

Epistle to the Ministers of all Religions

Sylvain Maréchal

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This treatise for and against the Bible will teach you nothing new. More than anyone, you know the strengths and the weaknesses of your books and the weak point in the armor of your gods. Allow others to cast an impartial eye on the depths of the sanctuary where imposture has long enjoyed the right of asylum. Allow then ...

Or rather, blush for the role you have transmitted from hand to hand for four thousand years. Having left its infancy behind, humanity has reached the age for passing from the regime of wet nurses to that of reason.

It would doubtless be an insult to you to believe you to be the dupes of the fables you traffic in. Of course you aren't, so cease to invent them. Dare to aspire to liberal ideas: it is yet possible for you to take your place among estimable beings. We will willingly agree to forget what you have been if you sincerely promise us to work at becoming again what you should never have ceased to be. We would like to think that the stain you have contracted is not completely indelible.

Already many among you have removed the mask and the costume of a theatrical character: follow this example, or be as honest as some of your predecessors of the second century of Christianity: Montanist priests suspended from the vault of their church a bladders full of wind and danced beneath it, singing the hymns to the Holy Spirit, of which this bladder full of wind was a parable.

In the name of reason, which it is never too late to return to, in the name of morality which for so long has suffered and groaned due its alliance with religion; in the name of the pitiless posterity which prepares to punish you if you persist in dragging the people along in your old ruts, have enough respect for yourselves, have enough respect for your like to put an end to the degradation of humanity. Don't you have reason to be satisfied? Aren't four thousand years of falsehoods enough? Put down the scepter of opinion, which you have allowed to be soiled in your hands. See that eighteen centuries have passed since the second era and the renewal of your boorish, ridiculous, and culpable solemnities: must the XIXth century also be infected by them? As you can see, every day almost all the sciences take a step towards the light. Will you alone remain in the shadows?

How would you escape universal derision if some clever chemist were to take it in his head, in the middle of a class, to put your God's blood in their alembic and his body in the crucible, and if he were to repeat the analysis at every crossroads?

Hasten then to abjure a profession that you can no longer exercise without inciting laughter, and without you yourselves laughing behind your altars. Seize the only means that remains to you to deserve pardon by fashioning a justice of your own invention. What are you waiting for? One day the role that you persist in filling will become a historical problem. With all their erudition the future Saumaises will find it difficult to make your current existence appear probable. No one will want to believe them; no one will want to believe that there was a time, a very long time, during which, under the eyes of philosophy, *shameless men* offered from their fingers, for the adoration of the entire earth, *a God made bread*: at the very least, fear the future. In just a short while that plebe, which kneels at your table to eat a God of your fashioning, will want to indemnify itself with violence, with an explosion for having been your plaything for so many years. Fear the awakening of those you have held for so many centuries in the most stupid of slumbers. Realize that you only owe your ascendancy to an old habit. For a long time there would have been no religions if religions hadn't degenerated into usages, routines; but everything gets worn out and erased. "But (you will say) we force no one. Everyone is free to come or not every seven days to prostrate himself before our holy stages. Apparently the plebe likes to be fooled and it is perhaps good that they be fooled... It is just as well it be us as other, more dangerous charlatans. In a despotic state it isn't the despot who should be reprimanded, but the multitude who suffer him." There are things we should not respond to: they revolt us, or refute themselves. We will continue to say to you:

Ministers of all religions, realize that we don't love you, and that in fact you aren't lovable. Your mythologies are mournful, your ceremonies monotonous and ridiculous, your harangues boring, your books heavy and gloomy. Don't stand against the torrents of the ages, which drag with them memories and religions. Do better. If the zeal of the House of the Lord still devours you, well then, abandon the profane and the impious to their destiny; go repopulate the Holy Land, that primary theatre of the Bible and the Gospel; bring there your God, your tripods and your books: we don't want them anymore. You are proud of the poetic beauty of your Bible and of the few grand traits spread around your Gospels. But the literary merit of these two religious productions can't save them from the fate that, a little sooner, a little later, puts every book full of indecent fables in its place.

We should add that the books of all religions resemble each other. This is why we address ourselves to the ministers of all religions. If we have lingered more particularly over those of the Catholics it's because we have the spectacle before our eyes, and in this treatise it is not only a question of the Bible and the Gospel, for religions differ among themselves only in their decorations.

