



Pocket Philosophical Dictionary

VOLTAIRE

Musean Translation

MOUSEIA



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Musean Translation

Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

Mouseia's complete machine-assisted Musean translation of the 73 articles in the 1764 first edition, made directly from the French and reviewed against the scan-collated French text. The author's notes, quotations and verse are retained. Historical ethnic labels, including offensive terms, are retained from the 1764 text.

TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

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GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

The 1764 edition's historical claims and figures are retained, not silently corrected. Source and proofreading aids are documented in [corpus/SOURCES.md](#).

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A — Abraham



Abraham is one of those names famous in Asia Minor and Arabia, like Thoth among the Egyptians, the first Zoroaster in Persia, Hercules in Greece, Orpheus in Thrace, Odin among the northern nations, and so many others better known for their celebrity than for any well-established history. I speak here only of secular history; as for that of the Jews, our masters and our enemies, whom we believe and whom we detest, since the history of that people was plainly written by the Holy Spirit himself, we hold it in the regard we ought. Here we address only the Arabs. They boast of descending from Abraham through Ishmael; they believe this patriarch built Mecca and died in that city. The fact is that God has favored Ishmael's race infinitely more than Jacob's. Both races have indeed produced robbers, but the Arab robbers have been prodigiously superior to the Jewish ones. Jacob's descendants conquered only a very small country, which they lost; Ishmael's descendants conquered part of Asia, Europe, and Africa, established an empire vaster than the Romans', and drove the Jews from the caves they called the Promised Land.

Judging things only by examples from our modern histories, it would be rather difficult for Abraham to have fathered two such different nations. We are told he was born in Chaldea and was the son of a poor potter who earned his living making little earthen idols. It is hardly likely that this potter's son went to found Mecca three hundred leagues away, beneath the tropic, crossing impass-

able deserts. If he was a conqueror, he doubtless turned toward the fine country of Assyria; and if he was merely a poor man, as he is portrayed to us, he did not find kingdoms beyond his homeland.

Genesis relates that he was seventy-five when he left the country of Haran after the death of his father, Terah the potter. But the same Genesis also says that Terah fathered Abraham at seventy, that Terah lived to two hundred and five, and that Abraham did not leave Haran until after his father's death. By this reckoning Genesis itself makes it clear that Abraham was a hundred and thirty-five when he left Mesopotamia. From one idolatrous country he went to another, called Shechem, in Palestine. Why did he go there? Why leave the fertile banks of the Euphrates for a region as remote, barren, and stony as Shechem? The Chaldean language must have differed greatly from that of Shechem; it was no trading center. Shechem lies more than a hundred leagues from Chaldea, and deserts must be crossed to reach it. But God wanted him to make this journey; he wanted to show him the land his descendants would occupy several centuries later. The human mind has difficulty understanding the reasons for such a journey.

He has scarcely reached the little mountainous country of Shechem before famine drives him out. With his wife he goes to Egypt in search of a livelihood. Shechem is two hundred leagues from Memphis. Is it natural to seek grain so far away, in a country whose language one does not understand? These are strange journeys to undertake at nearly a hundred and forty years of age.

He brings to Memphis his wife Sarah, who was extremely young, almost a child beside him, being only sixty-five. Since she was very beautiful, he resolved to profit from her beauty. "Pretend you are my sister," he told her, "so that I may be treated well on your account." He would have done much better to say, "Pretend you are my daughter." The king fell in love with young Sarah and gave the supposed brother many sheep, oxen, male and female donkeys, camels, menservants, and maidservants. This proves that Egypt was already a very powerful and civilized kingdom, and consequently a very ancient one, and that brothers who came to offer their sisters to the kings of Memphis were magnificently rewarded.

Young Sarah was ninety, according to Scripture, when God promised her that Abraham, who was then a hundred and sixty, would give her a child within the year.

Abraham, who loved to travel, went into the dreadful desert of Kadesh with his pregnant wife, still young and still pretty. A king of that desert duly fell in love with Sarah, just as the king of Egypt had. The father of the faithful told the same lie as in Egypt: he passed his wife off as his sister, and once again gained sheep, oxen, menservants, and maidservants from the affair. One may say that this Abraham grew very rich through his wife. Commentators have produced a prodigious number of volumes to justify Abraham's conduct and reconcile the chronology. We must therefore refer the reader to those commentaries. They were all composed by subtle and delicate minds, excellent metaphysicians, people without prejudice, and not in the least pedants.

A — Ame



It would be a fine thing to see one's soul. *Know yourself* is an excellent precept, but God alone can put it into practice: who but he can know his own essence? We call soul whatever animates. We know scarcely more, thanks to the limits of our intelligence. Three quarters of humankind go no further and do not trouble themselves about the thinking being; the other quarter searches, but no one has found it or ever will.

Poor philosopher, you see a plant growing and say *growth*, or even *vegetative soul*. You observe that bodies possess and impart motion, and say *force*. You see your hunting dog learning his trade under your instruction and cry *instinct*, *sensitive soul*. You combine ideas and say *mind*.

But please, what do you mean by these words? This flower grows, but is there a real being called *growth*? This body pushes another, but does it contain a distinct being called *force*? This dog brings you a partridge, but is there a being called *instinct*? Would you not laugh at a reasoner—even one who had tutored Alexander—who told you: “All animals live; therefore within them is a being, a substantial form, which is life”?

If a tulip could speak and told you, “My growth and I are two beings plainly joined together,” would you not mock the tulip?

Let us first see what you know, and what you are certain of: that you walk with your feet, digest with your stomach, feel through your whole body, and think with your head. Let us see whether reason alone could have given you light

enough to conclude, without supernatural aid, that you have a soul.

The earliest philosophers, Chaldean or Egyptian, said: "There must be something within us that produces our thoughts. This something must be very subtle: it is a breath, it is fire, it is ether, it is a quintessence, it is a light image, it is an entelechy, it is a number, it is a harmony." Finally, according to the divine Plato, it is a compound of *the same* and *the other*. "It is atoms that think within us," said Epicurus after Democritus. But, my friend, how does an atom think? Admit that you know nothing about it.

The opinion we must undoubtedly hold is that the soul is an immaterial being. But surely you do not conceive what this immaterial being is? "No," the learned answer, "but we know its nature is to think." And how do you know that? "We know because it thinks." Learned gentlemen! I greatly fear you are as ignorant as Epicurus. A stone's nature is to fall, because it falls; but I ask you, what makes it fall?

"We know," they continue, "that a stone has no soul." Agreed; I believe that as you do. "We know that a denial and an affirmation are not divisible, are not parts of matter." I share your opinion. But matter, otherwise unknown to us, possesses qualities that are not material and are not divisible. It has the gravitation toward a center that God has given it. This gravitation has no parts and cannot be divided. Bodies' motive force is not a being composed of parts. The growth of organized bodies, their life, their instinct, are no more separate beings, divisible beings. You can no more cut a rose's growth, a horse's life, or a dog's instinct in two than you can cut a sensation, a denial, or an affirmation in two. Your fine argument drawn from thought's indivisibility therefore proves nothing at all.

What, then, do you call your soul? What idea do you have of it? By yourself, without revelation, you can admit nothing within you but a power, unknown to you, to feel and think.

Now tell me honestly: is this power to feel and think the same as the one that makes you digest and walk? You admit it is not, for your understanding may tell your stomach "digest" as much as it likes: the stomach will do nothing of

the kind if it is ill. In vain would your immaterial being order your feet to walk; if they have gout, they will stay where they are.

The Greeks clearly perceived that thought often had nothing to do with the working of our organs. They allowed an animal soul for these organs, and for thoughts a finer, subtler soul, an *intellect*.

Yet this soul of thought supervises the animal soul on a thousand occasions. The thinking soul orders its hands to grasp, and they grasp. It does not tell its heart to beat, its blood to flow, or its chyle to form: all that happens without it. Here are two souls very much at a loss, with very little mastery of their household.

Now this first animal soul certainly does not exist; it is nothing but the movement of your organs. Take care, human being: your feeble reason gives you no more proof that the other soul exists. You can know it only through faith. You were born, you live, act, think, wake, and sleep without knowing how. God gave you the faculty of thought as he gave you everything else; and had he not come, at the times appointed by providence, to teach you that you have an immaterial and immortal soul, you would have no proof of it.

Let us see the fine systems your philosophy has constructed about these souls.

One man says the human soul is part of God's own substance; another that it is part of the great whole; a third that it has been created from all eternity; a fourth that it is made, not created. Others assure us that God forms souls as they are needed and that they arrive at the instant of copulation. "They lodge in the seminal animalcules," one cries. "No," says another, "they go to live in the fallopian tubes." "You are all wrong," says a newcomer: "the soul waits six weeks for the fetus to form, then takes possession of the pineal gland; but if it encounters a false conception, it withdraws to await a better opportunity." The latest opinion is that it dwells in the corpus callosum. This is the post La Peyronie assigns it. One had to be chief surgeon to the king of France to dispose of the soul's lodgings in this way. Yet his corpus callosum has not enjoyed the same success as the surgeon himself.

St. Thomas, in question 75 and those following, says that the soul is a *form subsisting in itself*; that it is whole in the whole; that its essence differs from its power; that there are three *vegetative* souls, namely the *nutritive, augmentative, and generative*; that the memory of spiritual things is spiritual and the memory of bodily things bodily; that the rational soul is a form *immaterial in its operations and material in its being*. St. Thomas wrote two thousand pages of this force and clarity; thus he is the angel of the schools.

No fewer systems have been devised about how this soul will feel after leaving the body through which it felt: how it will hear without ears, smell without a nose, and touch without hands; what body it will afterward resume, whether the one it had at two or at eighty; how the self, the identity of the same person, will persist; how the soul of a man who became an imbecile at fifteen and died an imbecile at seventy will pick up the thread of ideas it had at puberty; by what clever maneuver a soul whose leg was cut off in Europe and whose arm was lost in America will recover that leg and arm, which, transformed into vegetables, will have passed into some other animal's blood. There would be no end to an account of all the extravagances this poor human soul has imagined about itself.

What is most remarkable is that the laws of God's people say not a word about the soul's spirituality and immortality: nothing in the Decalogue, nothing in Leviticus or Deuteronomy.

It is quite certain, it is beyond doubt, that nowhere does Moses offer the Jews rewards or punishments in another life; that he never speaks to them of their souls' immortality; that he holds out no hope of heaven and threatens them with no hell. Everything concerns this world.

Before dying he tells them in his Deuteronomy:

"If, after having children and grandchildren, you transgress, you will be rooted out of the land and reduced to a small number among the nations."

"I am a jealous God, who punish the fathers' iniquity to the third and fourth generation."

"Honor father and mother so that you may live long."

"You will have food and never lack it."

“If you follow foreign gods, you will be destroyed...”

“If you obey, you will have rain in spring and autumn, wheat, oil, wine, and hay for your animals, so that you may eat and be full.”

“Put these words in your hearts, in your hands, between your eyes; write them on your doors, so that your days may be multiplied.”

“Do what I command you, without adding or taking anything away.”

“If a prophet arises who foretells extraordinary things, if his prediction is true and what he said comes to pass, and if he tells you, ‘Come, let us follow foreign gods’...kill him at once, and let all the people strike after you.”

“When the Lord has delivered the nations into your hands, slaughter everyone without sparing a single man, and have pity on no one.”

“Do not eat unclean birds, such as the eagle, the griffon, the ixion, and so forth.”

“Do not eat animals that chew the cud but do not have a divided hoof, such as the camel, hare, porcupine, and so forth.”

“By observing all these ordinances, you will be blessed in the city and in the fields; the fruit of your womb, your land, and your livestock will be blessed...”

“If you do not keep all the ordinances and all the ceremonies, you will be cursed in the city and in the fields...you will suffer famine and poverty; you will die of misery, cold, poverty, and fever; you will have mange, scabies, and fistulas...you will have ulcers on your knees and calves.”

“The foreigner will lend to you at interest, and you will not lend to him at interest...because you have not served the Lord.”

“And you will eat the fruit of your womb, and the flesh of your sons and daughters, and so forth.”

It is clear that all these promises and threats concern this world alone, and that not a word is to be found about the soul’s immortality and the life to come.

Several illustrious commentators have believed Moses was perfectly instructed in these two great doctrines. They prove it by the words of Jacob, who, believing his son had been devoured by beasts, said in his grief: *I shall go down with my son into the pit; into the lower world, into hell*—that is, I shall die, since my son is dead.

They prove it again through passages in Isaiah and Ezekiel. But the Hebrews to whom Moses spoke could have read neither Ezekiel nor Isaiah, who came only several centuries later.

It is quite useless to dispute Moses's secret beliefs. The fact is that in his public laws he never spoke of a life to come, and that he confines all punishments and rewards to the present time. If he knew of the future life, why did he not expressly set out this great doctrine? And if he did not know of it, what was the object of his mission? Several great personages ask this question. They answer that the master of Moses and of all men reserved the right to explain, in his own time, a doctrine the Jews could not understand while they were in the desert.

If Moses had proclaimed the doctrine of the soul's immortality, a great school of Jews would not always have opposed it. This great school of Sadducees would not have been authorized within the state. Sadducees would not have held its highest offices, nor would high priests have been chosen from their number.

It seems that only after Alexandria's foundation did the Jews divide into three sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. The historian Josephus, who was a Pharisee, tells us in book thirteen of his *Antiquities* that the Pharisees believed in the transmigration of souls. The Sadducees believed the soul perished with the body. The Essenes, Josephus also says, held souls to be immortal. According to them, souls descended in airy form into bodies from the highest region of the air. A violent attraction bears them back there; and after death those that belonged to good people dwell beyond the Ocean, in a country with neither heat nor cold, wind nor rain. The souls of the wicked go to a climate entirely opposite. Such was the theology of the Jews.

He who alone was to instruct all men came to condemn these three sects. But without him we could never have known anything about our soul, since the philosophers never had any definite idea of it, and Moses—the world's only true lawgiver before our own, Moses who spoke with God face to face and saw him only from behind—left men in profound ignorance on this great matter. Only for seventeen hundred years, then, have we been certain of the soul's existence and immortality.

Cicero had only doubts. His grandson and granddaughter could learn the truth from the first Galileans who came to Rome.

But before that time, and ever since throughout the rest of the earth where the apostles did not penetrate, everyone had to say to his soul: "Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you do? Where are you going? You are something I cannot name, thinking and feeling; and even if you felt and thought for a hundred billion years, your own understanding would never teach you anything more without a God's assistance."

Human being! This God gave you understanding to guide your conduct well, not to penetrate the essence of the things he created.

A — Amitié



It is a tacit contract between two sensitive and virtuous people. I say *sensitive*, for a monk or a hermit may be free of wickedness and live without knowing friendship. I say *virtuous*, for the wicked have only accomplices; pleasure seekers have companions in debauchery; the self-interested have associates; politicians gather factionalists; the common run of idle people have connections; princes have courtiers; only the virtuous have friends. Cethegus was Catiline's accomplice, and Maecenas Octavian's courtier; but Cicero was Atticus's friend.

What does this contract between two tender and honest souls entail? Its obligations are stronger or weaker according to their degree of feeling, the number of services rendered, and so forth.

Enthusiasm for friendship was stronger among the Greeks and Arabs than among us. The tales those peoples imagined about friendship are admirable. We have none to match them; we are a little dry in everything.

Among the Greeks, friendship was a matter of religion and law. The Thebans had their regiment of lovers. A fine regiment! Some have taken it for a regiment of sodomites. They are mistaken: that is to take the incidental for the essential. Friendship among the Greeks was prescribed by law and religion. Pederasty was unfortunately tolerated by custom; shameful abuses must not be charged against the law. We shall return to this subject.

A — Amour



Love is the same for all. Here we must turn to the physical: it is nature's fabric, embroidered by imagination. Do you want some idea of love? Watch the sparrows in your garden, watch your pigeons, contemplate the bull brought to your heifer. Look at that proud horse led by two of his grooms to the peaceful mare who awaits him and turns her tail aside to receive him. See how his eyes sparkle; hear his neighing; contemplate those leaps, those prancing steps, those pricked ears, that mouth opening in little convulsions, those swelling nostrils and the fiery breath issuing from them, that mane rising and floating, that impetuous movement as he flings himself upon the object nature has destined for him. But do not be jealous. Think of humankind's advantages: in love they compensate for all those nature has given animals—strength, beauty, agility, speed.

There are even animals that know no sexual enjoyment. Scaled fish are denied this sweetness. The female casts millions of eggs upon the mud; the male, happening upon them, passes over and fertilizes them with his seed, without troubling himself about which female they belong to.

Most animals that mate taste pleasure through a single sense, and once that appetite is satisfied, everything is extinguished. No animal but you knows embraces. Your whole body is sensitive; your lips above all enjoy a pleasure nothing tires, and that pleasure belongs to your species alone. Finally, you can

give yourself to love at any time, while animals have only an appointed season. If you reflect on these privileges, you will say with the Earl of Rochester: "In a land of atheists, love would make people worship the Divinity."

Since human beings have received the gift of perfecting everything nature grants them, they have perfected love. Cleanliness and care of oneself, by making the skin more delicate, increase the pleasure of touch; attention to health makes the organs of pleasure more sensitive.

All other feelings then enter into love, like metals alloyed with gold. Friendship and esteem lend their aid; the gifts of body and mind are further chains.

*For sometimes a woman herself, by her actions,
Her yielding ways and the clean care of her body,
Makes a man readily grow used to life with her.*

Lucrèce Liv. V.

Self-love above all tightens these bonds. We congratulate ourselves on our choice, and a crowd of illusions ornaments this work whose foundations nature laid.

Such are your advantages over animals. But if you taste so many pleasures unknown to them, how many sorrows too, of which beasts have no idea! What is dreadful for you is that, across three quarters of the earth, nature has poisoned the pleasures of love and the springs of life with a terrible disease to which man alone is subject, and which infects the organs of generation in him alone!

This plague is not like so many other diseases that follow from our excesses. Debauchery did not introduce it into the world. The Phrynes, Laises, Floras, and Messalinas were not attacked by it. It arose in islands where people lived in innocence, and from there spread through the Old World.

If nature could ever be accused of despising her own work, contradicting her plan, acting against her own purposes, it is here. Is this the best of possible worlds? What! If Caesar, Antony, and Octavian did not have this disease, was it

not possible that it should not kill Francis I? “No,” we are told, “things were thus ordered for the best.” I am willing to believe it, but it is hard.

A — Amour nommé Socratique



How has it come about that a vice which, if universal, would destroy humankind—an infamous outrage against nature—should nevertheless be so natural? It seems the furthest degree of deliberate corruption, yet it commonly falls to those who have not had time to be corrupted. It has entered entirely fresh hearts that have known neither ambition, fraud, nor the thirst for riches. It is blind youth that, through a confused instinct, rushes into this disorder on emerging from childhood.

The attraction of the two sexes toward each other appears early. Yet whatever has been said about African women and the women of southern Asia, this inclination is generally much stronger in the man than in the woman. It is a law nature has established for all animals: the male always makes the advance upon the female.

Young males of our species, brought up together, feeling this power that nature is beginning to unfold within them and finding no natural object for their instinct, turn toward what resembles it. Often a boy, in the freshness of his complexion, the brightness of his coloring, and the softness of his eyes, resembles a beautiful girl for two or three years. If he is loved, it is because nature

makes a mistake. One pays homage to the female sex by attaching oneself to what possesses its beauties; when age has erased the resemblance, the mistake ends.

