

THE SONG AT THE SCAFFOLD

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A 10-WEEK BOOK STUDY



SESSION EIGHT: CHAPTER 8, PAGES 55-62

People to know:

Louis XVI – King of France at the dawn of the Revolution [1789], executed in 1793, the year the Reign of Terror began. His queen: Marie Antoinette.

Robespierre – the leader of the Reign of Terror and its victim in 1794

Jean-Jacques Rousseau – “noble savage” – his political theory was to throw off all law, Church and State, and revert to the natural state.

Voltaire – Frenchman living in and writing essays on England – made Reason his god, Enlightenment thinking – freedom from Church dogma and the tyranny of the King.

Pope Pius VI – decried the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, an attempt to subordinate the Roman Catholic Church to the secular French government. Many Catholics turned against the Revolution when this decree came out in 1790.

Madame Acarie – see the note at the bottom of page 16

Madame Louise of France – see the note at the bottom of page 17

CHAPTER EIGHT: _____

(HOW WOULD YOU TITLE THIS CHAPTER?)

The image at the beginning of the chapter shows pikes, a sword, and an overturned chalice whose contents spilled out upon the ground. What do you expect to occur in this chapter? Could the image have more than one interpretation?

- ❁ Ideas have consequences, a fact lost upon Marquis de la Force. The “freedom” he spouted on about he now came to experience as “imprisonment.” He failed to grasp Rousseau’s revolutionary impetus that the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the Church must be torn asunder and replaced with Reason and Revolution.
 - ✚ “Fear is a great emotion – not one of us was sufficiently afraid.” The writer refers to the September Massacre, aptly named as more than 1,600 violently lost their lives at the hands of the “bloodthirsty rabble” within a four-day period.
 - ✚ Apply this to our culture: Ought we to be more afraid of the direction in which our country is going? Consider the soaring crime rates where the police have been defunded.
 - ✚ The description of the September Massacre includes foils: opposing pairs such as “ghastly gay,” “horribly drunk,” and “orgy” when describing murder.
 - ✚ What does the author mean: “No individual person were present except the victims”?
- ❁ Mademoiselle de Sombreuil was forced to drain a dreadful chalice to save her father’s life. Her reaction was ecstasy that her father had been saved – but at what a cost! Consider the Catholic doctrine that the ends do not justify the means. Consider Christ’s warning: “Do not fear those who can kill the body. Fear Him who can throw both body and soul into Gehenna.” (Lk 12:4-5)
- ❁ What was Blanche’s reaction upon the chalice being compelled upon her? Her father already lay dead on the ground before her. The cup forcibly brought to her lips echoes Jesus’ cry “I thirst” and being offered gall: “And in My thirst, they gave Me vinegar to drink.” (Psalm 69:22)
 - ✚ Blanche was not “truly free” as she drained the chalice unwillingly.
 - ✚ The mob loved her for it – a nun forced to participate in that unholy communion; a daughter drinking aristocratic blood in the presence of her dead father, the Marquis; a symbol to the author of France drinking the blood of her children.
 - ✚ “Nothing bears greater testimony to the ruin of her personality than this terrible consideration accorded her.” She lived two years within her aristocratic home with the “September mothers.”
- ❁ The assassination of the King via guillotine shocked the convent and indicated to the sisters that their sacrifice had not been accepted by God. Why?