Christian priests, you insist:

"For some time several well-known litterateurs have been known to express their admiration with these words: *as beautiful as the Bible*. At least (you add) it can't be denied that we have in our hands the most beautiful of books that exist. No one has yet been able to do better: the Orientals, the Egyptians, Greece, and Rome have produced nothing that has eclipsed the bible. This book occupies the first place, in literature as well as religion."

Ministers of the religion! It is also said, with just as much reason, *beautiful as Homer*. *Beautiful as Telemachus* has also been said.

This would seem to prove that there are, in the bible, as well as in Homer and the small number of original books, beauties of the first order. But the genius of Homer sometimes falls asleep: *aliquando dormitat Homerus*. The authors of the Old and the New Testaments not only sleep like the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey, they do something worse: they scandalize and revolt their readers with obscene paintings, horrible tableaux, and the defects of the whole.

From which it results that the Bible, written by the hand of God, or inspired by his holy spirit is, like other books composed by men of genius, full of beauty, but is not a book more perfect than them. And yet, according to the great pretensions of its eternal preachers, this should be the case. But there's more: the Bible is beneath many profane works.

To be sure, I would blush to have written certain – in fact, quite numerous – passages, of the Old and New Testaments. Jean Lafontaine disavowed his tales. I would think myself more criminal if I were the author of the Bible and the Gospel. I would have shown genius in a few places, but at the same time I would have given a poor opinion of my judgment and my morality.

In a word, if we asked of an enlightened and informed man which of all the famous books he would like to have been the author of, as long as he has a little self-respect he would not answer: the Bible.

Ministers of all religions, you place yourself under the protection of this phrase of Montesquieu's, echoed by many today: "Religion is the best guarantor we can have of men and the stability of states." (*Grand. et Decad. de Rome*.)

Priests! You haven't been able to save the thrones of your very-Christian kings. Your gods and your books couldn't protect the people and their chiefs from a political revolution. Your religions and your books are thus poor guarantors.

In vain as well you boast of the long and showy elegy for Jesus by the most eloquent, but not the wisest of 18th century writers. The "Apology for the Gospels" by J. J. Rousseau, and the "Commentary on the Apocalypse" by Newton only prove that, like other men, men of genius have their weaknesses in judgment.

Let us continue. You are yet spoken of, and you are still feared even today. You still frighten little children and old women. There are even statesmen who say that you are a necessary evil; that you should be used as a bogeyman to frighten and contain the canaille; that religion is a supplement to the police. Too many writers persist in saying that vast states, populous cities cannot do without priests and executioners. These considerations give you pride and assurance; but do you have so little honor as to brag about, to pride yourselves on such an existence. Is there anything here that would lead you to hold your heads high? Never forget that you only owe your credit over weak minds to an ancient political error that is reaching its end.

In just a short while we will dispense with these vain arrangements with you. In just a short while the cobbler will think himself dishonored by touching the hand of a priest.

Don't be insensitive to the contempt, the disgust that you inspire in every honest and reasonable man you find on your path. Skillful as you are, don't imprudently reest on the impunity you enjoy in your corrupting of good morality. You are allowed to do pretty much what you want. Don't think you've acquired the right to continue your sacred scandals. Adultery, deified for eighteen centuries in your temples has, for all that, not become a virtue. There is no prescription in favor of vice.

We are ready to consent to pass the sponge over the past, but on condition that you respect the present and the future; that you embrace a useful, honest profession, that you leave sons to their

parents, young maidens to their mothers, that you no longer incite the hard-working artisans of the two sexes to waste their time and their novice reason to your frequent performances.

Stop staining the most beautiful of life's ages by forcing young girls to engrave in their tender brains the most ridiculously absurd passages of your holy books. Perhaps soon enough some among them will only too well imitate the scandals of Virgin Mary.

If at least the holy letters you profess could lead to some great, profitable or interesting results. Higher mathematics, transcendental geometry, hardly necessary in themselves, have allowed for the most important discoveries in the mechanical arts. What fruits can we draw from the Bible and the Gospels? And what could those who dedicate themselves solely to their study be? Pilgrimages to Mecca or Calvary lead only to the tomb or the void.