*And before manhood,
To pluck life's brief spring and its earliest flowers.*

It is well known that this mistake of nature is much more common in mild climates than amid the ice of the North, because the blood is more inflamed and opportunity more frequent. Thus what seems only a weakness in young Alcibiades is a disgusting abomination in a Dutch sailor or a Muscovite army vendor.

I cannot bear the claim that the Greeks authorized this license. People cite Solon the lawgiver because he said in two bad verses:

You will cherish a handsome boy,
As long as his chin has no beard.

But honestly, was Solon a lawgiver when he composed those two ridiculous lines? He was young then; when the libertine had become wise, he did not place such infamy among the republic's laws. It would be like accusing Theodore Beza of preaching pederasty in his church because in his youth he wrote verses for young Candidus and said:

I embrace him and her.

People misuse Plutarch's text, where, amid his ramblings in the dialogue on love, he makes one speaker say that women are unworthy of true love. But another speaker takes the women's side, as he ought.

It is certain, as far as knowledge of antiquity can be certain, that Socratic love was not an infamous love. The word love has misled people. Those called a young man's lovers were precisely what the companions of our princes are among us, what pages of honor were: young people attached to a distinguished

child's education, sharing the same studies and the same military exercises. It was a warlike and sacred institution, abused as night festivals and orgiastic rites were abused.

The troop of lovers instituted by Laius was an invincible troop of young warriors, bound by oath to give their lives for one another. It was the finest thing ancient discipline ever possessed.

Sextus Empiricus and others may say all they please that the laws of Persia recommended pederasty. Let them quote the law's text; let them produce the Persians' code. Even if they produced it, I would still not believe them. I would say the thing is untrue because it is impossible. No, it is not in human nature to make a law contradicting and outraging nature, a law that would annihilate humankind if literally observed. People have mistaken shameful practices tolerated in a country for that country's laws. Sextus Empiricus, who doubted everything, should certainly have doubted this jurisprudence. If he lived in our day and saw two or three young Jesuits abusing some schoolboys, would he have the right to say that the constitutions of Ignatius of Loyola permitted this game?

Love of boys was so common in Rome that no one thought of punishing this folly, into which everyone plunged headlong. Octavian Augustus, that murderous, debauched coward who dared exile Ovid, thought it perfectly proper for Virgil to sing of Alexis and Horace to write little odes for Ligurinus. But the ancient Scantinian law prohibiting pederasty always remained in force. The emperor Philip enforced it again and drove from Rome the young boys engaged in that trade. In short, I do not believe there has ever been a civilized nation that made laws against morality.

A — Amour-propre



A beggar from the neighborhood of Madrid asked nobly for alms. A passerby said to him: “Are you not ashamed to ply this infamous trade when you can work?” “Sir,” the beggar replied, “I ask you for money, not advice.” Then he turned his back, preserving all his Castilian dignity. This lord was a proud beggar indeed: his vanity took offense at very little. He begged out of love for himself, and another form of that same self-love made him refuse a reprimand.

A missionary traveling in India met a fakir loaded with chains, naked as a monkey, lying on his belly and having himself whipped for the sins of his fellow Indians, who gave him a few local liards. “What renunciation of self!” said one of the spectators. “Renunciation of myself?” the fakir retorted. “Learn that I have myself flogged in this world only to pay you back in the next, when you will be horses and I the rider.”

Those who have said that love of ourselves is the foundation of all our feelings and actions were therefore very right—in India, Spain, and throughout the inhabited earth. Just as no one writes to prove to people that they have faces, there is no need to prove that they have self-love. This self-love is the instrument of our preservation. It resembles the instrument that perpetuates the species: it is necessary, it is dear to us, it gives us pleasure, and it must be concealed.

A — Ange



Angel: in Greek, *messenger*. We shall be scarcely better informed on learning that the Persians had Peris, the Hebrews Malacs, and the Greeks their Demonoi.

But perhaps this will teach us more: one of humankind's earliest ideas has always been to place intermediary beings between the Divinity and ourselves. These are the demons, the spirits invented by antiquity. Man has always made the gods in his own image. Princes were seen communicating their orders through messengers; therefore the Divinity too sends couriers. Mercury and Iris were couriers, messengers.

The Hebrews, the only people led by the Divinity himself, did not at first give names to the angels God finally deigned to send them. They borrowed the Chaldeans' names when the Jewish nation was captive in Babylonia. Michael and Gabriel are named for the first time by Daniel, a slave among those peoples. The Jew Tobit, who lived in Nineveh, knew the angel Raphael, who traveled with Tobit's son to help recover money owed by the Jew Gabael.

In the laws of the Jews—that is, in Leviticus and Deuteronomy—there is not the slightest mention of angels' existence, much less of their worship. Accordingly, the Sadducees did not believe in angels.

But Jewish histories speak of them a great deal. These angels had bodies. They had wings on their backs, as the Gentiles imagined Mercury had them on his heels; sometimes they hid their wings beneath their clothing. How could they

have been without bodies, since they drank and ate, and the inhabitants of Sodom wished to commit the sin of pederasty with the angels who visited Lot? According to Ben Maimon, ancient Jewish tradition admits ten ranks, ten orders of angels. 1. The Chaios Acodesh, pure, holy. 2. The Ofanim, swift. 3. The Oralim, the strong. 4. The Chasmalim, flames. 5. The Seraphim, sparks. 6. The Malachim, angels, messengers, envoys. 7. The Eloim, gods or judges. 8. The Ben Eloim, children of the gods. 9. Cherubim, images. 10. Ychim, the living.

The story of the angels' fall is not found in the books of Moses. The first evidence cited for it is that of the prophet Isaiah, who, addressing the king of Babylon, cries: "What has become of the collector of tribute? The firs and cedars rejoice at his fall. How have you fallen from heaven, Helel, morning star?" This *Helel* was translated by the Latin word *Lucifer*. Then, through an allegorical interpretation, the name Lucifer was given to the prince of angels who made war in heaven. Finally this name, meaning light-bearer and dawn, became the Devil's name.

The Christian religion is founded on the angels' fall. Those who rebelled were cast from the spheres they inhabited into hell at the earth's center and became devils. A devil tempted Eve in the form of a serpent and damned humankind. Jesus came to redeem humankind and triumph over the Devil, who still tempts us. Yet this fundamental tradition is found only in the apocryphal book of Noah, and even there it appears in a form entirely different from the received tradition.

St. Augustine, in his 109th letter, has no difficulty attributing fine and agile bodies to both good and bad angels. Pope Gregory II reduced the ten choirs of angels recognized by the Jews to nine choirs, nine hierarchies or orders. These are the Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Archangels, and finally the Angels, who give their name to the other eight hierarchies.

The Jews had two cherubim in the temple, each with two heads, one an ox's and the other an eagle's, and six wings. Today we paint them as a flying head with two little wings below the ears. We paint angels and archangels as young

people with two wings on their backs. As for Thrones and Dominions, no one has yet thought of painting them.

St. Thomas, in question 108, article two, says the Thrones are as near God as the Cherubim and Seraphim because God sits upon them. Scotus counted a thousand million angels. The ancient mythology of good and bad spirits having passed from the East into Greece and Rome, we consecrated this opinion by allowing every man a good angel and a bad one, one helping him and the other harming him from birth to death. But we do not yet know whether these good and bad angels continually pass from one post to another, or whether others relieve them. On this point consult St. Thomas's *Summa*.

We do not know precisely where the angels stay: whether in the air, in the void, or on the planets. God has not wished us to be informed.

A — Antropophages



We have spoken of love. It is hard to pass from people who kiss one another to people who eat one another. It is only too true that there have been cannibals. We found them in America; perhaps some remain. The Cyclopes were not the only people in antiquity who sometimes fed on human flesh. Juvenal relates that among the Egyptians—that people so wise, so renowned for its laws, so pious that it worshiped crocodiles and onions—the Tentyrites ate an enemy who had fallen into their hands. He does not tell this tale on hearsay: the crime was committed almost before his eyes. He was then in Egypt, not far from Tentyra. On this occasion he cites the Gascons and Saguntines, who once fed on the flesh of their countrymen.

In 1725 four savages from the Mississippi were brought to Fontainebleau. I had the honor of conversing with them. Among them was a lady of that country, whom I asked whether she had eaten human beings. She answered quite simply that she had. I appeared a little scandalized. She excused herself by saying it was better to eat one's dead enemy than leave him to be devoured by beasts, and that the victors deserved first choice. In pitched battles or otherwise, we kill our neighbors; for the vilest reward, we work in the kitchen of ravens and worms. There lies the horror, there lies the crime. Once one is killed, what does it matter whether a soldier eats one, or a raven and a dog?

We respect the dead more than the living. We ought to have respected both. The nations called civilized were right not to put their defeated enemies on the spit: if eating one's neighbors were permitted, people would soon eat their fellow citizens, which would be a great inconvenience to the social virtues. But civilized nations have not always been so; all were savage for a long time. Through the countless upheavals this globe has undergone, humankind has sometimes been numerous and sometimes very scarce. What now happens to elephants, lions, and tigers, whose numbers have greatly diminished, has happened to human beings. When a region was sparsely inhabited, its people had few arts; they were hunters. The habit of feeding on what they had killed easily led them to treat their enemies like their deer and boars. Superstition caused human victims to be sacrificed; necessity caused them to be eaten.

Which is the greater crime: to assemble piously and plunge a knife into the heart of a young girl adorned with ribbons in honor of the Divinity, or to eat a vile man one has killed in self-defense?

Yet we have far more examples of girls and boys sacrificed than of girls and boys eaten. Almost every known nation has sacrificed boys and girls. The Jews sacrificed them. This was called anathema; it was a true sacrifice, and chapter 29 of Leviticus commands that the living souls dedicated by vow should not be spared. But nowhere are the Jews commanded to eat them; they are only threatened with it. Moses, as we have seen, tells the Jews that if they do not observe the ceremonies, not only will they have scabies, but mothers will eat their children. It is true that in Ezekiel's time the Jews must have been accustomed to eating human flesh, for he predicts in chapter 39 that God will make them eat not only their enemies' horses but their riders and other warriors as well. This is explicit. Indeed, why should the Jews not have been cannibals? That would have been the only thing lacking for God's people to be the most abominable people on earth.

I have read, in anecdotes of English history from Cromwell's time, that a Dublin candlemaker sold excellent candles made from English people's fat. Some time afterward a customer complained that her candles were no longer so

good. “Alas!” she said, “we have run short of English people this month.” I ask who was more culpable: those who slaughtered the English, or this woman who made candles from their tallow?

A — Apis



Was the ox Apis worshiped at Memphis as a god, as a symbol, or as an ox? We may believe the fanatics saw a god in him, the wise a mere symbol, and the foolish populace worshiped the ox. Was Cambyses right, after conquering Egypt, to kill this ox with his own hand? Why not? He showed the fools that their god could be put on the spit without nature taking up arms to avenge the sacrilege. The Egyptians have been much praised. I know scarcely any people more contemptible. There must always have been a fundamental vice in their character and government that made them vile slaves. I grant that in almost unknown times they conquered the earth. But in historical times they were subdued by everyone willing to take the trouble: the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mamluks, Turks—in short, by everyone except our crusaders, since those were even more ill-advised than the Egyptians were cowardly. It was the Mamluk corps that defeated the French. Perhaps there are only two tolerable things about this nation: first, that those who worshiped an ox never wished to force those who worshiped a monkey to change religion; second, that they have always hatched chickens in ovens.

People praise their pyramids, but these are monuments of an enslaved people. The entire nation must have been made to work on them; otherwise those ugly masses could never have been raised. What purpose did they serve? To preserve in a little chamber the mummy of some prince, governor, or administrator,

whose soul was to restore him to life after a thousand years. But if they hoped for this resurrection of bodies, why remove their brains before embalming them? Were the Egyptians to rise again without brains?

A — Apocalypse



Justin Martyr, writing about the year 170 of our era, is the first to have spoken of Revelation. He attributes it to the apostle John the Evangelist in his dialogue with Trypho. This Jew asks whether he believes Jerusalem will one day be restored. Justin answers that he believes so, along with all Christians who think rightly. *There was among us*, he says, *a certain person named John, one of Jesus's twelve apostles; he predicted that the faithful would spend a thousand years in Jerusalem.*

This thousand-year reign was an opinion long received among Christians. The period enjoyed great credit among the Gentiles. Egyptian souls resumed their bodies after a thousand years; the souls in Virgil's purgatory underwent trials for the same length of time, *and for a thousand years*. The new Jerusalem of a thousand years was to have twelve gates in memory of the twelve apostles. Its form was to be square; its length, width, and height were to be twelve thousand stadia—that is, five hundred leagues—so that its houses would also have to be five hundred leagues high. Living on the top floor would have been rather disagreeable; but that, after all, is what Revelation says in chapter 21.

If Justin was the first to attribute Revelation to St. John, some have rejected his testimony because, in that same dialogue with the Jew Trypho, he says that according to the apostles' account Jesus Christ, on entering the Jordan, made the river's waters boil and set them aflame. Yet this appears in none of the apostles' writings.

The same St. Justin confidently cites the Sibyls' oracles. Furthermore, he claims to have seen the remains of the little houses in which the seventy-two interpreters were confined on Pharos in Egypt in Herod's time. The testimony of a man who had the misfortune to see those little houses seems to suggest that the author himself ought to have been confined in them.

St. Irenaeus, who comes after him and also believed in the thousand-year reign, says he learned from an old man that St. John wrote Revelation. But St. Irenaeus has been reproached for writing that there ought to be only four Gospels because there are only four parts of the world, four cardinal winds, and because Ezekiel saw only four animals. He calls this reasoning a demonstration. We must admit that Irenaeus's manner of demonstrating is fully equal to Justin's manner of seeing.

Clement of Alexandria, in his *Electa*, speaks only of an *Apocalypse of St. Peter*, which was highly esteemed. Tertullian, a great champion of the thousand-year reign, not only asserts that St. John predicted this resurrection and this reign of a thousand years in Jerusalem; he maintains that this Jerusalem was already beginning to take shape in the air. All the Christians in Palestine, and even the pagans, had seen it for forty consecutive days at the end of the night. Unfortunately, the city vanished as soon as daylight came.

Origen, in his preface to the Gospel of St. John and in his homilies, cites Revelation's oracles; but he equally cites the Sibyls' oracles. St. Dionysius of Alexandria, however, writing about the middle of the third century, says in one of his fragments preserved by Eusebius that almost all the theologians rejected Revelation as a book devoid of reason. It was not composed by St. John, but by someone named Cerinthus, who borrowed a great name to lend weight to his reveries.

The Council of Laodicea, held in 360, did not count Revelation among the canonical books. It was very strange that Laodicea, a church to which Revelation was addressed, should reject a treasure intended for itself; and that the bishop of Ephesus, who attended the council, should also reject this book by St. John, who was buried in Ephesus.

Everyone could see that St. John was constantly moving in his grave and continually making the earth rise and fall. Yet the very people who were certain St. John was not quite dead were also certain he had not written Revelation. But the champions of the thousand-year reign were unshakable in their opinion. Sulpicius Severus, in book 9 of his *Sacred History*, calls those who did not accept Revelation mad and impious. Finally, after many doubts and councils opposing councils, Sulpicius Severus's opinion prevailed. The matter having been clarified, the Church decided that Revelation was indisputably St. John's. Thus there is no appeal.

Every Christian communion has applied this book's prophecies to itself. The English found Great Britain's revolutions in it; the Lutherans, Germany's troubles; the Reformed of France, Charles IX's reign and Catherine de' Medici's regency. They are all equally right. Bossuet and Newton both commented on Revelation. But on balance, the eloquent declamations of the one and the sublime discoveries of the other have done them more honor than their commentaries.

A — Athée, Athéisme



Formerly, whoever held a secret in some art ran the risk of passing for a sorcerer; every new sect was accused of cutting children's throats in its mysteries; and every philosopher who departed from the jargon of the schools was accused of atheism by fanatics and by scoundrels, and condemned by fools.

Does Anaxagoras dare to maintain that the sun is not driven by Apollo mounted on a four-horse chariot? He is called an atheist, and he is forced to flee.

Aristotle is accused of atheism by a priest, and, unable to have his accuser punished, he withdraws to Chalcis. But the death of Socrates is the most hateful thing in the history of Greece.

Aristophanes (that man whom the commentators admire because he was Greek, never reflecting that Socrates was Greek too) was the first who accustomed the Athenians to look on Socrates as an atheist.

That comic poet, who is neither comic nor a poet, would not have been admitted among us to put on farces at the Saint-Laurent fair; he seems to me far baser and more contemptible than Plutarch paints him. Here is what the wise Plutarch says of that buffoon: "The language of Aristophanes smacks of the miserable charlatan; its sallies are the lowest and most disgusting; it is not even funny to the common people, and it is unbearable to people of judgment and honor; one cannot endure his arrogance, and honest men detest his malice." This, then, to say it in passing, is the Tabarin whom Madame Dacier, an

admirer of Socrates, dares to admire. This is the man who long beforehand prepared the poison with which infamous judges put to death the most virtuous man in Greece.

The tanners, the cobblers and the seamstresses of Athens applauded a farce in which Socrates was shown raised in the air in a basket, announcing that there was no God, and boasting of having stolen a cloak while teaching philosophy. A whole people, whose bad government allowed such infamous license, well deserved what happened to it: to become the slave of the Romans, and to be so today of the Turks.

Let us cross the whole span of time between the Roman republic and ourselves. The Romans, far wiser than the Greeks, never persecuted any philosopher for his opinions. It is not so with the barbarous peoples who succeeded the Roman Empire. As soon as the Emperor Frederick II quarrels with the popes, he is accused of being an atheist, and of being the author of the book of the three impostors, together with his chancellor de Vineis.

Does our great chancellor de l'Hôpital speak out against persecution? He is at once accused of atheism. *A learned man, but a true atheist.*¹ A Jesuit, as far beneath Aristophanes as Aristophanes is beneath Homer, a wretch whose name has become ridiculous even among fanatics, the Jesuit Garasse, in a word, finds *atheists* everywhere; that is what he calls all those against whom he rages. He calls Theodore Beza an atheist; it is he who misled the public about Vanini. The unhappy end of Vanini does not stir us to indignation and pity as that of Socrates does, because Vanini was merely a foreign pedant without merit; but after all, Vanini was not an atheist, as has been claimed; he was precisely the opposite.

He was a poor Neapolitan priest, a preacher and theologian by trade; an incessant disputant on quiddities and universals; *and whether a chimera buzzing in a void can devour second intentions*. But otherwise there was not a trace of atheism in him. His notion of God is of the soundest and most approved theology: "God is his principle and his end, father of the one and of the other, and needing neither the one nor the other; eternal, without being in time; present every-

where without being in any place. For him there is neither past nor future; he is everywhere, and outside of everything; governing all, and having created all; immutable, infinite without parts; his power is his will, etc.”

Vanini prided himself on renewing that fine sentiment of Plato, embraced by Averroes, that God had created a chain of beings from the smallest to the greatest, whose last link is fastened to his eternal throne; an idea, in truth, more sublime than true, but as far from atheism as being is from nothingness.

