to us, one is not aware of the danger, or one consciously ignores it in order to continue in one's various occupations. There is certainly no lack of that in the world, in which everyone has their worries and must carry out their duties, which then lead to stress...

Fortunately, faith, this gift from God, allows us to hope for better times, for the time of peace and harmony that was announced by God's prophets and by Christ. In that messianic time, everything on Earth will be restored, and one will no longer resort to old things. All things will become new, Scripture tells us. There will even be a new type of electricity production, which will be needed during that transition time. The Almighty will give humankind true wisdom, and because people will then be under his Spirit, they will be able to accept it. Their intelligence will be exercised in the direction of good and will no longer be subjected to the attraction of money, which will enable them to develop completely new things that do not harm their health. Nature will no longer have to suffer and will regain its splendour, its wealth and its purity, which are sources of balance for the planet and of well-being for humanity.

For their happiness, the Lord God has planned everything in advance, and He gave that which was dearest to his heart: his beloved Son, who came to Earth in order to give his life as the Ransom for all the sins of humanity. On the unshakeable foundation of his Sacrifice accomplished with supreme love, people can be re-educated and regain their dignity as earthly children of God. They will become altruists who love each other so much that they will no longer do anything that could

captivity, solely for my sake. After receiving this news, I left the small town in which I was working, and so did my friend, who agreed — and how much I admired that abnegation — that we could not possibly let down a man who had gone through such a hell.

A few months later there was a fresh failure of news, for now there was war in Algeria. I am still ignorant today of what happened to Pierre. Is he alive or dead? It is an unsolved mystery. At the end of a year spent in unfruitful search, I gave up all hope of ever seeing him again. It was then that I took to drink for the first time.

Of God, I could make less and less sense. Did He really punish? And if so, why? As I was completely fogged by the many religions contradicting one another, my childhood's Friend was blotted out leaving room only for a multitude of unanswered question marks. More confused than ever, I flung myself into the wildest excesses, quite aimless and with

an uneasy conscience, for I was piling foolishness upon foolishness. And if there should be a punishment after all? I was quite sure God existed, but what was He like? What uncertainty!

At twenty-four I married a young man after a great deal of hesitation and hours spent in deepest thought. He was delightfully simple and affectionate. We were married in church, I in a white dress to please my mother in law. But at the bottom of my heart I was ashamed of being dressed up so, for I was not worthy of it, and coming out of church I almost ran.

So began life shared with one another, or at least that was what I expected. My husband belonged to several clubs, and in the evenings I would be left to myself, far too often alone, and it was out of the question for me to go gallivanting here and there any more, for, with the example of my parents before me I had made up my mind firmly and seriously to my wifely role. A few months later I was

expecting my first child. This was a wonderful and extraordinary discovery. Heretofore I had not taken much interest in children but now I began to dream of having a lot of them, for I was filled with the glamour of it. I started again to put my trust in God, though I failed to understand Him any better than before. My first child was a boy, and my first care was to have him christened, being of course ignorant of the fact that there was no sense in it.

Then came the beginning of hard times: I found it difficult to put up with living with my in laws who, by the way, were very kind, but had no idea of liberty and unity as practised by my own parents. As for my husband, he did not spoil me as my brother had accustomed me to being spoiled. He had no time for anything but his work in the wine industry, and for his favourite sport which was gymnastics. The idea was growing upon me of making up my trunks and leaving. But there it was, never would I have dared to break the

promises made in church. So feeling desperate, I took to drinking once more. Tragedy fell upon us truly with the birth of our little girl, whom we called Madeleine. On her very first day she was taken with convulsions. She had to be nursed day and night. On top of this I had increasingly to help my husband with his work, as one of our workmen had several strokes. My own parents who lived close by were both ailing, and my mother in law also was far from well. With all this work, my nerves began to give way. One morning, three days before grape-gathering, going to wake up my two-year-old girl, I found her in violent convulsions and already in a coma. This was a terrible shock. She was taken straight to hospital, but died five days later. The day after the funeral we were grape gathering as if nothing untoward had happened. With twenty-five people coming in for meals, and having to do all the work myself alone, I had not a minute for a quiet cry. Once the

cause each other even the slightest harm. All dangers will be discarded, as well as everything else that is not appropriate for the prosperity of the human family who will become the Divine Family for all eternity.

The prophet Isaiah depicts for us the following blessed times in advance, in a vision that was given to him by the Almighty: "Behold, I shall create new heavens and a new earth. ... The sound of weeping and crying shall no longer be heard in it. There shall no longer be an infant who lives only a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years. ... They shall build houses and live in them, and plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. The lifetime of my people shall be like the lifetime of a tree, and my chosen ones [my elect] shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, or bear children doomed to misfortune, for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them." Isaiah 65: 17 and 19-23.

## "You were bought at a high price. Do not become slaves..." 1 Cor. 7: 23

The following explained study, which was conducted among adolescents, is no real revelation, but is nevertheless a clarification regarding the impact of the Internet among these young people. The article mentioning this study was published in the Swiss newspaper *20 Minutes* on the 12th of July 2017.