Ministers! Your religions are profligate in their spending. You need rich ornaments, shiny costumes, wax, incense, perfumes, golden cups, rugs, vast and sumptuous edifices... This profusion, for all that it's sacred, is not a good example, and in this century, where heads of household must know how to keep accounts, there would be great economy in suppressing religions and the priesthood, even more so because a father, at no cost and with no hindrance, can perfectly well fulfill these functions with his children.

"An honest elder, instructed by the years
Guiding the destiny of his numerous progeny,
Can he not, better than a priest, teach virtue?
Is he not cloaked in a saintly character?"

– S.M.

You will say to us: 'But wise and believing Egypt made a gift to its priests of a third of its treasury, so much did it believe itself in debt to us.'

That's because Egypt was believing, but wasn't wise.

Ministers of all religions! Glory itself no longer fills us with enthusiasm. Don't brag of lighting the flames of religious fanaticism. From this day forward we will no more have Crusades than civil wars. We will no more fight for priests than we do for masters. We have at least won this, and it is something.

Ministers of all religions! Your good times have passed. This shouldn't be hidden from you and you should expect this: this state could not last forever. Too much was done for you, and you did too little in exchange, for what equivalents did you give for all the goods, all the honors you were covered with? From time immemorial you held the first rank among the orders of the state. The good people of Egypt exempted you from all debts. You had your own separate jurisdiction: your persons, your property, your books were sacred. Even the fines levied against those who dared to doubt aloud the sanctity of your character and the purity of your morals were abandoned to you. You were the censors of kings. For a long time you were the only magistrates, the only judges. On the banks of the Nile and elsewhere you took control of the education of children and the instruction of the people. In Ethiopia things were different: the monarch of this country was chosen by the priests, and consequently always a priest. The magi (the priests of Persia were modestly called thus) were the king's teachers and, later, counselors, and, as in France, monarchs had engraved on their tombs that they had had the honor of being priests before dying. Julius Caesar gloried in the fact of having exercised the high priesthood. In many countries you wore on

your head the sovereign's diadem. In Albania, in the east, the first personage after the monarch was the pontiff. In India the Brahmans, who called themselves philosophers and were only priests, didn't even obey the king or the laws. For a long time the druids brought together in their priestly hands temporal might and sacred power: they judged the princes of the nation and made kings. Among the German people they put in irons whoever they wanted without giving reasons. In Greece the high pontiff several times declared to the first magistrates that they relied not on them, but on God alone. Dennis of Helicanarsus teaches us that in Rome the priests gave account of themselves neither to the people nor the senate. The priests of the time gave the signal for battles and retreats. At all times, in all countries the most beautiful edifices were built for you. The first blooming flowers, the masterpieces of all the arts are piled up on your altars. Mothers confide their children to you, husbands their wives.

Ministers of all religions! How have you responded to so much care? In exchange for so many benefits, what services have you rendered the world? In the petty persecutions you have attracted with your conduct you have inspired the most tender interest in your listeners of both sexes. Women have petted you: what have they received from you in return? Prayers, sermons, ceremonies, panic terrors, servile fears, talismans, rosaries, books full of maxims that are either insolent, immoral, or the cause of perturbations...etc. We are tired of spending so much and receiving so little. There is no compensation: the whole benefit in the bargain is on your side. Holy wars, crusades, inquisitions, fasts, the boredom of your solemnity and speeches, feasts lacking in gaiety, yelping hymns, absurd and ridiculous mysteries, old usages that no longer have reason or goal... Priests! Agree that you discharge poorly all these petty practices for the people, and the people are beginning to realize that you are costing them too much.

I ask you to agree to the fairness of the following observation:

If the religion of which you are the ministers had not yet been founded, in order to establish it would you today dare to employ the same methods, the same instruments that were used in the past? Would you not shrug your shoulders at the proposals that would be made to you concerning this? If there were not yet religions it would not be easy to establish one, if we were to judge by the struggle it is for you to maintain those that allow you to barely live.