He traveled to make his fortune and to dispute; but unhappily disputation is the road opposite to fortune; one makes as many irreconcilable enemies as one finds scholars or pedants against whom one argues. There was no other source of Vanini’s misfortune; his heat and his coarseness in disputation earned him the hatred of certain theologians; and having had a quarrel with a man named Francon or Franconi, this Francon, a friend of his enemies, did not fail to accuse him of being an atheist teaching atheism.

This Francon, or Franconi, helped by a few witnesses, had the barbarity to maintain at the confrontation what he had advanced. Vanini, on the stool of the accused, questioned about what he thought of the existence of God, answered that he adored with the church a God in three persons. Having taken a straw from the ground: “This straw is enough,” he said, “to prove that there is a creator.” Then he pronounced a very fine discourse on vegetation and movement, and on the necessity of a supreme being, without whom there would be neither movement nor vegetation.

President Grammont, who was then at Toulouse, reports this discourse in his history of France, today so forgotten; and this same Grammont, by an inconceivable prejudice, maintains that Vanini said all this *out of vanity, or out of fear, rather than from inner conviction*.

On what can this rash and atrocious judgment of President Grammont be founded? It is evident that on Vanini’s answer he ought to have been absolved of the accusation of atheism. But what happened? This unhappy foreign priest also dabbled in medicine; a large live toad was found, which he kept at home in a vase full of water; he was at once accused of being a sorcerer. It was maintained that this toad was the God he adored; an impious meaning was given to

several passages of his books, which is very easy and very common, by taking objections for answers, by malignly interpreting some dubious phrase, by poisoning an innocent expression. At last the faction that oppressed him wrung from the judges the decree condemning this wretch to death.

To justify this death it was necessary to accuse the unfortunate man of the most frightful thing. The Minim friar, and a very minimal one, Mersenne carried madness so far as to print that Vanini had set out from Naples with twelve of his apostles to go and convert all nations to atheism. How pitiful! How could a poor priest have had twelve men in his pay? How could he have persuaded twelve Neapolitans to travel at great expense to spread everywhere this abominable and revolting doctrine at the risk of their lives? Would a king be powerful enough to pay twelve preachers of atheism? No one before Father Mersenne had advanced so enormous an absurdity. But after him it has been repeated, the journals have been infected with it, the historical dictionaries; and the world, which loves the extraordinary, has believed this fable without examination.

Bayle himself, in his miscellaneous thoughts, speaks of Vanini as an atheist; he uses this example to support his paradox that *a society of atheists can subsist*; he asserts that Vanini was a man of very regular morals, and that he was the martyr of his philosophical opinion. He is equally mistaken on both points. The priest Vanini tells us in his dialogues written in imitation of Erasmus that he had had a mistress named Isabelle. He was free in his writings as in his conduct; but he was not an atheist.

A century after his death, the learned La Croze, and the one who took the name of *Philaletes*, sought to vindicate him; but as no one takes an interest in the memory of an unhappy Neapolitan, a very bad author, hardly anyone reads these apologies.

The Jesuit Hardouin, more learned than Garasse and no less rash, accuses such men as Descartes, Arnauld, Pascal, Nicole, and Malebranche of atheism in his book *Athei detecti*; fortunately they did not have the fate of Vanini.

From all these facts I pass to the moral question raised by Bayle, namely *whether a society of atheists could subsist*. Let us note first on this article what an enormous contradiction there is in men when they dispute; those who rose against

Bayle's opinion with the most violence, those who denied, with the most insults, the possibility of a society of atheists, have since maintained with the same intrepidity that atheism is the religion of the government of China.

They were certainly very much mistaken about the Chinese government; they had only to read the edicts of the emperors of that vast country; they would have seen that those edicts are sermons, and that everywhere in them there is talk of the supreme being, governor, avenger and rewarder.

But at the same time they were no less mistaken about the impossibility of a society of atheists; and I do not know how Mr. Bayle could have forgotten a striking example that might have made his cause victorious.

Why does a society of atheists seem impossible? It is because it is judged that men who had no restraint could never live together; that laws can do nothing against secret crimes; that there must be a vengeful God who punishes in this world or in the next the wicked who escape human justice.

The laws of Moses, it is true, did not teach a life to come, did not threaten punishments after death, did not teach the first Jews the immortality of the soul; but the Jews, far from being atheists, far from believing they escaped divine vengeance, were the most religious of all men. Not only did they believe in the existence of an eternal God, but they believed him always present among them; they trembled at being punished in themselves, in their wives, in their children, in their posterity, to the fourth generation; and this restraint was very powerful. But among the gentiles, several sects had no restraint at all; the skeptics doubted everything; the Academics suspended their judgment on everything; the Epicureans were persuaded that the Divinity could not involve itself in the affairs of men; and at bottom they admitted no divinity. They were convinced that the soul is not a substance but a faculty that is born and perishes with the body; consequently they had no yoke but that of morals and honor. The Roman senators and knights were true atheists; for the gods did not exist for men who neither feared nor hoped for anything from them. The Roman senate, then, was really an assembly of atheists in the time of Caesar and of Cicero.

That great orator, in his speech for Cluentius, says to the whole assembled senate: *What harm does death do him? We reject all the foolish fables of the underworld; what, then, has death taken from him?* Nothing but the sensation of pain.

Does not Caesar, Catiline's friend, wishing to save his friend's life against this same Cicero, object that putting a criminal to death is no punishment, that death *is nothing*, that it is merely the end of our ills, a moment more happy than fatal? Do not Cicero and the whole senate yield to these arguments? Did not the conquerors and lawgivers of the known universe plainly form a society of men who feared nothing from the gods, who were true atheists?

Bayle then examines whether idolatry is more dangerous than atheism, whether it is a greater crime not to believe in the Divinity than to hold unworthy opinions of it; in this he shares Plutarch's opinion; he believes it is better to have no opinion than a bad one; but, with all respect to Plutarch, it is evident that it was infinitely better for the Greeks to fear Ceres, Neptune and Jupiter than to fear nothing at all; it is clear that the sanctity of oaths is necessary, and that one must trust more those who think a false oath will be punished than those who think they can swear falsely with impunity. It is indubitable that in a well-ordered city it is infinitely more useful to have a religion (even a bad one) than to have none at all.

It appears, then, that Bayle should rather have examined which is the more dangerous, fanaticism or atheism. Fanaticism is certainly a thousand times more deadly; for atheism inspires no bloodthirsty passion, but fanaticism does; atheism does not oppose crimes, but fanaticism makes men commit them. Let us suppose with the author of the *Commentarium rerum Gallicarum* that the chancellor de l'Hôpital was an atheist: he made only wise laws, and counseled only moderation and concord. The fanatics committed the massacres of Saint Bartholomew. Hobbes passed for an atheist; he led a tranquil and innocent life. The fanatics of his time flooded England, Scotland and Ireland with blood. Spinoza was not only an atheist but taught atheism; it was certainly not he who had a part in the judicial assassination of Barneveldt, not he who tore the two de Witt brothers to pieces and ate them on the grill.

Atheists are for the most part bold and misguided scholars who reason badly, and who, unable to understand creation, the origin of evil and other difficulties, have recourse to the hypothesis of the eternity of things and of necessity.

Ambitious people and pleasure seekers scarcely have time to reason and to embrace a bad system; they have other things to do than to compare Lucretius with Socrates. That is how things go among us.

It was not so with the senate of Rome, which was almost entirely composed of atheists in theory and in practice, that is, who believed neither in providence nor in a future life; that senate was an assembly of philosophers, pleasure seekers and ambitious men, all very dangerous, who ruined the republic.

I would not want to deal with an atheist prince who found it in his interest to have me pounded in a mortar; I am quite sure I would be pounded. If I were a sovereign, I would not want to deal with atheist courtiers who stood to gain by poisoning me; I would have to take an antidote at random every day. It is therefore absolutely necessary for princes and for peoples that the idea of a supreme being, creator, governor, rewarder and avenger, be deeply engraved in their minds.

There are atheist peoples, says Bayle in his thoughts on comets. The Kaffirs, the Hottentots, the Tupinambá and many other small nations have no God; that may be; but that does not mean they deny a God; they neither deny nor affirm him; they have never heard him spoken of; tell them there is one, and they will readily believe it; tell them everything is done by the nature of things, and they will believe you just the same. To maintain that they are atheists is the same imputation as if one said they are anti-Cartesians; they are neither for nor against Descartes. They are true children; a child is neither atheist nor theist, he is nothing.

What conclusion shall we draw from all this? That atheism is a most pernicious monster in those who govern; that it is so too in closet scholars, even though their life be innocent, because from their studies they can influence those in office; that if it is not so deadly as fanaticism, it is almost always fatal to virtue.

Let us add above all that there are fewer atheists today than ever, since philosophers have recognized that there is no growing organism without a germ, no germ without design, etc., and that wheat does not come from rot.

Geometers who are not philosophers have rejected final causes, but true philosophers admit them; and, as a well-known author has said, a catechist announces God to children, and Newton demonstrates him to the wise.

¹ *Commentarium rerum Gallicarum*, L. 28.

B — Baptême



BAPTISM, a Greek word meaning immersion. Human beings, always guided by the senses, readily imagined that what washed the body washed the soul too. There were great vats in the underground chambers of the temples of Egypt for the priests and for the initiates. The Indians, from time immemorial, have purified themselves in the water of the Ganges, and that ceremony is still much in vogue. It passed to the Hebrews; there all strangers were baptized who embraced the Jewish law and did not wish to submit to circumcision; women especially, on whom that operation was not performed, and who underwent it only in Ethiopia, were baptized; it was a regeneration; it gave a new soul, as in Egypt. See on this subject Epiphanius, Maimonides and the Gemara.

John baptized in the Jordan, and even baptized Jesus, who nevertheless never baptized anyone, but who deigned to consecrate that ancient ceremony. Every sign is indifferent in itself, and God attaches his grace to the sign it pleases him to choose. Baptism soon became the first rite and the seal of the Christian religion. Yet the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised; it is not certain that they were baptized.

This sacrament was abused in the first centuries of Christianity; nothing was more common than to wait for the death agony to receive baptism. The example of the Emperor Constantine is a good enough proof of it. This is how he reasoned: "Baptism purifies everything; I can therefore kill my wife, my son and

all my relatives, then have myself baptized and go to heaven”—which in fact he did not fail to do. This example was dangerous; little by little the custom was abolished of waiting for death to enter the sacred bath.

The Greeks always kept baptism by immersion; the Latins, toward the end of the eighth century, having extended their religion into Gaul and Germany, and seeing that immersion might kill children in cold countries, substituted simple sprinkling, which often caused the Greek church to anathematize them.

Saint Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, was asked whether those were really baptized who had merely had the whole body sprinkled with water. He answers in his 76th letter that several churches did not believe these sprinkled persons to be Christians; that for his part he thinks they are Christians, but that they receive infinitely less grace than those who have been immersed three times according to custom.

Among Christians one was initiated as soon as one had been plunged; before that time one was only a catechumen. To be initiated one had to have sponsors, guarantors, called by a name corresponding to *godparents*, so that the church might be assured of the fidelity of the new Christians and the mysteries might not be divulged. That is why in the first centuries the gentiles were generally as poorly instructed in the mysteries of the Christians as the Christians were in those of Isis and Eleusis.

Cyril of Alexandria, in his work against the Emperor Julian, expresses himself thus: *I would speak of baptism if I did not fear that my discourse might reach those who are not initiated.*

From the second century children began to be baptized; it was natural that Christians should desire that their children, who would have been damned without this sacrament, should be provided with it. It was concluded at last that it must be administered to them after eight days, because among the Jews it was at that age that they were circumcised. The Greek church still follows that usage. Yet in the third century the custom prevailed of being baptized only at death.

Those who died in the first week were damned, according to the most rigorous fathers of the church. But Peter Chrysologus in the fifth century invented Limbo, a kind of mitigated hell, properly the edge of hell, the suburb of hell, where little children who die without baptism go, and where the patriarchs were before the descent of Jesus Christ into hell. So that the opinion that Jesus Christ descended into Limbo and not into hell has prevailed since.

People have debated whether a Christian in the deserts of Arabia could be baptized with sand; the answer was no. They asked whether rose water could be used for baptism, and it was decided that pure water was required, though muddy water was permitted. One sees easily that the whole of this discipline depended on the prudence of the first pastors who established it.

B — Beau, Beauté



Ask a toad what beauty is, the supremely beautiful, the to kalon: he will answer that it is his mate, with two large round eyes protruding from her little head, a broad flat mouth, a yellow belly, a brown back. Question a Negro of Guinea: beauty, for him, is black oily skin, sunken eyes, a flattened nose.

Question the Devil: he will tell you that beauty is a pair of horns, four claws and a tail. Finally, consult the philosophers: they will answer you with gibberish; they must have something conforming to the archetype of beauty in essence, to the to kalon.

One day I attended a tragedy beside a philosopher. “How beautiful that is!” he said. “What do you find beautiful in it?” I asked him. “It is,” he said, “that the author has attained his end.” The next day he took a medicine that did him good. “It has attained its end,” I said to him; “there is a beautiful medicine.” He understood that one cannot say a medicine is beautiful, and that to give anything the name of beauty it must cause us admiration and pleasure. He agreed that this tragedy had inspired those two sentiments in him, and that this was the to kalon, the beautiful.

We traveled to England; the same play was performed there, perfectly translated; it made all the spectators yawn. “Oh, oh,” he said, “the to kalon is not the same for the English and for the French.” He concluded after much reflection

that beauty is very relative, as what is decent in Japan is indecent in Rome, and what is fashionable in Paris is not so in Peking; and he spared himself the trouble of composing a long treatise on beauty.

B — Bêtes



How pitiful, how impoverished, to have said that beasts are machines, deprived of knowledge and feeling, which always perform their operations in the same manner, which learn nothing, perfect nothing, etc..!

What? This bird that makes its nest in a semicircle when it attaches it to a wall, that builds it in a quarter circle when it is in an angle, and in a circle on a tree: this bird does everything in the same way? This hunting dog that you have trained for three months, does he not know more at the end of that time than he knew before your lessons? The canary to whom you teach an air, does he repeat it that instant? Do you not spend a considerable time teaching him? Have you not seen him make mistakes and correct himself?

Is it because I speak to you that you judge me to have feeling, memory, ideas? Well then, I do not speak to you: you see me come into my house with a sorrowful air, search anxiously for a paper, open the desk where I remember having locked it, find it, read it with joy. You judge that I have felt sorrow and pleasure, that I have memory and knowledge.

Then form the same judgment about this dog who has lost his master, who has sought him in every road with pitiful cries, who enters the house agitated, anxious, who goes down, who goes up, who goes from room to room, who finds at last in his study the master he loves, and who shows him his joy by the sweetness of his cries, by his leaps, by his caresses.

Some barbarians seize this dog, who surpasses man so prodigiously in friendship; they nail him to a table, and they dissect him alive to show you the mesaraic veins. You discover in him all the same organs of feeling that are in you. Answer me, mechanist: has nature arranged all the springs of feeling in this animal so that it may not feel? Does it have nerves so that it cannot suffer? Do not suppose this absurd contradiction in nature.

But the masters of the school ask what the soul of beasts is. I do not understand that question. A tree has the faculty of receiving into its fibers the sap that circulates, of unfolding the buds of its leaves and its fruits; will you ask me what the soul of that tree is? It has received these gifts; the animal has received those of feeling, of memory, of a certain number of ideas. Who has made all these gifts? Who has given all these faculties? He who makes the grass of the fields grow, and who makes the earth gravitate toward the sun.

The souls of beasts are substantial forms, said Aristotle, and after Aristotle the Arab school, and after the Arab school the angelic school, and after the angelic school the Sorbonne, and after the Sorbonne nobody in the world.

The souls of beasts are material, cry other philosophers. These have fared no better than the others. They have been asked in vain what a material soul is; they must agree that it is matter that has sensation; but who gave it that sensation? It is a material soul, that is to say, it is matter that gives sensation to matter; they do not leave that circle.

Listen to other beasts reasoning about beasts: their soul is a spiritual being that dies with the body; but what proof have you of it? What idea have you of this spiritual being, which, in truth, has feeling, memory, and its measure of ideas and combinations, but which will never be able to know what a child of six knows? On what foundation do you imagine that this being, which is not body, perishes with the body? The greatest beasts are those who have advanced that this soul is neither body nor spirit. There is a fine system. We can understand by spirit only something unknown that is not body. Thus the system of these gentlemen comes to this, that the soul of beasts is a substance that is neither body nor something that is not body.

Where can so many contradictory errors come from? From the habit men have always had of examining what a thing is before knowing whether it exists. People call the little tongue, the valve of a bellows, the soul of the bellows. What is this soul? It is a name I have given to that valve which lowers, lets the air enter, rises again, and pushes it through a pipe when I set the bellows moving.

There is no soul there distinct from the machine. But who sets the bellows of animals moving? I have told you already: he who sets the stars moving. The philosopher who said, *God is the soul of animals*, was right; but he should have gone further.

B — Bien, Souverain-bien



The highest good.

Antiquity disputed much about the highest good; it would have been as much to the point to ask what is the highest blue, or the highest ragout, the highest walking, the highest reading, etc.

Everyone places his good where he can, and has as much of it as he can, in his own fashion.

What shall I give, what not? You refuse what another commands.

Castor delights in horses; the twin born of the same egg, in fists.

The greatest good is that which delights you with such force that it makes you utterly incapable of feeling anything else; as the greatest evil is that which goes so far as to deprive us of all feeling. Those are the two extremes of human nature, and those two moments are short.

Neither extreme delights nor extreme torments can last a whole life: the highest good and the highest evil are chimeras.

We have the fine fable of Crantor; he brings wealth, pleasure, health and virtue before the Olympic games; each asks for the apple. Wealth says: "I am the highest good, for with me one buys all goods." Pleasure says: "The apple belongs to me, for wealth is sought only to have me." Health insists that without her there

is no pleasure, and wealth is useless. Finally virtue argues that she stands above the other three, because with gold, pleasures and health one can make oneself very miserable through bad conduct. Virtue received the apple.

The fable is very ingenious, but it does not resolve the absurd question of the highest good. Virtue is not a good, it is a duty; it is of a different kind, of a superior order; it has nothing to do with painful or agreeable sensations. The virtuous man suffering from stones and gout, without support, without friends, deprived of necessities, persecuted, chained by a pleasure-loving tyrant in good health, is very unhappy; and the insolent persecutor who caresses a new mistress on his bed of purple is very happy. Say that the persecuted sage is preferable to his insolent persecutor, say that you love the one and detest the other; but admit that the sage in irons is in a rage. If the sage does not admit it, he deceives you; he is a charlatan.

T — Tout est Bien



There was a fine uproar in the schools, and even among people who reason, when Leibniz, paraphrasing Plato, built his edifice of the best of possible worlds, and imagined that all was for the best. He affirmed in the north of Germany that God could make only one world. Plato had at least left him the liberty of making five: on the ground that there are only five regular solids, the tetrahedron, or the pyramid with three faces and equal base, the cube, the hexahedron, the dodecahedron, the icosahedron. But since our world is not of the form of any of Plato's five bodies, he should have allowed God a sixth way.