**Study: A 10-year-old child goes too far when using the Internet. These addicts also have the tendency to spread violence or to be its victims.**

*While approximately 80% of 12- to 19-year-olds have a normal interaction with the Web, 12% show risky behaviour, and 9% use it in a clearly problematic way. That was revealed in the recent JAMES Study by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), which was published yesterday.*

*When the [Internet] connection is broken, these young fans show signs of an addiction. While surfing, they completely lose control and sometimes deceive their relatives in order to hide their behaviour. Their devour television and video games. They also have the tendency to spread violence on social media or have perhaps been victims of online bullying [cyberbullying].*

*The risk of dependence on the Internet is even greater when children and adolescents have difficulties with "real life". It then becomes particularly enticing to receive a "like" on social media or to obtain points in video games. There are three main groups of them that stand out: the very young, the children of better-off families, and the children of immigrants. The study suspects that the first group has difficulties in disciplining itself, the second group has access to more devices, and the third group looks for contact with its families in other countries.*

*The JAMES Study is conducted every two years and is commissioned by Swisscom [a large telecommunications company in Switzerland]. It is based on a survey of 1,000 young people from all over Switzerland.*

### Set limits

*Researchers recommend that parents promote activities which increase self-esteem, such as making music, drawing, doing handcrafts, being interested in animals, or reading. In a family, establishing rules even before a device is bought or reducing the number of devices that children have access to, also helps to limit the risks of an addiction. Above all, the role of example by the parents should not be underestimated.*

It is obvious that the use of the Internet carries many risks when it occurs in an inappropriate or excessive way. Young people are the first victims, they are the

most vulnerable in view of this giant with many faces, each more mesmerizing than the other. And the services offered on the Internet are also becoming more attractive, they are technological marvels. The feats of modern technology certainly prove humankind's undeniable and even admirable abilities, which are unfortunately also used for evil. How many bad images are imposed on the brain by a screen, and how much unbridled desire is aroused by ever-present advertising? How much extreme behaviour can be traced back to the insidious influence of contents, programmes and games based on violence? The latter is furthermore presented as being completely commonplace and even normal.

The influence of the Internet on young addicts is so great that the education given by their parents is almost completely discarded and their behaviour seems to be totally transformed. Some are even fascinated by radical religious or political speeches and then join an ideal that is dangerous for themselves and for others. The "prince of this world", Satan, has here found a means to have an even greater influence on the brains of people so that they act according to his pernicious will. What is important to him, and the goal of all his actions and of so-called "progress" that he lets humanity carry on with, is to maintain and support his kingdom on Earth. That kingdom in which humankind is so unhappy and more divided than ever.

As the above article clarifies, the risk of an Internet addiction is greater among young people who carry discontent within themselves. But they do not know that they are seeking refuge in something that will increase their discontent even more, because it cuts them off from the outside world and locks them into a virtual world (virtual reality). Unfortunately, we live in a society where true values have been lost, and there are not many adults who are a good example and can encourage young people in a good direction. The greatest help and the surest way out of misfortune, is to seek God, to try to understand God's Word and then apply it. He is the "Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort". He has deep love for every human being, to whom He has given the most sublime Gift: his beloved Son. The Son encourages sinners to leave their slippery slope (to quit their wicked way) by inviting them: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11: 28.

That is the source of love which humankind greatly lacks. The love of the Father and of his Son, Jesus, can fill in the blackest abyss and the darkest pit that the human heart can be lost in. It is the source of life that comes to meet us with delicacy and without imposing itself and that offers us a new life which is happy and fulfilled in the green pastures of the Good Shepherd who gave his life for his Sheep.

## Is there hope after death?

We quote an extract of a conversation with the French historian Jean Delumeau who specializes in the history of Christianity, which was published in the French-language newspaper *Dimanche Ouest-France* on the 1st of November 2015:

**Jean Delumeau invites us to hope in the face of death**

*I studied the Protestant Reformation and then Catholicism between the time of Luther and Voltaire. I discovered that Christianization occurred slower than was believed. Until the 13th century, Christianity was the religion of a minority. Then, while I was teaching in Rennes [a city in France] and looking for a subject to study, I had a revelation: there was no history of "fear".*

**Fear, is it that of death?**

*Fear is inherent in the human condition. It only disappears with death, because "fear" basically means "fear of death". It increased during the "great fear" of the*

*Black Death [a plague disease pandemic] around the year 1348, which killed half of the European population!*

**What does the Catholic Church say about that plague?**

*It presented that plague as a punishment for the sins of the people. From then on, there was a dramatization and an accusation of the guilt of the believers. The Catholic Church thought that finger-pointing would lead to conversions. The Black Death affected the minds of the people for several centuries.*

**But the Catholic Church also reassured...**

*Yes, through the sacraments and especially through confession. But also in daily life through all types of prayers and comforting rites: on death beds and in processions against epidemics... There was a whole range of literature about protection from misfortunes, with hundreds of blessings... I did a lot of work on the history of "feelings of reassurance".*