It costs us to remind you and publish all these harsh truths: it is you yourselves who force us to do this. A marked religious *reaction* characterizes this first year of the 19th Century. Able at seizing on all circumstances, you abuse them with a shamelessness that alarms the friends of reason. But let them be reassured, and be warned that reason will never lose its rights. That its home fires, maintained by a small number of pure hands, will never be extinguished; that its flame sometimes suffers from more or less lengthy eclipses without ever lacking for the sustenance it needs to be re-ignited with more brightness; that it has seen all religions pass in succession; that it alone never changes and remains in all centuries. Know also that despite your petty successes, your ephemeral triumphs, your perfumed apologists of both sexes, that most of those who haunt your religious clubs shrug their shoulders on leaving and are surprised that you are allowed to issue so many anarchic and revolutionary maxims in your divine offices. Know that your altars have received a shaking they will always feel, and that they will never recover the original stability of which you were so vain. Know that if it weren't for women your tribunes would be deserted. Know that the farmers, who you count on the most, are finally persuaded that it is neither you, nor your lustrations, nor your psalm singing, but their arms and the sun that make the earth fertile and fill their granges and cellars. Labor is their sole titular divinity; they do

without your *God in three* and prefer to give their alms to the truly indigent rather than to you, nourished by a bread that hasn't been watered with the honorable sweat of useful labor.

So abandon an evil cause abandoned by common sense. You have nothing more to do in this world from the moment we know that men in society need, not a religion, but a code written by reason in keeping with the counsels of experience. In a word, we have no more need of you.

Cite one phase of a man's life that requires your presence. When born he has his mother's breast. When young he has his father to mold him. More advanced in age another woman comes to put the final hand to his education and make a man of him. As a spouse, his companion fulfills all his desires. Having in his turn become a father, he passes down the lessons he learned from his father to his children. A citizen, his fatherland calls for his portion of the common labors of the hive. Born sensitive, a friend adds a complement to his happiness. We ask you: is there a sole circumstance in human life, a sole instant where we must deal with a priest? Is there a place for him in the paternal or marital home? So we can very well, without you, be born, live, and die. We have no need of a priest to love and discharge our debt to nature. Does a priest teach a newborn to find its mother's breast and the path to her heart? Does a young maiden need the lessons of a priest to please and make herself adored? Does a young bride have need to consult a priest so as to preserve her husband's esteem and have order and joy reign in their couple?

Ministers of all religions! Your profession is thus perfectly precarious. Your order is a costly superfluity and harmful. You are the parasitical mistletoe of the druids, which vegetates on the oak at its expense.

"And the salvation of souls!" you will say.

Do we need a priest to pray to God? Isn't the paternal benediction worth as much as the laying on of priestly hands? And can't the great affair of salvation be treated of other than by proxy?

"Read history and geography (you'll say). At all times and everywhere, from Siberia to the isle of Tahiti, from the Ganges to the Amazon we find a God and ministers to serve him. Priests are thus as necessary as God himself. Why don't you add: we are even more necessary than God, for in fact we can't see God, and we are there to represent him, to recall Him to distracted man."

Ministers of all religions! At all times and everywhere sorcerers were believed in: does this mean that we can't do without them?

No healthy logic can conclude from the fact that there have always been priests that they are still needed. On the contrary, it's because there were that they are no longer needed. The long ordeal we have gone through has disgusted us with them forever, and the people themselves are disenchanted in this regard. If everyone wanted to have his own oven and bake his own bread the profession of baker would no longer exist. In the same way, if everyone were to serve God in his own manner and take communion by his own hand in his own home, at that point there would no longer be any upkeep of the temples and their servants in keeping with the axiom; Beings should not be multiplied without necessity.

This same axiom is the condemnation of the Bible and the Gospels. The good example set by fathers is the best children's books.

Priests! Think by how thin a thread you hold on to your estate.

Once upon a time the multitude exercised its arms for you and you took the trouble to think and pray for it. The time has arrived when each of us will want to simultaneously exercise his intellectual physical faculties. From that day on you'll have nothing more to do.

Agree with us then that there is nothing on earth more useless than you: even poets are less so. The laborer adds something to nature. The artisan modifies, the banker exchanges and distribute the earth's products. The magistrate preserves order in society. What real services are drawn from you? Panic terrors, imaginary hopes, etc...

If we weigh the authority and the suffrage left to you the decadence of your rule is no longer in doubt. Women without passion, men of a partisan spirit, journalists who Bayle wouldn't have wanted as copyists, a few political Tartuffes, some eager speculating teachers, and finally the routine-ridden plebe: such are your resources.