Let us leave the divine Plato there. Leibniz, who was assuredly a better geometer than he, and a deeper metaphysician, did the human race the service of showing it that we ought to be very content, and that God could do no more for us: that he had necessarily chosen among all possible courses the best, beyond dispute.

"What will become of original sin?" they cried at him. "Let it become what it may," said Leibniz and his friends; but in public he wrote that original sin necessarily entered into the best of worlds.

What! To be driven from a place of delights, where one would have lived forever if one had not eaten an apple? What! To father in misery miserable children who will suffer everything, who will make others suffer everything? What!

To experience every disease, to feel every sorrow, to die in pain, and, for refreshment, to be burned through the eternity of the ages: is this lot really the best there was? It is not very *good* for us; and in what way can it be good for God?

Leibniz felt that there was nothing to answer; so he wrote hefty books in which he did not understand himself.

To deny that there is evil: that can be said laughingly by a Lucullus in good health who is enjoying a fine dinner with his friends and his mistress in the hall of Apollo. But let him put his head out of the window, and he will see unhappy people; let him have a fever, and he will be one himself.

I do not like to quote; it is ordinarily a thorny business; one neglects what precedes and what follows the place one quotes, and one exposes oneself to a thousand quarrels. Yet I must quote Lactantius, father of the Church, who in his chap. 13 of the wrath of God makes Epicurus speak thus. "Either God wishes to take evil from this world, and cannot; or he can, and does not wish it; or he neither can nor wishes; or at last he wishes and can. If he wishes and cannot, that is impotence, which is contrary to the nature of God; if he can and does not wish it, that is malice, and that is no less contrary to his nature; if he neither wishes nor can, that is at once malice and impotence; if he wishes and can (which alone of these courses suits God), where, then, does evil on earth come from?"

The argument is pressing; so Lactantius answers it very badly, saying that God wills evil, but that he has given us the wisdom with which one acquires good. One must admit that this answer is very weak in comparison with the objection; for it supposes that God could give wisdom only by producing evil; and then, what comical wisdom we have!

The origin of evil has always been an abyss whose bottom no one has been able to see. That is what drove so many ancient philosophers and legislators to resort to two principles, one good, the other evil. Typhon was the bad principle among the Egyptians, Ahriman among the Persians. The Manicheans adopted this theology, as is known; but since these people had never spoken to either the good or the bad principle, they are not to be believed on their word.

Among the absurdities with which this world abounds, and which may be counted among our ills, it is not a light absurdity to have supposed two all-powerful beings fighting over which of the two would put more of his own into this world, and making a treaty like the two doctors of Molière: "Allow me the emetic, and I will allow you the bloodletting."

Basilides, after the Platonists, maintained, from the first century of the church, that God had given our world to be made by his lowest-ranking angels; and that these, being unskilled, made things such as we see them. This theological fable falls to dust before the terrible objection that it is not in the nature of an all-powerful and all-wise God to have a world built by architects who understand nothing of it.

Simon, who felt the objection, forestalls it by saying that the angel who presided over the workshop is damned for having done his work so badly; but the burning of that angel does not cure us.

The adventure of Pandora among the Greeks answers the objection no better. The box in which all ills are found, and at the bottom of which hope remains, is in truth a charming allegory; but this Pandora was made by Vulcan only to avenge himself on Prometheus, who had made a man out of mud.

The Indians did no better. God having created man, he gave him a drug that assured him permanent health; the man loaded his ass with the drug, the ass grew thirsty, the serpent showed him a spring, and while the ass drank, the serpent took the drug for himself.

The Syrians imagined that the man and the woman, having been created in the fourth heaven, took it into their heads to eat a flat cake instead of the ambrosia that was their natural food. The ambrosia exhaled through the pores, but after eating the cake one had to empty one's bowels. The man and the woman begged an angel to show them where the privy was. "Do you see," the angel said to them, "that little planet, as big as nothing, which is some sixty million leagues from here? That is the privy of the universe; go there as fast as you can." They went there, they were left there; and it is since that time that our world has been what it is.

One will always ask the Syrians why God permitted man to eat the cake, and such a frightful flood of ills to come upon us.

I pass quickly from that fourth heaven to Lord Bolingbroke, so as not to weary myself. This man, who had without doubt a great genius, gave the celebrated Pope his plan of *all is well*, which is in fact found word for word in Lord Bolingbroke's posthumous works, and which Lord Shaftesbury had earlier inserted in his *Characteristics*. Read in Shaftesbury the chapter of the moralists, and you will find these words there.

"There is much to say in answer to these complaints about nature's defects. How did she come so impotent and so defective from the hands of a perfect being? But I deny that she is defective... her beauty results from oppositions, and universal concord is born of a perpetual combat... Every being must be sacrificed to others; plants to animals, animals to the earth... and the laws of central power and of gravitation, which give the celestial bodies their weight and their movement, will not be disturbed for the love of a wretched animal, which, protected as it is by those same laws, will soon be reduced to dust by them."

Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury and Pope, who put their ideas to work, do not resolve the question any better than the others: their *all is well* means nothing else but that the whole is directed by immutable laws. Who does not know that? You teach us nothing when you remark, after all the little children, that flies are born to be eaten by spiders, spiders by swallows, swallows by shrikes, shrikes by eagles, eagles to be killed by men, men to kill one another and to be eaten by worms, and then by devils, at least a thousand to one.

There is a clear and constant order among the animals of every species; there is order everywhere. When a stone forms in my bladder, it is an admirable mechanism; stony juices pass little by little into my blood; they filter through the kidneys, pass through the urethras, deposit themselves in my bladder, assemble there by an excellent Newtonian attraction; the stone forms, grows, I suffer ills a thousand times worse than death, by the most beautiful arrangement in the world; a surgeon, having perfected the art invented by Tubal-Cain, comes to thrust a sharp and cutting iron into my perineum, seizes my stone with his pincers, it breaks under his efforts by a necessary mechanism; and by the same

mechanism I die in frightful torments; *all that is well*; all that is the evident consequence of unalterable physical principles. I agree to it, and I knew it as well as you.

If we were incapable of feeling, there would be no objection to this physics. But that is not the question; we ask whether suffering exists, and where it comes from. *There are no ills*, says Pope in his fourth epistle on all is well; *or if there are particular ills, they compose the general good*.

There is a singular general good, composed of stones, gout, all crimes, all sufferings, death and damnation.

The fall of man is the plaster we put on all these particular maladies of body and soul, which you call general health; but Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke laugh at original sin; Pope does not speak of it; it is clear that their system saps the Christian religion in its foundations, and explains nothing at all.

Yet this system has lately been approved by several theologians, who readily admit contraries; very well, one must not envy anyone the consolation of reasoning as he can about the flood of ills that inundates us. It is only fair to let the hopelessly ill eat what they wish. People have gone so far as to maintain that this system is consoling. *God*, says Pope, *sees with the same eye the hero and the sparrow perish, an atom, or a thousand planets hurled into ruin; a soap bubble, or a world taking form*.

There, I admit, is a comical consolation. Do you not find a great soothing remedy in the prescription of Lord Shaftesbury, who says that God will not go and disturb his eternal laws for an animal as wretched as man? One must at least admit that this wretched animal has the right to cry out humbly, and to seek to understand while crying out why these eternal laws are not made for the well-being of each individual.

This system of *all is well* represents the author of all nature only as a powerful and maleficent king, who does not trouble himself that it costs the lives of four or five hundred thousand men, and that the others drag out their days in want and in tears, provided he brings his designs to pass.

Far, then, from consoling, the opinion of the best of possible worlds drives the philosophers who embrace it to despair. The question of good and evil remains an inextricable chaos for those who seek in good faith; it is a game of wit for those who dispute; they are galley slaves playing with their chains. As for the unthinking people, they resemble well enough fishes that have been carried from a river into a reservoir; they do not suspect that they are there to be eaten in Lent; likewise, on our own we know nothing at all of the causes of our destiny.

Let us put at the end of almost every chapter of metaphysics the two letters of the Roman judges when they did not understand a case: *N. L. non liquet*, it is not clear.

B — Bornes de l'esprit humain



They are everywhere, poor doctor. Do you want to know how your arm and your foot obey your will, and how your liver does not obey it? Do you seek to know how thought is formed in your wretched understanding, and that child in that woman's uterus? I give you time to answer me. What is matter? Your fellows have written ten thousand volumes on this subject; they have found some qualities of this substance; children know them as well as you; but this substance, what is it at bottom? And what is this thing you have named spirit, from the Latin word that means breath, unable to do better because you have no idea of it?

Look at this grain of wheat that I throw into the earth, and tell me how it rises again to produce a stalk loaded with an ear. Teach me how the same earth produces an apple at the top of that tree, and a chestnut on the neighboring tree. I could fill a folio with questions to which you should answer with only four words: *I have no idea*.

And yet you have earned your degrees, and your robe is fur-trimmed, and so is your cap, and you are called master. And that other impertinent fellow who has bought an office believes he has bought the right to judge and condemn what he does not understand!

Montaigne's motto was, *What do I know?* and yours is, *What do I not know?*

C — Caractère



From the Greek word *impression, engraving*. It is what nature has engraved in us; can we erase it? A great question. If I have a crooked nose and two cat's eyes, I can hide them with a mask. Have I any more power over the character nature has given me? A man born violent and impetuous presents himself before Francis I, king of France, to complain of being unfairly passed over. The prince's face, the respectful bearing of the courtiers, the very place where he is, make a powerful impression on this man; he mechanically lowers his eyes, his harsh voice softens, he humbly presents his request; one would believe him born as gentle as the courtiers are (in that moment at least), in the midst of whom he is even disconcerted. But if Francis I understands physiognomies, he easily discovers in those lowered eyes, lit though with a somber fire, in the drawn muscles of his face, in his lips pressed one against the other, that this man is not so gentle as he is forced to appear. This man follows him to Pavia, is taken with him, is led with him to prison in Madrid; the majesty of Francis I no longer makes the same impression on him; he grows familiar with the object of his respect. One day, as he pulls off the king's boots and does it badly, the king, embittered by his misfortune, grows angry; our man tells the king to get lost and throws his boots out of the window.

Sixtus V was born petulant, stubborn, haughty, imperious, vindictive, arrogant; this character seems softened in the trials of his novitiate. Does he begin to gain some influence in his order? He flies into a rage against a guardian and

beats him senseless with his fists. Is he inquisitor at Venice? He exercises his office with insolence. Now he is a cardinal: he is possessed *della rabbia papale*; this rage overrides his natural disposition; he buries his person and his character in obscurity; he counterfeits the humble man and the dying man; he is elected pope; that moment gives back to the spring, which calculation had bent, all its long-restrained elasticity; he is the proudest and most despotic of sovereigns.

Drive out nature with a fork, she will still come back.

Religion and morals put a bridle on the force of nature; they cannot destroy it. The drunkard in a cloister, reduced to a demi-setier of cider at each meal, will get drunk no more, but he will always love wine.

Age weakens the character; it is a tree that yields no more than a few degenerate fruits, but they are always of the same nature; it covers itself with knots and moss, it becomes worm-eaten, but it is still an oak or a pear tree. If one could change one's character, one would give oneself one, one would be master of nature. Can one give oneself anything? Do we not receive everything? Try to animate the indolent man with sustained energy, to freeze with apathy the boiling soul of the impetuous, to inspire a taste for music and poetry in one who lacks taste and a musical ear; you will succeed no better than if you undertook to give sight to a man born blind. We perfect, we soften, we hide what nature has put in us, but we put nothing there.

A farmer is told: "You have too many fish in this pond; they will not thrive. There are too many cattle in your meadows; the grass is running short, and they will grow thin." It comes about after this exhortation that the pike eat half my man's carp, and the wolves half his sheep, and the rest grow fat. Will he congratulate himself on his management? This country fellow is yourself; one of your passions has devoured the others, and you believe you have triumphed over yourself. Are we not almost all like that old general of ninety who, having met some young officers carousing a little with girls, said to them in anger: "Gentlemen, is this the example I give you?"

C — Certain, certitude



“How old is your friend Christopher?” “Twenty-eight; I have seen his marriage contract and his baptismal certificate. I have known him since childhood. He is twenty-eight; I have certainty of it, I am certain of it.”

Scarcely have I heard the answer of this man so sure of what he says, and of twenty others who confirm the same thing, when I learn that for secret reasons, and through a peculiar scheme, Christopher’s baptismal certificate has been backdated. Those to whom I had spoken know nothing of it yet; yet they still have certainty of what is not.

If you had asked the whole earth before the time of Copernicus, “Did the sun rise? Did it set today?” everyone would have answered: “We are completely certain of it.” They were certain, and they were wrong.

Sorcery, divination, demonic harassment were for a long time the most certain thing in the world in the eyes of all peoples; what an innumerable crowd of people who had seen all these fine things, who were certain of them! Today that certainty has faded somewhat.

A young man who is beginning to study geometry comes to find me; he is still only at the definition of triangles. “Are you not certain,” I say to him, “that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles?” He answers that not only is he not certain of it, but that he has not even a clear idea of that proposition; I demonstrate it to him, and he then becomes very certain of it, and he will be so for all his life.

There is a certainty very different from the others; they were only probabilities, and these probabilities, examined, have become errors; but mathematical certainty is immutable and eternal.

I exist, I think, I feel pain: is all that as certain as a geometrical truth? Yes. Why? Because these truths are proved by the same principle, that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time. I cannot at the same time exist and not exist, feel and not feel. A triangle cannot at the same time have a hundred and eighty degrees, which are the sum of two right angles, and not have them.

The physical certainty of my existence, of my feeling, and mathematical certainty are therefore of the same value, although they are of a different kind.

It is not the same with the certainty founded on appearances, or on the unanimous reports that men make to us.

“But what,” you say to me, “are you not certain that Peking exists? Do you not have fabrics from Peking at home? Have not people from different countries, with different opinions, who have written violently against one another while all preaching the truth at Peking, assured you of that city’s existence?” I answer that it is extremely probable to me that there was then a city of Peking; but I would not wager my life that this city exists; and I will wager my life whenever anyone wishes, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles.

Something very amusing has been printed in the Encyclopedic Dictionary; it is maintained there that a man ought to be as sure, as certain that Marshal Saxe has risen again, if all Paris told him so, as he is sure that Marshal Saxe won the battle of Fontenoy, when all Paris tells him so. See, I beg you, how admirable this reasoning is: I believe all Paris when it tells me something morally possible; therefore I must believe all Paris when it tells me something morally and physically impossible.

Apparently the author of that article meant to joke, and the other author who goes into raptures at the end of that article, written against his own views, meant to joke too.¹

¹ See the article *Certainty*, Encyclopedic Dictionary.

C — Chaîne des événemens



It has long been maintained that all events are linked one to another by an invincible fatality; it is destiny which in Homer is superior to Jupiter himself. That master of gods and men declares plainly that he cannot prevent Sarpedon his son from dying at the appointed time. Sarpedon was born in the moment in which he had to be born, and could not be born in another; he could not die anywhere but before Troy; he could not be buried anywhere but in Lycia; his body had, at the appointed time, to produce vegetables which had to change into the substance of certain Lycians; his heirs had to establish a new order in his states; this new order had to influence the neighboring kingdoms; there resulted from it a new arrangement of war and peace with the neighbors of the neighbors of Lycia: so, step by step, the destiny of the whole earth has depended on the death of Sarpedon, which depended on another event, which was bound by others to the origin of things.

If a single one of these facts had been arranged differently, there would have resulted another universe; now it was not possible that the actual universe should exist and not exist; therefore it was not possible for Jupiter to save the life of his son, Jupiter though he was.

This system of necessity and fatality was invented in our own day by Leibniz, as he says, under the name of sufficient reason; it is nevertheless very ancient; it is no new discovery that there is no effect without a cause, and that often the smallest cause produces the greatest effects.

Lord Bolingbroke admits that the little quarrels of Mrs. Marlborough and Mrs. Masham gave him the opportunity to conclude the separate treaty of Queen Anne with Louis XIV; that treaty brought the peace of Utrecht; that peace of Utrecht confirmed Philip V on the throne of Spain. Philip V took Naples and Sicily from the house of Austria; the Spanish prince who is today King of Naples evidently owes his kingdom to Lady Masham, and he would not have had it, and perhaps would not even have been born, if the duchess of Marlborough had been more complaisant toward the queen of England; his existence at Naples depended on one folly more or less at the court of London. Examine the circumstances of all the peoples of the world: they are thus established on a sequence of events that seem connected to nothing and are connected to everything. Everything in this immense machine is a cog, pulley, rope, or spring.

It is the same in the physical world. A wind that blows from the depths of Africa and the southern seas brings a part of the African atmosphere, which falls again as rain in the valleys of the Alps; those rains fertilize our lands; our north wind in its turn sends our vapors to the Negroes; we do good to Guinea, and Guinea does good to us in its turn. The chain extends from one end of the universe to the other.

But it seems to me that the truth of this principle is strangely abused. It is concluded from it that there is no atom so small whose movement has not influenced the present arrangement of the whole world; that there is no accident so small, either among men or among animals, that is not an essential link in the great chain of destiny.

Let us understand one another: every effect evidently has its cause, going back from cause to cause into the abyss of eternity; but not every cause has its effect, coming down to the end of the ages. All events are produced one by another, I admit it; if the past has given birth to the present, the present gives birth to the future; everything has fathers, but not everything always has children. It is here precisely as with a genealogical tree; every house goes back, as is known, to Adam, but in the family there are many people who died without leaving posterity.

There is a genealogical tree of the events of this world. It is incontestable that the inhabitants of Gaul and Spain descend from Gomer, and the Russians from Magog his younger brother: this genealogy is found in so many big books! On that basis, one cannot deny that we owe to Magog the sixty thousand Russians who are today in arms toward Pomerania, and the sixty thousand French who are toward Frankfurt; but whether Magog spat to the right or to the left near Mount Caucasus, and whether he made two ripples in a well or three, whether he slept on his left side or on his right, I do not see that this has much influenced the resolution taken by the Empress of Russia Elizabeth to send an army to the aid of the Empress of the Romans Maria Theresa. Whether my dog dreams or does not dream in his sleep, I do not perceive the relation this important affair can have with those of the Great Mogul.

We must remember that nature is not entirely filled with matter, and that not every movement is communicated step by step until it goes around the world. Throw into the water a body of like density: you calculate easily that after some time the movement of that body, and that which it communicated to the water, are annihilated; movement is lost and is restored; therefore the movement that Magog may have produced by spitting into a well cannot have influenced what is happening today in Russia and in Prussia. Therefore present events are not the children of all past events; they have their direct lines, but a thousand little collateral lines are of no use to them. Once again, every being has its father, but not every being has children: we shall perhaps say more of this when we speak of destiny.

C — Chaîne des êtres créés



The first time I read Plato, and saw that gradation of beings rising from the lightest atom up to the supreme being, that ladder filled me with admiration; but when I examined it closely, that great phantom vanished, as formerly all apparitions fled in the morning at the crowing of the cock.

The imagination at first takes pleasure in seeing the imperceptible passage from brute matter to organized matter, from plants to zoophytes, from those zoophytes to animals, from these to man, from man to spirits, from those spirits clothed in a little aerial body to immaterial substances; and at last a thousand different orders of these substances, which rise through beauty and perfection to God himself. This hierarchy pleases the good people very much, who believe they see the pope and his cardinals followed by the archbishops, the bishops; after whom come the parish priests, the vicars, ordinary priests, the deacons, the subdeacons, then appear the monks, and the Capuchins bring up the rear.