**And on Paradise!**

*Let us begin with the earthly Paradise. From ancient Christianity until the 18th century, it was believed that it still existed, hidden in the depths of the East. Then, with the Age of Enlightenment, came the idea of restoring it on Earth. The ideology of "progress" is one example.*

**Today, what remains of Paradise?**

*Not much. One may simply have the conviction, like me, that after death, there is not a place, but a paradisaical situation that will last for you and me after death. It will be the end of earthly sufferings and be eternal happiness. But this conviction can no longer be translated into images.*

**Is Paradise "All Saints' Day"?**

*In modern terms, All Saints' Day is a Christian festival of all those who are already in Paradise, in a situation of eternal happiness. Paradise, with others who will also go there, is in the light and in the nearness of God, in mutual affection. It is a hope.*

**Is Hell promised for those who are not chosen?**

*I do not believe that. But I would say, with apostle John: Hell will be the Second Death. On Judgement Day, the damned, if there are any, will be condemned to eternal death. But not to eternal torment. An eternal Hell would mean that God was not victorious over death and sin. Yet, the Christian belief is that God will definitely be victorious over evil. Evil and Hell will then have disappeared.*

**What has become of Purgatory today?**

*The belief in Purgatory, which was long proclaimed as a temporary Hell, collapsed with the First World War. Imagine chaplains in the trenches, preaching Purgatory to those poor men. It is no longer mentioned today. Moreover, it was an invention from the Middle Ages.*

**You call for the deep originality of Christianity...**

*Christianity is a hope that will become a full reality after death. I deeply believe in it. The Christian hope is that Jesus, through his resurrection, has "reopened" Paradise and that he will receive us there. How and why should such a hope be out of date? Even today, always and everywhere, Christianity pleads for forgiveness and the inexhaustible love of God. I agree with Paul Ricoeur [who was a French philosopher] and think that God is stronger than evil.*

Those statements by Jean Delumeau interest us. Especially when he confirms that he believes neither in the existence of Hell nor Purgatory. The example that he quotes, regarding the soldiers in the trenches during the First World War, actually shows that Hell is here on Earth through the line of conduct of people who are sinners and separated from God, who fight and kill each

grape-gathering was over, I collapsed; first pneumonia, then a nervous breakdown. Then I started to hate that God who had given and who had taken away and whom I was quite determined never to praise again. For several weeks I went through hell.

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One day there was a ring at the door. There was some representatives of a religious sect. They had come to the right door with their God who punishes! I sent them packing, telling them that I cared nothing for all those things I had become quite indifferent.

A week later there was another ring. It was someone else come to talk about God. No, no, thank you very much! I was about to shut the door in the face of that evangelist, but there was something so sincere about the way he looked at me that I was unable to. I listened to what he had to say. I did not understand a word of it, but it was so kindly said that our conversation lasted an hour on the door step.

At the end he gave me a Paper, *The Monitor of the Reign of Justice* which was a real revelation to me. It was borne in upon me that God had given all, even a ransom, and that it was Satan who made trouble, taking his sport in making mankind suffer. How wonderful it was to be able to pray again, to know where to go! What a blessing! I subscribed to the Paper for or All. Visits from evangelists were also a great comfort to me. I also received the book *The Message to Humanity* and rapidly understood the invitation that went with it, but I was not yet ready for grasping how far it went.

Once again my husband and I experienced a short period of brightness with the birth of another little girl. Since our workman had died of his last stroke, I was obliged to do more and more of the heavy work of the vine. My husband's health was also greatly undermined, and my father, suffering from cancer, had to have his right arm amputated. When

he came out of hospital, he bravely took up nursing my mother once more in spite of his handicap. Fortunately my brother, who was unmarried, was very helpful.

At fourteen months our little girl had the same convulsions as her sister and died two months later. I was resigned to this death with relief, for the idea of the child's going on living handicapped and incurable was something terrible. My husband was now obliged to contemplate giving up his vineyard, so dear to his heart, and found an interesting job in an office dealing with agriculture and the wine industry. For me it was a very good thing, for I could not have gone on any longer being everywhere at once.

My father died after a long period of suffering. Then I took mother into my own home. But after a while I had to place her in a nursing home as I had come to the end of my strength. I fell ill. When I recovered I began ever more clearly to understand the

Lord's invitation to collaborate in his wonderful work. However, I hesitated, for I knew that I should have to lay many things aside, and did not feel very much like it.

Then came the evening when, in the company of some friends, I gave in to the temptation to drink too much. Suddenly, in my drunken condition, I felt disgusted with myself and with everything. I swallowed a lot of sleeping tablets. I awoke in hospital, feeling terribly ill. The pastor was in attendance in a very reproachful mood. There and then I was able to understand clearly the Lord's great compassion, his immense sacrifice, the possibility of starting again from zero, and this time to head for life: I promised that henceforth I would be guided by Him. As for the pastor, perhaps one day he will come to understand why I was smiling, when he could find nothing to smile at in so much iniquity.

Since then my joy has been great. With the Lord's assistance I have given up drinking,