Ministers of all religions! We are certain that you don't very much like each other and this is as it must be: each of you preaches for his own shop. Well then, if you want to reestablish good relations, don't bear banners or wear livery any longer. Do even better: don't any longer have books. This expiatory sacrifice to good sense, we have no doubt, will cost you, but a beautiful and generous auto-da-fe of the sacred writings of all countries has become indispensable for the peace of all countries. Theology, so sterile yet so fecund, has invaded two thirds of our libraries. It appears that it is only grudgingly that good books, of which there are few, are admitted there. Reason and truth don't take up much room.

If you can't resolve to immediately sacrifice your already printed books, at least don't re-publish them, and especially don't publish new ones: we've had enough of them. We are so full of theology that we're nauseous from it. Remember that Jesus wasn't a maker of books and that far from having the same mania as you, it is claimed that he didn't even know how to read. In certain nations there are certain priests who imitate him in this, and they aren't the worst of them.

But there is another great, and much more general, measure which we exhort you to cooperate in with good grace. In order to put an end to these interminable disputes over words, which have led to the confusion of things and the degradation of men, ministers of all religions, consent to forbid yourselves, along with us, from ever speaking of religion, either for good or ill. We are all tired of forever repeating the same things without ever have attached a meaning to it. This simple measure, once proposed in Switzerland, was successful as long as its execution was watched over. Now that we are a few steps closer to the truth such a resolution would be even less impracticable. So take the only wise position that remains in the current state of spirits: with no regrets, with no exceptions, burn those books in all languages that deal with sacred things: the Bible, the Gospels, the Koran, the Zend Vesta before all others. Tear out the pages in other volumes that even mention them. At the same time we will promise to no longer worry ourselves with all this. Let us no longer stir up these matters whose mephitism has so often asphyxiated the brains of men, but principally let us avoid the idle qualifications of materialists, spiritualists, Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Jews... Let us destroy everything that can maintain or recall these old ideas, which we happily no longer have any need of. Let us return to that great and ancient distinction between men, the good and the evil. Let us simplify as much as possible so as to better understand each other. Misunderstandings, principally in religion, have caused almost all the misfortunes in the world.

Ministers of all religions! How honorable it would be not only for you to adhere in heart and mind to this noble pacific measure, but to even climb to your apostolic pulpits to preach this sublime devotion with your own mouths. How estimable you would again become if, following the example of the Curé Meslier and a few noble spirits before and after this good man, we were to hear you frankly pronounce the following homily: "We confess with truth and repentance that up

until today we have not marched correctly before reason. Alas, we have unworthily compromised the dignity of free men and have thought through our servile and lying, absurd and evil-doing institutions. But that is all done with: a sudden flash of light has just struck our eyes. Yes, we willingly consent to no longer even pronounce the name of our God. God has no more need of priests to serve Him than He does candles to light his way. Man's religion cannot reach Him: He is too elevated for it. Let Him then enjoy himself at his ease, in His celestial beatitude and for all eternity, without troubling His august leisure and without our importuning Him with indiscreet wishes, with perfectly useless prayers. God doesn't nourish Himself with our incense, any more than we do with His flesh on our holy tables. The moment has arrived to make honorable amends for our having for so many centuries degraded God and misled men by maintaining that at our beckoning and our first request the divine majesty left the heavens to precipitously descend into our narrow chalices and willingly place himself on our lips. We make this confession with all humility and in confusion: such a religion was the height of ridiculousness, foolishness, and impertinence. It must be admitted that never was priestly empiricism carried to such an overturning of all natural ideas. In a word, this religion diminished God without aggrandizing men. In order to expiate so monstrous a scandal we agree to break these factitious ties with our own hands, this magic chain that communicated between heaven and earth. Let each stay in his place: God in the empyrean and men on earth! From this day forward we will no more mix in his affairs than he in ours. We have no quarrel with him, no more than with the fixed stars. Virtues belong to and suffice for those who practice them. And so, for the repose of the world, let there no longer be any question of God: let's speak no more about it. Statesmen, for their part, are beginning to realize that it is totally useless for them to have the Heavenly One intervene in the affairs down below. It would mean provoking the degradation of the primary magistracy of an empire to suspect them of needing priests to administer with wisdom and to be on the watch for materialists and unbelievers. This pusillanimity was part of an old policy whose emptiness and insufficiency we today feel. A government strong enough to be just, similar to the supreme governor of the worlds, remains impassive and indifferent to all religious opinions. It knows neither priests nor atheists: it only sees men born free and graced with reason.

