CHAPTER 22

Confirmation of the Preceding Chapter by the Refutation of Several of Jaquelot’s Maxims

Themistius: You are right: those were five blows that destroyed all of Jaquelot’s machinery. But let’s have him mount his great battle-horse to see whether he can put some order back into his sorry affairs.

Maximus: I see: you want to observe what will happen if he has recourse again to the immutability of the general laws. But have we not already reduced to rubble everything that he had built on this miserable foundation?¹ Let’s just say that this great battle-horse has already died from his wounds.

Themistius: Jaquelot claims two things: 1. that God did not will the sin of Adam; 2. that the great design of God was already formed, already prepared, even to the point of having received its final touches, although God had not yet deliberated on the fate of man, when sin entered by pure accident into the universe, after which God considered that state of affairs.

Maximus: Against the first of these claims, I observe that there is no prosecutor impudent enough who would dare to suggest to a mother, who had left her son to die of hunger, to offer the following quibble: ‘tell the judges that you indeed willed to permit your son to die of hunger, but that you did not at all will for him to die of hunger.’ What a distinction! How insane; how extravagant! Yet it pleased Jaquelot to make use of it in order to exculpate God before the pagan philosophers. God, he says,² did not will sin;³ He willed only to permit it.

Let’s remember that the conduct of God as He stood by and watched Eve’s combat with the snake, and the conduct of the mother who was overflowing with milk but let her son die of hunger, are very similar. If Jaquelot insists that there is a difference in that the permission of the mother is a crime while God’s permission is innocent, then the pagan philosopher will reply in two ways to him: 1. That on this footing it would be easy to maintain that God can innocently

¹ See above, Dialogues, Part 2, chapter 17, 292, and chapter 18, 300.
² Jaquelot, etb, 350.
³ Here he adds efficaciously, which is nothing but chicanery. So does he claim that God willed sin ineffectaciously? It’s pure gibberish. See above, Dialogues, Part 2, chapter 21, 312n7.
necessitate people to sin and even innocently produce sin in the soul of man; 2. That it is not a matter here of examining the moral difference between these two permissions, but rather of knowing whether by their physical state they are not equally joined to a complete will that their objects actually occur.

Jaquelot will make Christianity the laughing stock of outsiders if he insists on maintaining that it is truthfully impossible for a mother to permit her son to die of hunger while nevertheless not willing that he die of hunger, but that it is very possible for God to permit Eve to die under His eyes while not willing that she die. As for his second claim that sin did not enter into God's original plan, we have already refuted that invincibly.4

Themistius: He is stubborn enough in his pettiness that I can suppose with some plausibility that he will claim that the conduct of this mother toward her son, and that of God toward Eve, should not be compared because the child cannot resist hunger, while Eve could resist her tempter.

Maximus: I believe he is very capable of offering in all seriousness a difference as illusory as that one, and which I can refute with the following two arguments. The first is that God was more certain that Eve would perish if she was not given aid than the mother was certain that her son would perish if he was not given aid. From which it follows that the resolution not to aid Eve indicates in God a complete will that she die just as much as the resolution of the mother not to aid her son indicates fully that she willed his death.

Second,5 once Eve was reduced to a state wherein she no longer knew how to make use of the weapons God had given her, it was just as great an act of hatred not to help her then as it would have been if she had never been given any weapons in the first place; for being completely unarmed, and having weapons that are entirely useless because one does not know how to use them when the need arises, are the very same thing. I would feel no more indebted to a man who had given me weapons from which he knew I would derive no benefit than to a man who had absolutely refused me all weapons.6

Themistius: Your second argument is so evident that I could make even the crudest peasant understand it immediately. I would ask him: ‘if you were swimming with one of your neighbours, saw him at risk of drowning, and left

5 I am still supposing that it is the Zoroastrian who is attacking Jaquelot: this holds once and for all.
6 See Ῥῶψ Φιλάρρα, clix (ΟΔ ΙΙΙ, 858).