But there is a little more distance between God and his most perfect creatures than between the holy father and the dean of the sacred college: that dean can become pope, but the most perfect of the spirits created by the supreme being cannot become God; infinity lies between God and him.

This chain, this supposed gradation, likewise does not exist among plants and animals; the proof of it is that there are species of plants and of animals that have been destroyed. We have no more murex. It was forbidden to eat the grif-

fon and the ixion; those two species have disappeared from this world, whatever Bochart may say: where then is the chain?

Even if we had not lost some species, it is visible that some can be destroyed. The lions and the rhinoceroses are beginning to become very rare.

It is very probable that there have been races of men which are no longer found; but I am willing to grant that they have all survived, along with the whites, the Negroes, the Kaffirs to whom nature has given an apron of their own skin, hanging from the belly to the middle of the thighs; the Samoyeds, whose women have a nipple of beautiful ebony, etc.

Is there not visibly a void between the ape and man? Is it not easy to imagine a two-footed animal without feathers, which would be intelligent without having either the use of speech or our form, which we could tame, which would answer our signs and would serve us? And between that new species and that of man, could one not imagine others?

Beyond man, you lodge in the sky, divine Plato, a succession of celestial substances; we believe in some of those substances, because the faith teaches it to us. But you, what reason have you to believe in them? You have not apparently spoken with Socrates' guiding spirit; and the good man *Er*, who rose again expressly to teach you the secrets of the other world, taught you nothing of those substances.

The supposed chain is no less interrupted in the perceptible universe.

What a gradation, I beg you, between your planets! The Moon is forty times smaller than our globe. When you have traveled from the Moon into the void, you find Venus; she is about as big as the earth. From there you go to Mercury; he turns in an ellipse very different from the circle that Venus describes; he is twenty-seven times smaller than we are, the Sun a million times bigger, Mars five times smaller; that one makes his round in two years, Jupiter his neighbor in twelve, Saturn in thirty; and even Saturn, the most distant of all, is not so big as Jupiter. Where is the supposed gradation?

And then, how can there be a chain linking everything across vast empty spaces? If there is one, it is certainly the one Newton discovered; it is he who makes all the globes of the planetary world gravitate one toward another in that

immense void.

Much-admired Plato! You have told nothing but fables; and there has come to the island of the Cassiterides, where in your time men went all naked, a philosopher who has taught the earth truths as great as your imaginings were childish.

L — Le Ciel des Anciens



If a silkworm called the little down surrounding its cocoon the sky, it would reason just as well as all the ancients did when they gave that name to the atmosphere, which, as Mr. de Fontenelle so aptly says in his *Worlds*, is the down around our cocoon.

The vapors rising from our seas and our earth, which form clouds, meteors, and thunder, were first taken for the dwelling of the gods. In Homer the gods always descend in golden clouds; that is why painters still portray them sitting on a cloud today. But since it was only right that the master of the gods should be more comfortable than the others, they gave him an eagle to carry him, because the eagle flies higher than other birds.

The ancient Greeks, seeing that the masters of cities lived in citadels on some mountaintop, judged that the gods might have a citadel too, and placed it in Thessaly on Mount Olympus, whose summit is sometimes hidden in clouds, so that their palace stood on the same level as their sky.

The stars and planets, which seem fastened to the blue vault of our atmosphere, next became the dwellings of the gods. Seven of them each had a planet; the others lodged wherever they could. The general council of the gods met in a great hall reached by the Milky Way; for the gods certainly needed a hall in the air, since men had town halls on earth.

When the Titans, a species of animal between gods and men, declared a fairly just war on these gods to claim part of their inheritance on their father's side, being sons of heaven and earth, they merely piled two or three mountains on top of one another, reckoning that this was quite enough to make them masters of heaven and the castle of Olympus.

*And lest high heaven be safer than the earth,
The giants, they say, aspired to heaven's kingdom,
And piled high mountains up toward the stars.*

This physics of children and old women was prodigiously ancient; yet it is quite certain that the Chaldeans had ideas as sound as ours about what is called the heavens. They placed the sun at the center of our planetary world, at roughly the distance from our globe that we have established; they had the earth and all the planets revolve around that star. Aristarchus of Samos tells us this. It is the true system of the world, which Copernicus later revived; but the philosophers kept the secret to themselves, to win greater respect from kings and people—or rather, to escape persecution.

The language of error is so familiar to men that we still call our vapors, and the space between the earth and the moon, the sky. We say “go up to heaven,” just as we say the sun turns, though we know perfectly well that it does not. We are probably the sky for the inhabitants of the moon, and each planet places its heaven on the neighboring planet.

If someone had asked Homer which heaven Sarpedon's soul had gone to, and where Hercules' soul was, Homer would have been very much at a loss; he would have answered in harmonious verse.

What assurance was there that Hercules' airy soul would have found itself more comfortable on Venus or Saturn than on our globe? Might it have been in the sun? The place hardly seems habitable in that furnace. In short, what did the ancients mean by heaven? They knew nothing about it. They were forever cry-

ing “*heaven and earth*”; it is as though someone cried “infinity and an atom.” Strictly speaking, there is no heaven. There is a prodigious number of globes rolling through empty space, and our globe rolls like the rest.

The ancients believed that going to heaven meant going up; but one does not go up from one globe to another. The heavenly globes are sometimes above our horizon, sometimes below it. Thus, suppose that Venus, after coming to Paphos, returned to her planet when that planet had set: the goddess Venus was not then going up in relation to our horizon; she was going down, and in that case one ought to have said “*go down to heaven*.” But the ancients did not split such fine hairs. Their notions about everything belonging to physics were vague, uncertain, contradictory. Enormous volumes have been written to discover what they thought about many questions of this sort. Four words would have sufficed: *they did not think*.

One must always except a small number of sages; but they came late, few explained their thoughts, and when they did, the charlatans of the earth sent them to heaven by the shortest route.

A writer named Pluche, I believe, undertook to make Moses a great physicist. Another had previously reconciled Moses with Descartes and published *Cartesius Mozaizans*. According to him, Moses was the first to invent vortices and subtle matter. But everyone knows well enough that God, who made Moses a great legislator and a great prophet, had no wish whatever to make him a professor of physics. He instructed the Jews in their duty and taught them not a word of philosophy. Calmet, who compiled a great deal and never reasoned at all, speaks of the Hebrews’ system; but this crude people was very far from possessing a system. They did not even have a school of geometry; the name itself was unknown to them. Their only science was brokerage and usury. Their books contain a few muddled, incoherent ideas about the structure of heaven, worthy in every respect of a barbarous people. Their first heaven was the air, the second the firmament, to which the stars were fastened. This firmament was solid and made of ice, and supported the upper waters, which escaped from that reservoir through doors, sluices, and cataracts at the time of the Flood.

Above this firmament, or these upper waters, was the third heaven, or empyrean, to which St. Paul was caught up. The firmament was a kind of half-vault embracing the earth. The sun did not circle a globe of which they knew nothing. When it reached the west, it returned east by an unknown path; and if it was not seen, that was, as the Baron de Fæneste says, because it came back at night.

Even these fantasies the Hebrews had borrowed from other peoples. Most nations, except the Chaldean school, regarded heaven as solid. The earth, fixed and motionless, was a good third longer from east to west than from south to north; this is the origin of the expressions longitude and latitude that we have adopted. Plainly, on this view, there could be no antipodes. Accordingly, St. Augustine calls the idea of antipodes an *absurdity*, and Lactantius expressly says, “*Are there people foolish enough to believe that there are men whose heads are lower than their feet?*” etc.

St. Chrysostom exclaims in his fourteenth homily, “*Where are those who maintain that the heavens move and that their shape is circular?*”

Lactantius also says in Book III of his *Institutions*: “*I could prove to you by many arguments that it is impossible for heaven to surround the earth.*”

The author of the *Spectacle of Nature* may tell the Chevalier as often as he likes that Lactantius and St. Chrysostom were great philosophers; the answer will be that they were great saints, and that being a saint does not in the least require being a good astronomer. We shall believe that they are in heaven, but admit that we do not know precisely which part of heaven they are in.

C — Circumcision



When Herodotus recounts what the barbarians among whom he traveled told him, he recounts nonsense, as most of our travelers do. Nor does he demand belief when he speaks of the adventure of Gyges and Candaules, of Arion carried on a dolphin, of the oracle consulted to discover what Croesus was doing, which answered that he was then cooking a tortoise in a covered pot; of Darius' horse, which, by neighing before all the others, proclaimed its master king; and of a hundred other fables fit to amuse children and to be compiled by rhetoricians. But when he speaks of what he has seen, of the customs of peoples he has examined, of their antiquities he has consulted, then he speaks to men.

"It appears," he says in the book of Euterpe, "that the inhabitants of Colchis are originally from Egypt. I judge this for myself rather than from hearsay; for I found that in Colchis they remembered the ancient Egyptians much better than people in Egypt remembered the ancient customs of Colchis.

"These inhabitants of the shores of the Euxine claimed to be a colony established by Sesostris. For my part, I inferred it not only because they are dark-skinned and have curly hair, but because the peoples of Colchis, Egypt, and Ethiopia are the only ones on earth who have practiced circumcision from time immemorial. The Phoenicians and the people of Palestine admit that they took circumcision from the Egyptians. The Syrians now living on the banks of the Thermodon and the

Parthenius, and their neighbors the Macrones, admit that they conformed to this Egyptian custom only recently. This is the principal sign by which they are recognized as Egyptian in origin.

“As for Ethiopia and Egypt, since this ceremony is very ancient in both nations, I cannot say which received circumcision from the other. It is nevertheless likely that the Ethiopians took it from the Egyptians; whereas the Phoenicians, on the contrary, have abolished the practice of circumcising newborn children since they have had more dealings with the Greeks.”

It is evident from this passage of Herodotus that several peoples took circumcision from Egypt; but no nation has ever claimed to have received circumcision from the Jews. To whom, then, can the origin of this custom be attributed: to the nation from which five or six others confess they received it, or to another nation, far less powerful, less commercial, less warlike, hidden in a corner of Arabia Petraea, which never communicated the slightest of its customs to any people?

The Jews say that they were once received into Egypt out of charity. Is it not very likely that the little people imitated a practice of the great people, and that the Jews took some customs from their masters?

Clement of Alexandria reports that Pythagoras, traveling among the Egyptians, was obliged to be circumcised to gain admission to their mysteries. Circumcision was therefore absolutely necessary to join the ranks of Egypt's priests. These priests existed when Joseph arrived in Egypt; its government was very ancient, and Egypt's antique ceremonies were observed with the most scrupulous exactness.

The Jews admit that they remained in Egypt for two hundred and five years. They say that they did not undergo circumcision during that time. It is therefore clear that during those two hundred and five years the Egyptians did not receive circumcision from the Jews. Would they have taken it from them after the Jews had stolen all the vessels lent to them and fled into the desert with their booty, according to their own testimony? Will a master adopt the principal mark of the religion of his thieving, fugitive slave? That is not human nature.

The book of Joshua says that the Jews were circumcised in the desert: "*I have delivered you from what was your disgrace among the Egyptians.*" Now, what could this disgrace have been for people situated between the peoples of Phoenicia, the Arabs, and the Egyptians, except what made them contemptible to these three nations? How was this disgrace removed? By removing a little of their foreskin. Is that not the natural sense of the passage?

Genesis says that Abraham had been circumcised earlier; but Abraham traveled to Egypt, which had long been a flourishing kingdom governed by a powerful king. Nothing prevents circumcision from having been in use for a long time in that ancient kingdom before the Jewish nation was formed. Moreover, Abraham's circumcision had no sequel: his descendants were not circumcised until Joshua's time.

Now before Joshua, by their own admission, the Israelites took many customs from the Egyptians. They imitated them in several sacrifices and ceremonies: in the fasts observed on the eve of the festivals of Isis, in ablutions, in the custom of shaving the priests' heads. Incense, the candelabrum, the sacrifice of the red heifer, purification with hyssop, abstinence from pork, horror of foreigners' cooking utensils: everything attests that the little Hebrew people, despite its aversion to the great Egyptian nation, had retained countless practices of its former masters. That goat Azazel, sent into the desert laden with the people's sins, was a visible imitation of an Egyptian practice. The rabbis even agree that the word Azazel is not Hebrew. Nothing therefore prevents the Hebrews from having imitated the Egyptians in circumcision, as their Arab neighbors did.

There is nothing extraordinary in God's having sanctified circumcision, no less ancient among the Africans than baptism was among the Asians, which he also sanctified. It has already been observed that he is free to attach his graces to whatever signs he deigns to choose.

For the rest, ever since the Jewish people was circumcised under Joshua, it has preserved this practice down to our own day. The Arabs too have always remained faithful to it. But the Egyptians, who in the earliest times circumcised boys and girls, eventually ceased performing the operation on girls, and finally

restricted it to priests, astrologers, and prophets. Clement of Alexandria and Origen tell us this. Indeed, we do not find that the Ptolemies ever underwent circumcision.

The Latin authors, who treat the Jews with such profound contempt that they derisively call them *Curtus Apella*, *Credat Judæus Apella*, *Curti Judæi*, do not apply these epithets to the Egyptians. All the people of Egypt are circumcised today, but for another reason: because Mohammedanism adopted the ancient circumcision of Arabia.

It is this Arab circumcision that passed to the Ethiopians, where boys and girls are still circumcised.

One must admit that this ceremony of circumcision seems very strange at first; but it should be remembered that from time immemorial the priests of the East consecrated themselves to their divinities by particular marks. An ivy leaf was engraved with a punch on the priests of Bacchus. Lucian tells us that devotees of the goddess Isis imprinted characters on their wrists and necks. The priests of Cybele made themselves eunuchs.

It seems highly likely that the Egyptians, who revered the instrument of generation and carried its image in pomp in their processions, conceived the idea of offering Isis and Osiris, through whom everything on earth was engendered, a small portion of the member by which these gods had willed that the human race should perpetuate itself. Ancient Eastern customs are so prodigiously different from ours that nothing should seem extraordinary to anyone who has read a little. A Parisian is astonished to be told that the Hottentots have one testicle cut off their male children. The Hottentots may be astonished that Parisians keep two.

C — Corps



Just as we do not know what a spirit is, we do not know what a body is. We see certain properties; but what is the subject in which those properties reside? There are only bodies, said Democritus and Epicurus; there are no bodies, said the disciples of Zeno of Elea.

Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, is the latest to have claimed, through a hundred specious sophisms, to prove that bodies do not exist. They have, he says, neither colors, nor smells, nor heat; these qualities are in your sensations, not in the objects. He could have spared himself the trouble of proving that truth; it was well enough known. But from there he passes to extension and solidity, which are essential properties of body, and thinks he proves that a piece of green cloth has no extension because the cloth is not actually green: this sensation of green exists only in you, therefore this sensation of extension also exists only in you. And after thus destroying extension, he concludes that the solidity attached to it falls away of itself, and consequently nothing in the world exists except our ideas. So that, according to this doctor, ten thousand men killed by ten thousand cannon shots are fundamentally nothing but ten thousand apprehensions of our soul.

The Bishop of Cloyne had only himself to blame for falling into such an excess of absurdity. He thinks he shows that extension does not exist because a body appeared four times larger through his telescope than to his naked eye, and four times smaller through another lens. From this he concludes that, since a body

cannot have an extension of four feet, sixteen feet, and one foot at the same time, this extension does not exist; therefore nothing exists. He had only to take a measuring rule and say: "Whatever size a body may appear to me, its extension is so many of these measures."

It was easy enough for him to see that extension and solidity are not like sounds, colors, tastes, smells, etc. Clearly these last are feelings aroused in us by the arrangement of parts; but extension is not a feeling. Let this burning wood go out: I no longer feel hot. Let this air cease to be struck: I no longer hear. Let this rose fade: I no longer smell it. But this wood, this air, this rose have extension without me. Berkeley's paradox is not worth the trouble of refuting.

It is worth knowing what led him into this paradox. Long ago I had several conversations with him. He told me that his opinion originated in our inability to conceive what this subject is that receives extension. And indeed he triumphs in his book when he asks Hylas what this subject, this *substratum*, this substance is. "It is extended body," Hylas answers. Then the bishop, under the name of Philonous, mocks him; and poor Hylas, seeing that he has said extension is the subject of extension, and has said something foolish, is utterly confounded and admits that he understands nothing about it, that there are no bodies, that the material world does not exist, that there is only an intellectual world.

Philonous ought merely to have told Hylas: "We know nothing of the underlying nature of this subject, this extended, solid, divisible, movable, shaped substance, etc. I know it no better than I know the thinking, feeling, willing subject; but this subject exists nonetheless, since it has essential properties of which it cannot be stripped."

We are all like most of the ladies of Paris: they dine splendidly without knowing what goes into their stews. In the same way we enjoy bodies without knowing what composes them. What is body made of? Parts; and these parts resolve into other parts. What are these last parts? Still bodies. You divide without ceasing, and never advance.

At last a subtle philosopher, observing that a painting is made of ingredients none of which is a painting, and a house of materials none of which is a house, imagined, in a somewhat different fashion, that bodies are built of an infinity of

little beings that are not bodies; and these are called monads. This system has its merits, and if it were revealed, I should think it quite possible. All these little beings would be mathematical points, kinds of souls waiting only for a coat to slip into. It would be a continual transmigration: a monad would go now into a whale, now into a tree, now into a conjurer. This system is as good as another; I like it quite as much as the swerve of atoms, substantial forms, resistible grace, and Dom Calmet's vampires.

D — De la Chine



We go to China for earth, as though we had none; for fabrics, as though we lacked fabrics; for a little herb to steep in water, as though no herbs grew in our climate. In return, we wish to convert the Chinese. This is a very praiseworthy zeal, but we must not dispute their antiquity or tell them they are idolaters. Would anyone really approve of a Capuchin who, after a warm welcome at a château of the Montmorencys, tried to persuade them that they were newly minted nobles, like the king's secretaries, and accused them of idolatry because he had found two or three statues of constables in the château, held in profound respect?

The celebrated Wolff, professor of mathematics at the University of Halle, once delivered an excellent address in praise of Chinese philosophy. He praised that ancient species of men, which differs from us in beard, eyes, nose, ears, and reasoning; he praised the Chinese, I say, for worshiping a supreme God and loving virtue. He did this justice to the emperors of China, the Kolao, the tribunals, the scholars. The justice done to the bonzes is of a different kind.

You must know that this Wolff drew a thousand students of every nation to Halle. At the same university there was a professor of theology named Lange, who drew no one. In despair at freezing all alone in his lecture hall, this man naturally wished to ruin the professor of mathematics. As is the custom of his kind, he did not fail to accuse him of not believing in God.

Some European writers who had never been to China had claimed that the government of Peking was atheistic. Wolff had praised the philosophers of Peking; therefore Wolff was an atheist. Envy and hatred never make better syllogisms. This argument of Lange's, supported by a cabal and a patron, was found conclusive by the country's king, who sent the mathematician a formal dilemma: leave Halle within twenty-four hours or be hanged. And since Wolff reasoned very soundly, he did not fail to leave. His departure deprived the king of two or three hundred thousand crowns a year, which the philosopher had brought into the kingdom through the influx of his disciples.