"And so we, ministers of all religions, who imprudently propagated so many errors fatal to public and individual tranquility, are firmly resolved to repair all the harm we have done. We renounce our functions and our books. With pleasure and docility we return to civilian ranks in order to fulfill to the best of our ability honest and useful professions.

"We also promise, on our conscience, to never again in the future utter any sacramental words, the bases for all religious sects and the inexhaustible source of animosity and crime. Wanting to recognize but two classes of men, the good and the evil, from this day forward we will do everything possible to deserve a place among the good."

How beautiful will be the day consecrated to this solemn and simultaneous declaration by the ministers of all religions. This will truly mean peace, real peace, universal, lasting peace; the perpetual peace of the good Abbé de Saint-Pierre, which is not the dream of only one man. It waits only for this lone measure.

"But (you will doubtless object), is such an extreme measure not a bit rushed and premature? Let us wait a while; let's not rush."

Ministers of all religions! We hear you. In your hands religion is Pandora's box, at the bottom of which you always see hope. But know that sooner or later it is necessary that that salutary revolution have its full effect. Every passing day brings it closer. Without looking back, hasten

to accomplish it. Assist in the efforts of time. Help us to make a *tabula rasa* of all religious systems. Instead of redecorating the old idol, which for a moment served as a rallying point for our primordial ancestors, let it fall on its own and of its own weight. Don't you see that it's worm eaten? Don't you see that its base is made of clay and sand? Help us to strip your books of this divine character, a misleading varnish that impressed simple souls. Have the merit of assisting in this great work. You must have been among the first to have observed just how much influence religious opinions have lost in relation to enlightenment. They will end up in a short while being completely discredited. Reason's obligations will necessary get the upper hand over divine service, since they have as foundation the eternal rights and the daily needs of men.

And now, too, that we are no longer in the mood to leave for much longer at your disposal, in your hands, this ideal mechanism which you gave the most pompous denominations: in any event, this mechanism becomes weaker with each passing day.

Take away your scaffolding: the edifice has been constructed.

You have felt that the divine religion is only an hors d'oeuvre: in order to make yourselves necessary you affect to preach a religious morality, but know too that:

Morality ends where religion begins

–S.M.

As long as your holy writings serve as elementary and classic books, don't lay your hands on morality and education. Woe on a people whose primary instruction is confided to priests! Woe on a nation where the priests assume the duties of the father! Woe on fathers who need a priest to inspire virtue in their children! Woe on a city where the priests are legislators!

Men make books. The Bible was written by priests who, to be sure, were not angels. But don't books, in their turn, make men? This question isn't difficult to resolve once we have read the Bible and the Gospels, and once we have observed the Jewish nation and the Christian peoples.

Ministers of religion! It is true that your solemnities are still frequented, though not believed. Religion is nothing but a party affair, and your presence is put up with only in order to oppose you to others who are more feared than you. For many years the people who still attend the divine services have disdained your preaching. Lone women and the elderly stay there to pass their afternoons. Less than ever male sinners present themselves to your tribunals of penitence and your holy tables. Religion is falling into disuse, the scepter is falling from your hands and things are no worse for this.

Has government been less obeyed since maintaining absolute silence on God, giving no religion as an example and commanding only in the name of the law? Does it need you, religious ministers, to sanction its public acts?

Has the French soldier become less patient, less a friend of discipline since we no longer speak of God – either for good or evil – in the French army? Ministers of the religion! Does it need you to say mass before battle in order to carry off victory?

So stop looking upon yourselves as necessary and important citizens. It's a great step towards human perfectibility to have arrived at thinking that we can do without priests, and even their God; that not everything is in the Bible or the Gospels. Our poets aren't worth as much as the prophets, but our books of mathematics and physics have done harm to the holy writings. Nature's marvels take the place of miracles. Ministers of all religions! The naturalists will kill you

off, or will at least cut off your supplies. Instead of moping in your chairs and running the risk of dying of hunger at your Lord's holy table, believe us: leave behind a trade that can no longer either nourish or honor its master. Assume again the love of labor, embrace a useful and honest profession, and cease to be priests. Make yourselves men again, and we will only see in you our like and our brothers.

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