

Agobard of Lyons – Liber Apologeticus, pt. I

(first half of 833)

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Translated by

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- I. Hear this all peoples! Let the earth and her fullness hear, from the rising of the sun to its setting, from the north and from the sea; let all men learn and reflect at the same time on the fact that the sons of the lord and emperor Louis have been and are justly outraged and that they properly mean and plan to cleanse their father's palace of its filthy crimes and wicked factions and to cleanse the kingdom of its most bitter and turbulent disturbances! Their great desire is that brotherly faith and fraternal sincerity, worthy of God and welcomed by all loyal people, may persist among them and endure unbroken!
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- II. Therefore, when the aforesaid lord and emperor was quiet in his home and flourishing in his palace, he still kept his young wife [Judith] under his awe and, according to the Apostle, paid her the conjugal debt (Cf. I Cor. 7:3). But over the course of days when these things at first began to cool and then grow cold, on account of this, since what was licit had ceased, the woman turned openly to wantonness, nay rather turned to illicit things, and united with her very person those people suited for the purpose of committing obscenities, at first secretly, and then shamelessly. Only a few knew in the beginning, then many, and finally everyone in the palace, the kingdom, and to the ends of the earth. Young men laughed about this matter, old men grieved, but discerning men judged it all to be intolerable. And so the spirits of the emperor's sons were aroused by a reasonable zeal, seeing the stain on their father's bed, the filth of the palace, the confusion of the realm, and the name of the Franks shrouded, which until then had shined bright throughout the entire world. Rising up together as one and with dutiful accord for the correction of crimes, they met together; some men were apprehended, others fled, but the authoress of the evils was barred from the palace, confined to
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25 custody, removed of royal attire, [and] clothed in the habit of a nun. They returned to their father [his] quiet and a modicum of honor. When these good deeds were annulled through the excessive indulgence of [his] sons, the woman, as if a lawful Lady, was again recalled to the palace and placed over the councils and counselors by means of temptations of the flesh, criminal favors of lust, and indecent flatteries. Through her incitations the mind of the governor [Louis] was changed, and by his hard horns he began to incite his sons and throw the people into disorder. And thus was done a thing previously unheard-of to mortal men: not so much [that] those persecuted suffer persecution unjustly, than those [who were] unwilling and compelled acted as the persecutors, and not only acted
30 [as persecutors], but also suffered [persecution themselves], since they were compelled most violently to swear diverse and contradictory oaths.

III. Consider and see if such a thing was ever done! Allegiance was sworn to the older emperor [Louis the Pious], and then by his command [those who had previously sworn] swore the same thing to the younger emperor [Lothar]; and again by doing the same thing certain men swore to [his] brother the king [Louis the German] regarding the same things, and finally almost all were compelled to swear to the child [Charles the Bald]. And it does not even stop there. But, as if none of these things had happened, still more oath swearing was exacted. *“Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord?”* (Jer. 5:9) Shall the contempt of God and the defiling of His name remain unavenged? As it was written, *“Thou shalt not swear falsely, nor profane the name of thy Lord God.”* (Lev. 19:12) Behold, when an abyss of stupidities was revealed, what was gained? For when [our] armies ought to be sent against external peoples, and the emperor himself ought to fight against the barbaric nations, so that he might subjugate them to the faith for the purpose of extending the border of the kingdom of the faithful—
35 for thus does the universal church pray in those solemn prayers, on the days of the Lord’s Passion, on behalf of emperors: *“That God may make barbaric nations subject to them”*—now, on the contrary, every kingdom with its farthest reaches is crowded together into one place in its center, yet with discordant intent, since some are being prepared for shattering intestinal innards, others for pacifying—if it can be done—the most unjust discord. All those with a dutiful mind ought to weigh carefully that which is said in the aforementioned prayers, where it admonishes priests, saying, *“Let us
40 pray on behalf of our most Christian emperor, that our Lord and God may make all the barbaric nations set under that man for our perpetual peace.”* Therefore, the house of God, *“which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim. 3:15), prays that the barbarians be made subject to the most Christian emperor, not that his subjects be troubled and barbarized. For it is not [becoming] of the most Christian emperor to confound his subjects and divide the united.
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55 IV. O Lord God of heaven and earth, why have you allowed your most faithful and most Christian servant, our emperor, to come to such negligence that he does not wish to see the evils that threaten him from all sides? For he loves those hating him and hates those loving him. What [of the fact]—if it is true, and which many who are known to discern things clearly affirm—namely, that

60 there are at his side some who avidly hope for the death of his sons? If then [it is as] they have
discerned, [some] plan among themselves so that they may do violence to the emperor and divide
the kingdom among themselves. Whether this is true, they themselves know. But there are many
who do not doubt those about whom it is said press down upon the kingdom, so to speak, as if upon
65 a leaning wall and a tottering fence. Whence it is obvious that unless God will come to our assistance,
the kingdom will either be given to external peoples, or be divided among many tyrants, or perhaps
[handed over] to the Antichrist for whom it is being made ready. It is being made like this, since the
emperor, who ought to be undertaking just wars against barbarian kings, prepares to lead unjust ones
against his sons who love him.

70 V. Indeed, some say that the lady of the great palace, in addition to those things that are said about her
secrets and her avowals, plays childishly, even in the sight of some of the sacerdotal order, and with
the willing participation of many who ought to preach to the playful lady in accordance with the
model that the Apostle wrote regarding the selection of bishops, saying “[He should be] one that ruleth
75 well his own house, having his children in subjection with all chastity. But if a man know not how to rule his
own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:4–5) If she does not know how to
rule even herself in the manner of a queen, how will she have a concern for the honor of the palace,
or how will she exercise diligently the governance of the kingdom? They should also remind her of
that which is especially apropos of the sentence quoted above—insofar as it pertains to the outer
senses—which Holy Scripture states in another place: “A diligent woman is a crown to her husband; and
80 she that doth things worthy of confusion, is a rottenness in his bones” (Prov. 12:4); and again, “Roofs
dropping through in a cold day, and a contentious woman are alike. He that retaineth her, is as he that would
hold the wind, and shall call in the oil of his right hand” (Prov. 27:15–16). But perhaps someone may say,
“She is not quarrelsome, but agreeable and charming.” To which words should be replied, there is no
one more quarrelsome [than one] who wishes to provoke, exasperate, dishonor, and utterly estrange
85 good sons of a good father from their father. Since she, on account of her singular beauty, is said to
be loved heedlessly by a man, that which is again said in Scripture should have been impressed upon
them both: “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain. The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised”
(Prov. 31:30).

90 VI. Therefore, all those fearing and loving God, the king and the kingdom, peaceful society, those making
use of the things of this world, [and] those delighting in divine things now ought to bend their every
effort, so that the wound of iniquity may be squeezed out and the scar of health cover it up, without
an emission of blood, without the ruin of slaughter, without the bitterness of quarrels, without the
turbid and foul mixture of impure spirits, as it is said truly about the Church of this realm: “This is the
95 house of God and the gate of heaven (Gen. 28:17). And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt.
16:18). And again, “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save. He will rejoice over thee
with gladness, He will be silent in His love and He will be joyful over thee in praise. The triflers that were

departed from the law, I will gather together, because they were of thee; that thou mayest no more suffer reproach for them (Soph. 3:17–18). And let all the people say Amen, Amen, and a hymn to God!” (1 Par. 16:36)