This example should teach sovereigns that they must not always listen to slander and sacrifice a great man to a fool's fury. Let us return to China.

What possessed us, here at the far end of the West, to argue so bitterly and with such torrents of abuse over whether there had been fourteen princes before Fohi, emperor of China, and whether this Fohi lived three thousand or two thousand nine hundred years before our common era? I should like to see two Irishmen take it into their heads to quarrel in Dublin over who owned the land I now occupy in the twelfth century. Is it not obvious that they ought to rely on me, since I have the archives in my hands? To my mind it is the same with China's first emperors: we must rely on the country's tribunals.

Argue as much as you please about the fourteen princes who reigned before Fohi: your fine dispute will only prove that China was then very populous and governed by laws. Now I ask you whether a nation brought together, with laws and princes, does not presuppose a prodigious antiquity. Consider how much time is needed before a singular combination of circumstances leads to the discovery of iron in mines, its use in agriculture, the invention of the shuttle and all the other arts.

Those who make children with strokes of the pen have devised a very amusing calculation. The Jesuit Pétiau, by a fine computation, gives the earth, 285 years after the Flood, a hundred times more inhabitants than anyone dares suppose it has today. The Cumberlands and Whistons have made equally comical calculations. These good men had only to consult the registers of our colonies in

America: they would have been astonished. They would have learned how little the human race multiplies, and how very often it diminishes instead of increasing.

Let us then, we who date from yesterday, we descendants of the Celts who have only just cleared the forests of our savage lands, let the Chinese and Indians enjoy their fine climate and their antiquity in peace. Above all, let us stop calling the emperor of China and the subah of the Deccan idolaters. We must not be fanatical about Chinese merit. The constitution of their empire is indeed the best in the world: the only one entirely founded on paternal authority—which does not prevent the mandarins from giving their children plenty of beatings; the only one in which a provincial governor is punished if, on leaving office, he has not won the people's acclamations; the only one to have instituted prizes for virtue, while everywhere else the laws confine themselves to punishing crime; the only one to have made its conquerors adopt its laws, while we are still subject to the customs of the Burgundians, Franks, and Goths who subdued us. But one must admit that the common people, governed by bonzes, are as roguish as ours; that everything is sold very dear to foreigners there, just as here; that in the sciences the Chinese are still at the point we reached two hundred years ago; that, like us, they have a thousand ridiculous prejudices and believe in talismans and judicial astrology, as we believed for so long.

Let us also admit that they were astonished by our thermometer, by our way of freezing liquids with saltpeter, and by all the experiments of Torricelli and Otto von Guericke, just as we were when we first saw these amusements of physics. Let us add that their doctors cure fatal illnesses no better than ours, and that nature alone cures minor illnesses in China, as it does here. But none of this alters the fact that four thousand years ago, when we could not read, the Chinese knew all the essentially useful things of which we boast today.

C — Catéchisme Chinois



Or

Conversations of Cu-su, disciple of Confucius, with Prince Kou, son of the king of Lou, tributary of the Chinese emperor Gnen-van, 417 years before our common era. Translated into Latin by Father Fouquet, formerly an ex-Jesuit. The manuscript is in the Vatican Library, number 42759.

Kou.

What am I to understand when I am told to worship heaven? (Chang-ti.)

Cu-su.

Not the material sky we see; for that sky is nothing but air, and that air is composed of all the earth's exhalations. Worshiping vapors would be absurd folly.

Kou.

Yet it would not surprise me. Men seem to me to have committed even greater follies.

Cu-su.

True; but you are destined to govern: you must be wise.

Kou.

So many peoples worship heaven and the planets!

Cu-su.

The planets are merely earths like ours. The moon, for example, would do as well to worship our sand and mud as we would to kneel before the moon's sand and mud.

Kou.

What do people mean when they say “heaven and earth,” “go up to heaven,” “be worthy of heaven”?

Cu-su.

They are saying something enormously foolish.¹ There is no heaven. Each planet is surrounded by its atmosphere as by a shell, and rolls through space around its sun. Each sun is the center of several planets that travel continually around it. There is neither up nor down, neither ascent nor descent. You can see that if the inhabitants of the moon said one goes up to earth, that one must make oneself worthy of earth, they would be talking wildly. We too utter a meaningless word when we say one must make oneself worthy of heaven; it is as though we said one must make oneself worthy of the air, worthy of the constellation of the Dragon, worthy of space.

Kou.

I think I understand you: we must worship only the God who made heaven and earth.

Cu-su.

Certainly: we must worship God alone. But when we say he made heaven and earth, we are piously uttering a great paltriness. For if by heaven we mean the prodigious space in which God kindled so many suns and set so many worlds revolving, it is far more ridiculous to say “*heaven and earth*” than to say “*the mountains and a grain of sand*.” Our globe is infinitely less than a grain of sand beside those millions of billions of universes among which we disappear. All we can do here is join our feeble voice to that of the innumerable beings who pay homage to God in the abyss of space.

Kou.

Then we were thoroughly deceived when we were told that Fo had descended to us from the fourth heaven and appeared as a white elephant.

Cu-su.

Those are stories the bonzes tell children and old women. We must worship only the eternal author of all beings.

Kou.

But how could one being have made the others?

Cu-su.

Look at that star: it is fifteen hundred thousand million *li* from our little globe. Rays leave it and form two vertically opposite, equal angles on your eyes; they form the same angles on the eyes of all animals. Is that not a manifest design? Is that not an admirable law? Now who makes a work, if not a worker? Who makes laws, if not a legislator? There is therefore an eternal worker, an eternal legislator!

Kou.

But who made this worker? And how is he made?

Cu-su.

My prince, yesterday I was walking beside the vast palace built by the king your father. I heard two crickets, one of whom said to the other, "What a tremendous building!" "Yes," said the other; "proud as I am, I admit that someone more powerful than crickets made this marvel. But I have no conception of that being; I see that he exists, but I do not know what he is."

Kou.

I tell you that you are a better-instructed cricket than I am; and what I like in you is that you do not claim to know what you do not know.

Second Conversation.

Cu-su.

You agree, then, that there is an almighty being, self-existent, the supreme craftsman of all nature?

Kou.

Yes; but if he exists of himself, nothing can limit him: is he therefore everywhere? Does he therefore exist in all matter, in every part of me?

Cu-su.

Why not?

Kou.

Then would I myself be a part of the divinity?

Cu-su.

That may not follow. This piece of glass is penetrated on every side by light; yet is it itself light? It is merely sand, and nothing more. Everything is in God, undoubtedly; what animates everything must be everywhere. God is not like the emperor of China, who lives in his palace and sends out orders through the Kolao. From the very fact that he exists, his existence must fill all space and all his works; and since he is within you, that is a continual warning to do nothing you could blush for before him.

Kou.

What must one do to dare look at oneself in this way, without disgust or shame before the Supreme Being?

Cu-su.

Be just.

Kou.

And what else?

Cu-su.

Be just.

Kou.

But the sect of Laokium says there is neither justice nor injustice, neither vice nor virtue.

Cu-su.

Does the sect of Laokium say there is neither health nor sickness?

Kou.

No, it does not utter so great an error.

Cu-su.

The error of thinking there is neither health nor sickness of the soul, neither virtue nor vice, is as great and more disastrous. Those who have said everything is equal are monsters. Is it the same to feed one's son or smash him against a stone? To help one's mother or plunge a dagger into her heart?

Kou.

You make me shudder. I detest the sect of Laokium; but there are so many shades of justice and injustice! One is often very uncertain. What man knows precisely what is permitted or forbidden? Who can confidently fix the bound-

aries separating good and evil? What rule will you give me to distinguish them?

Cu-su.

Those of Confucius, my master: *Live as, when dying, you will wish you had lived; treat your neighbor as you want him to treat you.*

Kou.

These maxims, I admit, ought to be the code of the human race. But what will it matter to me, when I die, to have lived well? What shall I gain by it? When this clock is destroyed, will it be happy to have struck the hours correctly?

Cu-su.

This clock neither feels nor thinks; it cannot feel remorse, and you do when you feel guilty.

Kou.

But if, after committing several crimes, I manage to feel no more remorse?

Cu-su.

Then you will have to be smothered; and you may be sure that among men who do not like being oppressed, some will be found to put you beyond the power of committing further crimes.

Kou.

Thus God, who is in them, will allow them to be wicked after allowing me to be so?

Cu-su.

God has given you reason: neither you nor they should abuse it. Not only will you be unhappy in this life, but who has told you that you will not be unhappy in another?

Kou.

And who has told you there is another life?

Cu-su.

Doubt alone obliges you to behave as though there were one.

Kou.

But if I am certain there is none?

Cu-su.

I defy you to be certain.

Third Conversation.

Kou.

You press me, Cu-su. For me to be rewarded or punished when I no longer exist, something must survive in me that feels and thinks after me. Now, since before my birth nothing of me had either feeling or thought, why should there be any after my death? What could this incomprehensible part of myself be? Will this bee's buzzing remain when the bee is no more? Does this plant's growth survive when the plant is uprooted? Is not growth a word used to signify the inexplicable manner in which the Supreme Being has willed that a plant should draw juices from the earth? The soul is likewise a word invented to express, feebly and obscurely, the springs of our life. All animals move, and this power of moving is called active force; but there is no distinct being that is this force. We have passions, memory, reason; but these passions, this memory, this reason are surely not things apart, not beings existing in us, not little persons with a separate existence. They are generic words invented to fix our ideas. The soul, which signifies our memory, our reason, our passions, is therefore itself only a word. Who produces motion in nature? God. Who makes all plants grow? God. Who produces motion in animals? God. Who produces man's thought? God.

If the human soul² were a little person enclosed in our body, directing its movements and ideas, would that not imply in the eternal craftsman of the world a weakness and an artifice unworthy of him? Would he not then have been incapable of making automaton endowed in themselves with movement and thought? You taught me Greek; you had me read Homer. I find Vulcan a divine smith when he makes golden tripods that go to the council of the gods all by themselves; but this Vulcan would seem a miserable charlatan if he had hidden one of his apprentices inside these tripods to move them unnoticed.

Some dull dreamers have thought it a fine invention to make planets roll by means of spirits continually pushing them; but God was not reduced to this pitiful expedient. In a word, why put two springs into a work when one is

enough? You would not dare deny that God has the power to animate the little-known being we call matter; why, then, should he use another agent to animate it?

There is much more: what would this soul be, which you so generously give our body? Where would it come from? When would it arrive? Would the creator of the universe have to be continually watching for men and women to mate, carefully noting the moment when a germ leaves a man's body and enters a woman's, and then quickly sending a soul into that germ? And if the germ dies, what becomes of this soul? It will have been created uselessly, or it will wait for another opportunity.

That, I confess, is a strange occupation for the master of the world; and not only must he continually attend to the copulation of the human species, he must do as much for all animals. For they all have memory, ideas, and passions like us; and if a soul is necessary to form these feelings, this memory, these ideas, these passions, God must work perpetually at forging souls for elephants and fleas, for owls, fish, and bonzes.

What conception would you give me of the architect of so many millions of worlds, obliged to keep making invisible pegs to perpetuate his work?

Here is a very small part of the reasons that may lead me to doubt the soul's existence.

Cu-su.

You reason in good faith; and that virtuous disposition, even if mistaken, would please the Supreme Being. You may be deceiving yourself, but you do not seek to deceive yourself, and therefore you are excusable. But remember that you have offered me only doubts, and that these doubts are sad. Admit more consoling probabilities. It is hard to be annihilated: hope to live. You know that a thought is not matter, that it has no relation to matter; why, then, should you find it so difficult to believe that God has placed within you a divine principle which, being incapable of dissolution, cannot be subject to death? Would you dare say it is impossible for you to have a soul? Surely not. And if it is possible, is it not very likely that you have one? Could you reject a system so beautiful and so necessary to the human race? Will a few difficulties repel you?

Kou.

I should like to embrace this system, but I should like it proved to me. I cannot choose to believe when I have no evidence. I am always struck by that great idea that God made everything, that he is everywhere, that he penetrates everything, that he gives movement and life to everything; and if he is in every part of my being, as he is in every part of nature, I do not see what need I have of a soul. What use have I for this little subordinate being when God himself animates me? What purpose would this soul serve? We do not give ourselves our ideas, for we almost always have them in spite of ourselves; we have them when we are asleep. Everything happens within us without our intervention. The soul might tell the blood and animal spirits, "Please flow this way to oblige me"; they will always circulate in the manner God has prescribed for them. I would rather be the machine of a God whose existence is proved to me than the machine of a soul I doubt.

Cu-su.

Well then, if God himself animates you, never stain this God within you with crimes; and if he has given you a soul, let that soul never offend him. In either system you have a will, you are free—that is, you have the power to do what you wish. Use this power to serve the God who gave it to you. It is good for you to be a philosopher, but necessary for you to be just. You will be all the more just when you believe you have an immortal soul.

Please answer me: is it not true that God is supreme justice?

Kou.

Certainly; and if it were possible for him to cease being so—which is blasphemy—I should still wish to act equitably.

Cu-su.

Is it not true that when you are on the throne, your duty will be to reward virtuous actions and punish criminal ones? Would you wish God not to do what you yourself are bound to do? You know that in this life there are, and always will be, unhappy virtues and unpunished crimes. Good and evil must therefore meet their judgment in another life. It is this idea, so simple, so natural, so general, that has established among so many nations belief in the immortality of

our souls and in the divine justice that judges them when they have abandoned their mortal remains. Is there any system more reasonable, more fitting to the divinity, more useful to the human race?

Kou.

Why, then, have several nations not embraced this system? You know that in our province we have about two hundred families of ancient Sinous, who once inhabited part of Arabia Petraea. Neither they nor their ancestors ever believed the soul immortal. They have their five books, as we have our Five Classics; I have read the translation. Their laws, necessarily like those of all other peoples, order them to respect their fathers, not to steal, not to lie, to be neither adulterers nor murderers; but these same laws say nothing to them of rewards or punishments in another life.

Cu-su.

If this idea has not yet developed among that poor people, it doubtless will one day. But what is one wretched little nation to us, when the Babylonians, Egyptians, Indians, and all civilized nations have accepted this salutary doctrine? If you were ill, would you reject a remedy approved by all the Chinese on the pretext that a few mountain barbarians had refused to use it? God gave you reason; it tells you the soul must be immortal: it is therefore God himself who tells you so.

Kou.

But how can I be rewarded or punished when I am no longer myself, when I have nothing left of what constituted my person? It is only through my memory that I remain myself. I lose my memory in my last illness: will a miracle therefore be needed after my death to restore it, to bring me back into the existence I shall have lost?

Cu-su.

That is to say, if a prince had slaughtered his family to reign, if he had tyrannized over his subjects, he would escape merely by telling God, "It was not me; I have lost my memory; you are mistaken; I am no longer the same person." Do you think God would be quite satisfied with that sophism?

Kou.

Very well, I surrender. I wished to do good for my own sake; I shall also do it to please the Supreme Being. I thought it enough for my soul to be just in this life; I shall hope it will be happy in another. I see that this opinion is good for peoples and princes; but the worship of God troubles me.

Fourth Conversation.

Cu-su.

What do you find objectionable in our Chu-King, that first canonical book so revered by all Chinese emperors? You plow a field with your royal hands to set the people an example, and offer its first fruits to Chang-ti, to Tien, to the Supreme Being. You sacrifice to him four times a year; you are king and pontiff; you promise God to do all the good in your power. Is there anything repugnant in that?

Kou.

I am very far from finding fault with it. I know that God has no need of our sacrifices or prayers, but we need to offer them to him. His worship is established not for him, but for us. I very much like to pray; above all, I want my prayers not to be ridiculous. For when I have shouted that *the mountain of Chang-ti is a fat mountain, and that one must not look at fat mountains*, when I have made the sun flee and the moon dry up, will this gibberish please the Supreme Being or benefit my subjects and myself?

Above all I cannot endure the madness of the sects around us. On one side I see Laotze, whom his mother conceived through the union of heaven and earth, and with whom she was pregnant for eighty years. I have no more faith in the doctrine of annihilation and universal stripping-away than in the white hair with which he was born, or the black cow he mounted to go and preach his doctrine.

The god Fo impresses me no more, though his father was a white elephant and he promises immortal life.

What displeases me most is that such fantasies are continually preached by the bonzes, who delude the people to govern them. They make themselves revered through mortifications that terrify nature. Some deprive themselves all their lives of the most wholesome foods, as though one could please God only by a

bad diet. Others put an iron collar around their necks, which they sometimes richly deserve. They drive nails into their thighs as though their thighs were planks; the people follow them in crowds. If a king issues an edict that displeases them, they calmly tell you this edict is not in the commentary on the god Fo, and that it is better to obey God than men. How can one remedy so extravagant and dangerous a popular disease? You know that tolerance is the principle of China's government and of every government in Asia; but is this indulgence not disastrous when it exposes an empire to upheaval over fanatical opinions?

Cu-su.

May Chang-ti preserve me from wishing to extinguish in you this spirit of tolerance, this most venerable virtue, which is to souls what permission to eat is to bodies. Natural law allows everyone to believe what he wishes, just as it allows him to eat what he wishes. A doctor has no right to kill his patients because they have not followed the diet he prescribed. A prince has no right to hang those subjects who have not thought as he does; but he has the right to prevent disturbances, and if he is wise, he will find it very easy to uproot superstitions. Do you know what happened to Daon, sixth king of Chaldea, some four thousand years ago?

Kou.

No, I know nothing about it; you will oblige me by telling me.

Cu-su.

The Chaldean priests had taken it into their heads to worship the pike of the Euphrates. They claimed that a famous pike named *Oannes* had once taught them theology; that this pike was immortal, three feet long, with a little crescent on its tail. Out of respect for this *Oannes*, eating pike was forbidden. A great dispute arose among the theologians over whether the pike *Oannes* carried milt or roe. The two parties excommunicated each other and several times came to blows. Here is how King Daon set about ending the disorder.

He ordered both parties to observe a strict three-day fast, after which he summoned the supporters of the pike with roe to attend his dinner. He had a three-foot pike brought in, with a little crescent attached to its tail. "Is this your

god?" he asked the doctors. "Yes, Sire," they answered, "for he has a crescent on his tail and surely carries roe." The king ordered the pike cut open: it had the finest milt in the world. "You see perfectly well," he said, "that this is not your god, since it carries milt." And the king and his satraps ate the pike, to the great satisfaction of the theologians of the roe, who saw that their adversaries' god had been fried.

The doctors of the opposite party were immediately sent for. They were shown a three-foot god with roe and a crescent on its tail. They declared that this was the god Oannes and that it carried milt. It was fried like the other and found to carry roe. Then, both parties being equally foolish and having had no breakfast, good King Daon told them he had nothing but pike to give them for dinner. They ate greedily of it, whether with roe or milt. The civil war ended, everyone blessed good King Daon, and from that time forward the citizens had as many pike served at dinner as they pleased.

Kou.

I like King Daon very much, and solemnly promise to imitate him at the first opportunity. I shall always prevent, as far as I can, without doing violence to anyone, the worship of Fos and pike.

I know that in Pegu and Tonkin there are little gods and little Talapoins who bring down the waning moon and clearly predict the future—that is, clearly see what does not exist, for the future does not exist. I shall do all I can to prevent the Talapoins from coming to my country to take the future for the present and bring down the moon.

What a pity that there are sects going from town to town peddling their fantasies like quacks selling their drugs! What a disgrace to the human mind that little nations should think truth belongs to them alone, and that the vast empire of China is abandoned to error! Would the eternal being be only the God of the island of Formosa or the island of Borneo? Would he abandon the rest of the universe? My dear Cu-su, he is the father of all men; he allows them all to eat pike. The worthiest homage we can pay him is to be virtuous. A pure heart is the most beautiful of all his temples, as the great emperor Hiao said.

Fifth Conversation.

Cu-su.

Since you love virtue, how will you practice it when you are king?

Kou.

By being unjust neither to my neighbors nor to my peoples.

Cu-su.

It is not enough to do no harm. You will do good: you will feed the poor by employing them in useful work, not by endowing idleness. You will improve the highways, dig canals, raise public buildings, encourage all the arts, reward merit of every kind, forgive involuntary faults.

Kou.

That is what I call not being unjust: those are so many duties.

Cu-su.

You think like a true king; but there is the king and the man, public life and private life. You will soon marry: how many wives do you intend to have?

Kou.

Well, I think a dozen will be enough. A larger number might steal time meant for affairs of state. I do not like those kings who have three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines, and thousands of eunuchs to serve them. This mania for eunuchs seems to me above all too great an outrage against human nature. At most, I forgive caponizing roosters: they are better to eat for it. But no one has yet had eunuchs put on a spit. What use is their mutilation? The Dalai Lama has fifty to sing in his pagoda. I should very much like to know whether Chang-ti takes great pleasure in hearing the clear voices of those fifty geldings.

I also find it very ridiculous that some bonzes do not marry. They boast of being wiser than other Chinese: very well, let them make wise children. What an amusing way to honor Chang-ti, to deprive him of worshipers! What a singular way to serve the human race, to set an example of annihilating it! The good little lama named *Stelca isant Erepi* used to say that *every priest should make as many children as he could*. He preached by example and was very useful in his time. For my part, I shall marry off all the lamas and bonzes, and the

lamesses and bonzesses, who feel a calling to this holy work. They will certainly be better citizens for it, and I shall think I have done the kingdom of Lou a great service.

Cu-su.

Oh, what a good prince we shall have! You make me weep for joy. You will not be content with having wives and subjects; after all, one cannot spend the whole day making edicts and children. You will surely have friends.

Kou.

I already have them, and good ones, who warn me of my faults; I allow myself the liberty of correcting theirs. They console me, and I console them. Friendship is the balm of life, better than that of the chemist Erueil, and even than the sachets of the great Ranoud. I am astonished that friendship has not been made a religious precept; I am inclined to insert it into our ritual.

Cu-su.

Take care not to do so. Friendship is sacred enough in itself; never command it. The heart must be free. Besides, if you made friendship a precept, a mystery, a rite, a ceremony, a thousand bonzes would preach about it and write their fantasies, making friendship ridiculous. We must not expose it to such profanation.

But how will you deal with your enemies? Confucius recommends loving them in twenty passages: does that not seem a little difficult?

Kou.

Love one's enemies! Good God, nothing is more common.

Cu-su.

How do you understand that?

Kou.

As I think it ought to be understood. I learned the art of war under the prince of Décon against the prince of Vis-Brunk. As soon as one of our enemies was wounded and fell into our hands, we cared for him as though he were our brother. We often gave our own beds to our wounded enemies and prisoners,

and slept beside them on tiger skins spread on the ground. We served them ourselves. What more do you want? That we should love them as we love our mistress?

Cu-su.

I am greatly edified by everything you tell me, and wish all nations could hear you. For I am assured that some peoples are impertinent enough to dare say we do not know true virtue, that our good actions are merely splendid sins, that we need lessons from their Talapoints to give us sound principles. Alas, the wretches! They only learned to read and write yesterday, and they claim to teach their masters!

Sixth Conversation.

Cu-su.

I shall not repeat all the commonplaces that have been retailed among us for five or six thousand years about all the virtues. Some are only for ourselves, such as prudence to guide our souls and temperance to govern our bodies: these are precepts of policy and health. True virtues are those useful to society, such as fidelity, magnanimity, beneficence, tolerance, etc. Thank heaven, there is not an old woman among us who does not teach all these virtues to her little children; they are the rudiments of our youth in village and city alike. But one great virtue is beginning to fall out of practice, and I am sorry for it.

Kou.

What is it? Name it quickly: I shall try to revive it.

Cu-su.

Hospitality. This most social virtue, this sacred bond between men, has begun to loosen since we have had inns. This pernicious institution came to us, they say, from certain savages of the West. Apparently those wretches have no houses in which to welcome travelers. What a pleasure to receive, in the great city of Lou, in the beautiful Honchan square, in my house Ki, a generous stranger arriving from Samarkand, to whom I become from that moment a sacred person, and who is bound by every divine and human law to welcome me into his home when I travel in Tartary, and to be my intimate friend!

The savages I speak of receive strangers only for money, in disgusting hovels; they charge dearly for this infamous welcome. And yet I hear that these poor people think themselves above us, that they boast of having a purer morality. They claim that their preachers preach better than Confucius; that, in short, it is for them to teach us justice because they sell bad wine along the highways, and their women run like madwomen through the streets and dance while ours cultivate silkworms.

Kou.

I find hospitality excellent and practice it with pleasure, but I fear abuse. There are people near Great Tibet who are very poorly housed, who love roaming, and who would travel from one end of the world to the other for nothing. And when you go to Great Tibet to enjoy the right of hospitality in their homes, you will find neither a bed nor a pot on the fire. That can put one off politeness.

Cu-su.

The inconvenience is slight; it is easy to remedy by receiving only people who come well recommended. There is no virtue without its dangers, and it is because they have dangers that embracing them is beautiful.

How wise and holy our Confucius is! There is no virtue he does not inspire; human happiness is attached to each of his sayings. Here is one that comes to mind, the fifty-third:

Repay benefits with benefits, and never avenge injuries.

What maxim, what law could the peoples of the West oppose to so pure a morality? In how many places does Confucius recommend humility? If this virtue were practiced, there would never be quarrels on earth.

Kou.

I have read everything Confucius and the sages of earlier centuries wrote about humility; but it seems to me they never gave a sufficiently exact definition of it. Perhaps there is little humility in daring to criticize them; but at least I have the humility to admit that I have not understood them. Tell me what you think.

Cu-su.

I shall humbly obey. I think humility is modesty of soul; for outward modesty is only civility. Humility cannot consist in denying to oneself a superiority one may have acquired over another. A good doctor cannot conceal from himself that he knows more than his delirious patient. A teacher of astronomy must admit to himself that he is more learned than his disciples; he cannot help believing it, but he must not be conceited about it. Humility is not abasement; it is the corrective to self-love, as modesty is the corrective to pride.

Kou.

Well then, it is in the practice of all these virtues and in the worship of a simple and universal God that I wish to live, far from the chimeras of sophists and the illusions of false prophets. Love of my neighbor will be my virtue on the throne, and love of God my religion. I shall despise the god Fo, and Laotze, and Vishnu, who has become incarnate so many times among the Indians, and Sammonocodom, who descended from heaven to fly a kite among the Siamese, and the Camis, who came from the moon to Japan.

Woe to a people foolish and barbarous enough to think there is a God for its province alone! It is blasphemy. What! The sunlight shines on every eye, and God's light would shine only on one small, paltry nation in a corner of this globe! What horror, and what folly! The divinity speaks to the hearts of all men, and the bonds of charity must unite them from one end of the universe to the other.

Cu-su.

Wise Kou! You have spoken like a man inspired by Chang-ti himself. You will be a worthy prince. I have been your teacher, and you have become mine.

¹ See the article on *Heaven*.

² See the article *Soul*.

C — Catéchisme du Japonois



The Indian.

Is it true that the Japanese once did not know how to cook, that they had subjected their kingdom to the Grand Lama, that this Grand Lama decided with sovereign authority what they should eat and drink; that from time to time he sent a little lama to your country to collect tribute and give you in exchange a sign of protection made with the first two fingers and the thumb?

The Japanese.

Alas, nothing is truer. Imagine that even all the posts of Canusi, the chief cooks of our island, were bestowed by the lama, and not bestowed for the love of God. Moreover, every secular household paid an ounce of silver a year to this great cook of Tibet. All he gave us in compensation were little dishes in rather bad taste, called *remains*. And whenever some new whim took him, such as making war on the peoples of Tangut, he levied new subsidies on us. Our nation often complained, but to no purpose; indeed, each complaint ended in paying a little more. At last love, which does everything for the best, delivered us from this servitude. One of our emperors quarreled with the Grand Lama over a woman. But it must be admitted that those who served us best in this affair were our Canusi, otherwise Pauxcospies. We owe it to them that we shook off the yoke, and here is how.

The Grand Lama had an amusing mania: he believed he was always right. Our Dairi and our Canusi wanted at least to be right sometimes. The Grand Lama found this pretension absurd; our Canusi would not give way, and broke with him forever.

The Indian.

Well then, since that time you have doubtless been happy and peaceful?

The Japanese.

Not at all. We persecuted, tore apart, and devoured one another for nearly two centuries. Our Canusi wanted in vain to be right; they have been reasonable for only a hundred years. Accordingly, since that time we can confidently regard ourselves as one of the happiest nations on earth.

The Indian.

How can you enjoy such happiness if what I have been told is true, that you have twelve culinary factions in your empire? You must have twelve civil wars a year.

The Japanese.

Why? If there are twelve caterers, each with a different recipe, must people cut one another's throats instead of dining? On the contrary, everyone will dine well in his own fashion with the cook he likes best.

The Indian.

It is true that one ought not to dispute tastes; but people do dispute them, and the quarrel grows heated.

The Japanese.

After disputing a long time and seeing that all these quarrels teach men only to harm one another, they finally decide on mutual tolerance, unquestionably the best thing to do.

The Indian.

And who, if you please, are these caterers who divide your nation in the art of eating and drinking?

The Japanese.

First there are the Breuxeli, who will never give you blood sausage or bacon. They cling to the old cuisine; they would rather die than lard a chicken. Besides, they are great calculators: if there is an ounce of silver to divide between them and the eleven other cooks, they first take half for themselves, and the rest goes to those best at arithmetic.

The Indian.

I imagine you seldom dine with those people?

The Japanese.

No. Then there are the Pispatés, who on certain days every week, and even for a considerable part of the year, would a hundred times rather eat a hundred crowns' worth of turbot, trout, sole, salmon, and sturgeon than feed on a veal stew that would not cost four sous.

As for us Canusi, we are very fond of beef and a certain pastry called pudding in Japanese. Everyone agrees, moreover, that our cooks are infinitely more learned than those of the Pispatés. No one has studied the Romans' garum more deeply than we have, or better understood the onions of ancient Egypt, the locust paste of the earliest Arabs, the Tartars' horseflesh; and there is always something to learn in the books of the Canusi, commonly called Pauxcospie.

I shall not speak of those who eat only in the manner of Terlu, or those who adhere to Vincal's diet, or the Batistanes, or the others; but the Quekars deserve particular attention. They are the only guests I have never seen get drunk or swear. They are very hard to deceive, but they will never deceive you. It seems the law of loving one's neighbor as oneself was made only for these people; for really, how can a good Japanese boast of loving his neighbor as himself when for a little money he goes and fires a lead bullet into his brains, or cuts his throat with a kris four fingers wide, all under a banner? He exposes himself to having his own throat cut and receiving lead bullets; so one can say with far more truth that he hates his neighbor as himself. The Quekars have never had this frenzy. They say poor humans are earthenware jugs made to last a very short time, and that it is not worth their while to go merrily smashing themselves against one another.

I confess that if I were not a Canusi, I would not mind being a Quekar. You will admit there is no way to quarrel with such peaceful cooks. There are very many others called Diestes. They give dinner to everyone without distinction, and in their houses you are free to eat whatever you please: larded, wrapped in bacon, without lard, without bacon, with eggs, with oil; partridge, salmon, pale wine, red wine—it is all the same to them, provided you say some prayer to God before or after dinner, or even simply before breakfast, and are honest people. They will laugh with you at the Grand Lama's expense, which will do him no harm, and at the expense of Terluh and Vincal and Memnon, etc. It is only right that our Diestes should admit our Canusi are very learned in cookery, and above all never speak of reducing our revenues; then we shall live together very peacefully.

The Indian.

But after all, there must be a dominant cuisine, the king's cuisine.

The Japanese.

I admit it; but when the king of Japan has dined well, he ought to be in a good humor and not prevent his good subjects from digesting.

The Indian.

But if obstinate people insist on eating sausages under the king's nose that the king detests; if four or five thousand assemble armed with grills to cook their sausages; if they insult those who do not eat them?

The Japanese.

Then they must be punished like drunkards disturbing the citizens' peace. We have provided against that danger. Only those who eat in the royal fashion are eligible for dignities of state. All the others may dine as they please, but they are excluded from office. Riotous gatherings are strictly forbidden and punished immediately, without remission; all quarrels at table are carefully suppressed, according to the precept of our great Japanese cook, who wrote in the sacred language, *Suti raho, cus flat, natis in usum letitiæ sciphis pugnare tracum est*: which means, dinner is meant for quiet, decent joy, and one must not throw glasses at people's heads.

With these maxims we live happily at home. Our liberty is secure under our Taicosema; our wealth increases; we have two hundred junks of the line, and we are the terror of our neighbors.

The Indian.

Why, then, did the good versifier Recina, son of that Indian poet Recina, so tender, so precise, so harmonious, so eloquent, say in a didactic work in rhyme entitled *Grace*, and not *The Graces*:

Japan, where once so much light shone,
Is now a dreary heap of mad visions?

The Japanese.

The Recina you speak of is himself a great visionary. Does this poor Indian not know that we taught him what light is? That if the true course of the planets is known in India today, it is owed to us? That we alone taught men the fundamental laws of nature and the calculus of infinity? That, to descend to things of more common use, the people of his country learned only from us how to build junks in mathematical proportions? That they owe us even the coverings called machine-knit stockings with which they clothe their legs? Could we have invented so many admirable or useful things and be nothing but fools, while a man who put other people's fantasies into verse is the only sage? Let him leave us to do our cooking, and write verses, if he likes, on more poetic subjects.¹

The Indian.

What can you expect? He has his country's prejudices, his party's, and his own.

The Japanese.

Oh, that is too many prejudices!

¹ NB. *This Indian Recina, taking his country's dreamers on trust, believed good sauces could be made only when Brahma, by a wholly particular act of will, taught his favorites the sauce himself; that there were an infinite number of cooks for whom it was impossible to make a stew with a firm wish to succeed, and that Brahma deprived them of the means out of sheer malice. No such impertinence is believed in Japan, where this Japanese saying is held an incontestable truth:*

God naver acts by partial will, but by general Laws.

C — Catéchisme du Curé



Ariston.

Well, my dear Theotimus, so you are going to be a country priest?

Theotimus.

Yes; I am being given a little parish, and I prefer it to a large one. I have only a limited share of intelligence and energy. I certainly could not direct seventy thousand souls, considering that I have only one myself; and I have always admired the confidence of those who undertake these immense districts. I do not feel capable of such an administration. A great flock frightens me, but I shall be able to do some good for a little one. I have studied enough law to prevent my poor parishioners, as far as I can, from ruining themselves in lawsuits. I know enough medicine to recommend simple remedies when they are ill. I know enough agriculture to give them useful advice now and then. The local lord and his wife are decent people, not devotees, who will help me do good. I flatter myself that I shall live fairly happily, and that people will not be unhappy with me.

Ariston.

Are you not sorry to have no wife? She would be a great consolation. How pleasant, after preaching, singing, hearing confessions, giving communion, baptizing, burying, to find at home a gentle, agreeable, honest woman who would

care for your linen and your person, cheer you in health, nurse you in illness, give you pretty children whose good upbringing would benefit the state. I pity you, who serve men, for being deprived of a consolation so necessary to men.

Theotimus.

The Greek Church takes great care to encourage parish priests to marry; the Anglican Church and the Protestants have the same wisdom. The Latin Church has a contrary wisdom; I must submit to it. Perhaps today, when the philosophical spirit has made such progress, a council would make laws more favorable to humanity than the Council of Trent. Meanwhile I must conform to the present laws. It costs a great deal, I know; but so many people worth more than I have submitted to them that I ought not to complain.

Ariston.

You are learned, and your eloquence is wise; how do you intend to preach to country people?

Theotimus.

As I would preach to kings. I shall always speak of morality and never of controversy. God preserve me from delving into concomitant grace, efficacious grace which is resisted, sufficient grace which does not suffice; from examining whether the angels who ate with Abraham and Lot had bodies or merely pretended to eat. There are a thousand things my audience would not understand, and neither would I. I shall try to make good people and be one myself; but I shall not make theologians, and shall be one as little as I can.

Ariston.

What a good priest! I want to buy a country house in your parish. Please tell me how you will proceed in confession.

Theotimus.

Confession is an excellent thing, a restraint on crime invented in the remotest antiquity. People confessed in the celebration of all the ancient mysteries. We have imitated and sanctified this wise practice. It is very good for inducing hearts ulcerated by hatred to forgive, and for making petty thieves return what they may have stolen from their neighbors. It has some drawbacks. There are many indiscreet confessors, especially among the monks, who sometimes teach

girls more follies than all the boys in a village could lead them into. No details in confession: it is not a judicial interrogation, but the admission of faults that a sinner makes to the Supreme Being through another sinner, who will in turn accuse himself. This salutary admission is not made to satisfy a man's curiosity.

Ariston.

And excommunications—will you use them?

Theotimus.

No. Some rituals excommunicate locusts, sorcerers, and actors. I shall not forbid locusts to enter the church, considering that they never go there. I shall not excommunicate sorcerers, because there are no sorcerers; and as for actors, since they are pensioned by the king and authorized by the magistrate, I shall take care not to defame them. I shall even confess to you as my friend that I have a taste for the theater when it does not offend morals. I passionately love *The Misanthrope*, *Athalie*, and other plays that seem to me schools of virtue and propriety. The lord of my village has some of these plays performed in his château by talented young people. These performances inspire virtue through the attraction of pleasure; they form taste and teach good speech and pronunciation. I see nothing in this but what is very innocent and even very useful. I fully intend to attend these performances for my instruction, but in a screened box, so as not to scandalize the weak.

Ariston.

The more you reveal your feelings, the more I want to become your parishioner. One very important point troubles me. How will you prevent the peasants from getting drunk on feast days? That is their grand way of celebrating them. You see some overwhelmed by a liquid poison, their heads bent toward their knees, their hands dangling, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, reduced to a state far below that of beasts, led staggering home by their weeping wives, incapable of work the next day, often sick and stupefied for the rest of their lives. You see others made furious by wine, stirring up bloody quarrels, striking and being struck, and sometimes ending these frightful scenes, the shame of the

human species, in murder. It must be admitted that the state loses more subjects through feast days than through battles. How will you lessen so execrable an abuse in your parish?

Theotimus.

I have made my decision. I shall allow them, even urge them, to cultivate their fields on feast days after divine service, which I shall hold very early. It is holiday idleness that leads them to the tavern. Working days are not days of debauchery and murder. Moderate labor contributes to the health of body and soul; moreover, this labor is necessary to the state. Suppose five million men each do ten sous' worth of work a day on average—and that is a very modest reckoning. You make those five million men useless for thirty days of the year. That is therefore thirty times five million ten-sou pieces that the state loses in labor. Certainly God has never commanded either this loss or drunkenness.

Ariston.

Thus you will reconcile prayer and labor. God commands both. You will serve God and your neighbor. But in ecclesiastical disputes, which side will you take?

Theotimus.

None. People never dispute virtue, because it comes from God: they quarrel over opinions, which come from men.

Ariston.

What a good priest! What a good priest!

C — Christianisme



Historical inquiries into Christianity.

Several scholars have expressed surprise at finding no trace of Jesus Christ in the historian Josephus, for everyone now agrees that the short passage mentioning him in his history is interpolated. Yet Josephus' father must have been one of the witnesses to all Jesus' miracles. Josephus was of priestly descent, related to Queen Mariamne, Herod's wife; he enters into the greatest detail about all that prince's actions, yet says not a word of either Jesus' life or death. And this historian, who conceals none of Herod's cruelties, does not mention the massacre of all the children ordered by him after news reached him that a king of the Jews had been born. The Greek calendar counts fourteen thousand children slaughtered on that occasion.

Of all the actions of all tyrants, this is the most horrible. There is no parallel in the history of the entire world.

Yet the best writer the Jews ever had, the only one esteemed by Romans and Greeks, makes no mention of this event, as extraordinary as it is appalling. He says nothing of the new star that appeared in the East after the Savior's birth, a brilliant phenomenon that ought not to have escaped so enlightened a historian as Josephus. He is also silent about the darkness that covered the whole earth at midday for three hours at the Savior's death; about the great number of tombs that opened at that moment, and the multitude of the just who rose from the dead.

Scholars continually express their surprise that no Roman historian spoke of these prodigies, which occurred under the empire of Tiberius, before the eyes of a Roman governor and a Roman garrison, who ought to have sent the emperor and senate a circumstantial account of the most miraculous event men had ever heard of. Rome itself must have been plunged into thick darkness for three hours; this prodigy ought to have been recorded in Rome's annals and in those of every nation. God did not wish these divine things to be written by profane hands.

These same scholars also find certain difficulties in the history of the Gospels. They observe that in St. Matthew, Jesus Christ tells the scribes and Pharisees that all the innocent blood shed on earth must fall on them, from the blood of Abel the just to Zechariah, son of Barac, whom they killed between the temple and the altar.

There is, they say, no Zechariah killed in the temple in Hebrew history before the Messiah's coming or in his time; but in Josephus' history of the siege of Jerusalem one finds a Zechariah, son of Barac, killed in the middle of the temple by the faction of the Zealots. It is in chapter 19 of book 4. From this they suspect that the Gospel according to St. Matthew was written after Titus took Jerusalem. But all doubts and objections of this kind vanish as soon as one considers the infinite difference that must exist between divinely inspired books and the books of men. God wished to envelop his birth, life, and death in a cloud as venerable as it is obscure. His ways differ from ours in everything.

Scholars have also greatly tormented themselves over the difference between the two genealogies of Jesus Christ. St. Matthew gives Joseph's father as Jacob, Jacob's as Matthan, Matthan's as Eleazar. St. Luke, on the contrary, says Joseph was the son of Heli, Heli of Mattat, Mattat of Levi, Levi of Janna, etc.

They also raise difficulties because Jesus is not Joseph's son, but Mary's. They further raise certain doubts about our Savior's miracles, citing St. Augustine, St. Hilary, and others who gave the accounts of these miracles a mystical, allegorical meaning: the fig tree cursed and withered for bearing no figs when it was not fig season; the demons sent into pigs' bodies in a country where pigs were not kept; the water changed into wine at the end of a meal when the

guests were already flushed with drink. But all these scholarly criticisms are confounded by faith, which only grows purer for it. The sole purpose of this article is to follow the historical thread and give a precise idea of the facts no one disputes.

First, Jesus was born under the Mosaic law. He was circumcised according to that law, fulfilled all its precepts, celebrated all its feasts, and preached only morality. He did not reveal the mystery of his incarnation; he never told the Jews that he was born of a virgin. He received John's blessing in the waters of the Jordan, a ceremony to which many Jews submitted; but he never baptized anyone. He did not speak of the seven sacraments; he established no ecclesiastical hierarchy in his lifetime. He concealed from his contemporaries that he was the Son of God, eternally begotten, consubstantial with God, and that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. He did not say that his person was composed of two natures and two wills. He wished these great mysteries to be announced to men in the course of time by those enlightened by the Holy Spirit. As long as he lived, he departed in nothing from the law of his fathers. He showed men only a just man pleasing to God, persecuted by those who envied him and condemned to death by prejudiced magistrates. He wished his holy Church, established by him, to do all the rest.

Josephus, in chapter XII of his history, speaks of a sect of rigorous Jews newly established by a certain Judas the Galilean. "*They despise,*" he says, "*the evils of the earth; they triumph over torments by their constancy; they prefer death to life when the cause is honorable. They have endured fire and sword and seen their bones broken rather than utter the slightest word against their legislator or eat forbidden foods.*"

It appears that this portrait applies to the Judaïtes, not the Essenes. For here are Josephus' words: "*Judas was the founder of a new sect, entirely different from the other three,*" that is, *from the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes*. He continues: "*They are Jews by nation; they live united among themselves and regard pleasure as a vice.*" The natural sense of this sentence shows that the author is speaking of the Judaïtes.

However that may be, these Judaïtes were known before Christ's disciples began to form a considerable party in the world.

The Therapeutae were a society different from the Essenes and Judaïtes; they resembled the Gymnosophists of India and the Brahmins. *"They have,"* says Philo, *"an impulse of heavenly love that throws them into the enthusiasm of the Bacchantes and Corybantes and brings them into the state of contemplation to which they aspire. This sect arose in Alexandria, which was full of Jews, and spread widely through Egypt."*

The disciples of John the Baptist also spread a little through Egypt, but chiefly through Syria and Arabia; there were also some in Asia Minor. The Acts of the Apostles (ch. 19) says that Paul met several in Ephesus. He asked them, *"Have you received the Holy Spirit?"* They answered, *"We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."* He asked, *"What baptism, then, have you received?"* They answered, *"John's baptism."*

In the first years following Jesus' death there were seven different societies or sects among the Jews: the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Judaïtes, Therapeutae, the disciples of John, and the disciples of Christ, whose little flock God guided along paths unknown to human wisdom.

The faithful received the name of Christians at Antioch around the year sixty of our common era; but in the Roman Empire they were known by other names, as we shall see later. Before this they distinguished themselves only by the names of brothers, saints, or faithful. God, who had descended to earth to be an example of humility and poverty, thus gave his Church the feeblest beginnings, guiding it in the same state of humiliation in which he had wished to be born. All the first faithful were obscure men, all worked with their hands. The apostle Paul testifies that he earned his living making tents. St. Peter raised from the dead the seamstress Dorcas, who made the brothers' robes. The faithful assembled at Joppa in the house of a leather-dresser named Simon, as we see in chapter 9 of the Acts of the Apostles.

The faithful spread secretly through Greece, and some went from there to Rome among the Jews, to whom the Romans allowed a synagogue. They did not at first separate from the Jews; they retained circumcision, and, as has

already been observed elsewhere, the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised.

When the apostle Paul took Timothy with him, whose father was a Gentile, he circumcised him himself in the little town of Lystra. But Titus, his other disciple, refused to submit to circumcision. The brothers, Jesus' disciples, remained united with the Jews until Paul suffered persecution in Jerusalem for bringing foreigners into the temple. The Jews accused him of wishing to destroy the Mosaic law through Jesus Christ. To clear him of this accusation, the apostle James proposed that Paul have his head shaved and go to purify himself in the temple with four Jews who had vowed to shave themselves. "*Take them with you,*" James told him (ch. 21, Acts of the Apostles), "*purify yourself with them, and let everyone know that what is said of you is false, and that you continue to keep the law of Moses.*"

Paul was nonetheless accused of impiety and heresy, and his criminal trial lasted a long time; but the very accusations brought against him make it evident that he had come to Jerusalem to observe Jewish rites.

He said these very words to Festus (chapter 25 of Acts): "*I have sinned neither against the Jewish law nor against the temple.*"

The apostles proclaimed Jesus Christ as a Jew who observed the Jewish law, sent by God to have it observed.

"Circumcision is useful," says the apostle Paul (2nd Epistle to the Romans), "if you observe the law; but if you violate it, your circumcision becomes a foreskin. If an uncircumcised man keeps the law, he will be as one circumcised. The true Jew is he who is a Jew inwardly."

When this apostle speaks of Jesus Christ in his epistles, he does not reveal the ineffable mystery of consubstantiality with God. "We are delivered by him," he says (ch. 5, Epistle to the Romans), "from God's wrath; God's gift has spread over us through the grace given to a single man, who is Jesus Christ."—"Death reigned through the sin of a single man; the just will reign in life through a single man, who is Jesus Christ."

And in chapter 8: “We are God’s heirs and Christ’s co-heirs.” And in chapter 16: “To God, who alone is wise, honor and glory through Jesus Christ.”—“You belong to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to God.” (1st Corinthians, ch. 3.)

And (1st Corinthians, ch. 15, v. 27): “Everything is subjected to him, excepting, of course, God, who subjected all things to him.”

There has been some difficulty explaining the passage in the Epistle to the Philippians: “*Do nothing from vain glory; in humility let each believe the others superior to himself; have the same feelings as Christ Jesus, who, being in the imprint of God, did not think to seize equality with God as his prize.*” This passage seems thoroughly examined and brought into full light in a surviving letter from the churches of Vienne and Lyon, written in the year 117, a precious monument of antiquity. This letter praises the modesty of certain faithful: “*They did not wish,*” says the letter, “*to take the great title of martyrs*” for a few tribulations, “*following the example of Jesus Christ, who, being imprinted with God, did not think to seize the quality of equality with God as his prize.*” Origen also says in his commentary on John: Jesus’ greatness shone more when he humbled himself “*than if he had seized equality with God as his prize.*” Indeed, the contrary explanation is a manifest misreading. What would it mean to say, “*Believe others superior to you; imitate Jesus, who did not think it a seizure, a usurpation, to make himself equal to God*”? It would plainly contradict itself, give an example of greatness as an example of modesty, offend common sense.

Thus the apostles’ wisdom founded the infant Church. This wisdom was not impaired by the dispute that arose between the apostles Peter, James, and John on one side, and Paul on the other. The dispute occurred at Antioch. The apostle Peter, otherwise Cephas or Simon Barjona, ate with converted Gentiles, observing neither the ceremonies of the law nor its distinctions between foods. He, Barnabas, and other disciples ate indiscriminately of pork, strangled flesh, animals with split hooves that did not chew the cud. But when several Christian Jews arrived, St. Peter resumed with them abstinence from forbidden foods and the ceremonies of the Mosaic law.

This action seemed very prudent; he did not wish to scandalize his companions, the Christian Jews. But St. Paul rose against him somewhat harshly. “*I resisted him,*” he says, “*to his face, because he was blameworthy.*” (Epistle to the Galatians, ch. 2.)

This quarrel seems all the more extraordinary on St. Paul’s part because, having at first been a persecutor, he ought to have been more moderate, and because he himself had gone to sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem, had circumcised his disciple Timothy, had performed the Jewish rites for which he then reproached Cephas. St. Jerome maintains that this quarrel between Paul and Cephas was feigned. He says in the first homily, volume 3, that they acted like two lawyers who grow heated and spar in court to gain greater authority over their clients. He says that Peter Cephas, being destined to preach to the Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles, pretended to quarrel—Paul to win the Gentiles, for the Gentiles, and Peter to win the Jews. But St. Augustine is not at all of this opinion. “*I am sorry,*” he says in his epistle to Jerome, “*that so great a man should make himself the patron of falsehood, patronum mendacii...*”

For the rest, if Peter was destined for the Judaizing Jews and Paul for foreigners, it is very probable that Peter did not come to Rome. The Acts of the Apostles makes no mention of Peter’s journey to Italy.

However that may be, it was around the year 60 of our era that Christians began to separate from the Jewish communion, and this brought them so many quarrels and persecutions from the synagogues scattered through Rome, Greece, Egypt, and Asia. Their Jewish brothers accused them of impiety and atheism and excommunicated them in their synagogues three times on the Sabbath. But God always sustained them amid their persecutions.

Little by little several churches formed, and the separation between Jews and Christians became complete before the end of the first century. The Roman government knew nothing of this separation. Neither Rome’s senate nor its emperors entered into these quarrels of a little party that God had so far guided in obscurity and was raising by imperceptible degrees.

We must see what state the Roman Empire's religion was then in. Mysteries and expiations enjoyed credit almost everywhere on earth. It is true that the emperors, the great, and the philosophers had no faith in these mysteries; but the people, who dictate to the great in matters of religion, obliged them to conform outwardly to their worship. To put the people in chains, one must appear to wear the same chains oneself. Cicero himself was initiated into the mysteries of Eleusis. Knowledge of a single God was the principal doctrine announced at these mysterious and magnificent festivals. It must be admitted that the surviving prayers and hymns of these mysteries are the most pious and admirable things paganism possesses.

The Christians, who also worshiped only one God, found it easier on this account to convert many Gentiles. Some philosophers of Plato's school became Christians. That is why the Church Fathers of the first three centuries were all Platonists.

The ill-considered zeal of some did no harm to fundamental truths. St. Justin, one of the earliest Fathers, has been reproached for saying in his commentary on Isaiah that the saints would enjoy all sensual blessings in a thousand-year reign on earth. He has been blamed for saying in his *Apology for Christianity* that God, having made the earth, left its care to angels, who fell in love with women and fathered children on them: the demons.

Lactantius and other Fathers have been condemned for fabricating oracles of the Sibyls. He maintained that the Erythraean Sibyl had composed these four Greek lines, here translated literally:

With five loaves and two fish
He will feed five thousand men in the desert,
And gathering the pieces left over,
He will fill twelve baskets with them.

The early Christians were also reproached for fabricating certain acrostic verses by an ancient Sibyl, each beginning in order with one of the letters of Jesus Christ's name.

But this zeal of some Christians, which was not according to knowledge, did not prevent the Church from making the progress God intended for it. Christians first celebrated their mysteries at night in secluded houses and cellars; this gave them the title of light-fleeing, according to Minucius Felix. Philo calls them Gessaeans. Among the Gentiles, their most common names during the first four centuries were Galileans and Nazarenes; but Christian has prevailed over all the others.

Neither the hierarchy nor the customs were established all at once. Apostolic times differed from those that followed. St. Paul tells us in First Corinthians that when the brothers, circumcised or uncircumcised, were assembled and several prophets wished to speak, only two or three were to speak, and if anyone meanwhile had a revelation, the prophet who had taken the floor was to fall silent.

Some Christian communions that hold assemblies without a hierarchy still base themselves on this practice of the primitive Church. Everyone except women was then allowed to speak in church. What is now Holy Mass, celebrated in the morning, was the Supper, held in the evening. These practices changed as the Church grew stronger. A larger society required more regulations, and the prudence of the pastors adapted itself to time and place.

St. Jerome and Eusebius report that when the churches took form, five different orders were gradually distinguished: the overseers, *Episcopoi*, from whom came bishops; the elders of the society, *Presbyteroi*, priests; the servants, or deacons; the *Pistoi*, believers, initiates—that is, the baptized, who shared in the suppers of the Agape feasts; and the catechumens and energumens awaiting baptism. No one in these five orders wore clothing different from the others; no one was compelled to celibacy, witness Tertullian's book dedicated to his wife, witness the apostles' example. No representations, either paintings or sculpture, in their assemblies during the first three centuries. Christians carefully concealed their books from Gentiles, entrusting them only to initiates; catechumens were not even permitted to recite the Lord's Prayer.

What most distinguished Christians, and lasted until very recent times, was the power to drive out devils with the sign of the cross. Origen, in his treatise against Celsus, admits at number 133 that Antinous, deified by the emperor Hadrian, performed miracles in Egypt through the power of charms and illusions; but he says devils leave the bodies of the possessed at the mere utterance of Jesus' name.

Tertullian goes further. From the depths of Africa, where he lived, he says in chapter 23 of his *Apology*: "*If your gods do not confess themselves devils in the presence of a true Christian, we willingly allow you to shed that Christian's blood. Is there any clearer demonstration?*"

Indeed, Jesus Christ sent his apostles to drive out demons. The Jews of his time also had the gift of expelling them; for when Jesus had delivered the possessed, sent the devils into a herd of pigs, and performed other such cures, the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons through the power of Beelzebub." "*If it is through Beelzebub that I drive them out,*" Jesus answered, "*through whom do your sons drive them out?*" It is indisputable that the Jews boasted of this power: they had exorcists and exorcisms. They invoked the name of God, of Jacob, and of Abraham. They put consecrated herbs into the noses of demoniacs. Josephus reports some of these ceremonies. This power over devils, which the Jews have lost, was transmitted to Christians, who also seem to have lost it some time ago.

The power to drive out demons included that of destroying the operations of magic; for magic always flourished among all nations. All the Church Fathers testify to magic. St. Justin admits in book 3 of his *Apology* that the souls of the dead are often summoned, and draws from this an argument for the soul's immortality. Lactantius, in book 7 of his *Divine Institutions*, says "*that if anyone dared deny the existence of souls after death, the magician would soon convince him by making them appear.*" Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Bishop Cyprian—all affirm the same thing. It is true that today everything has changed, and there are no more magicians than demoniacs; but there will be some whenever God pleases.

When Christian societies grew somewhat numerous, and several rose against the worship of the Roman Empire, magistrates dealt severely with them, and the people above all persecuted them. They did not persecute the Jews, who had particular privileges and kept to their synagogues; they allowed them to practice their religion, as is still done in Rome today. All the diverse forms of worship scattered throughout the empire were tolerated, though the senate did not adopt them.

But Christians, declaring themselves enemies of all these forms of worship, especially the empire's, were exposed several times to cruel trials.

One of the earliest and most celebrated martyrs was Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, condemned by the emperor Trajan himself, then in Asia, and sent by his orders to Rome to be exposed to wild beasts, at a time when other Christians were not being massacred there. We do not know what accusation was brought against him before this emperor, otherwise renowned for clemency. St. Ignatius must have had very violent enemies. However that may be, the history of his martyrdom reports that the name of Jesus Christ was found engraved on his heart in golden letters; and from this Christians in some places took the name Theophores, which Ignatius had given himself.

A letter of his survives, asking the bishops and Christians not to oppose his martyrdom—whether because Christians were already powerful enough to deliver him, or because some among them had enough influence to obtain his pardon. Another very remarkable thing is that Rome's Christians were allowed to come and meet him when he was brought to the capital, which plainly proves that it was the person being punished, not the sect.

Persecutions were not continuous. Origen says in book three against Celsus: *"One can easily count the Christians who have died for their religion, because few have died, and only from time to time, at intervals."*

God took such great care of his Church that, despite its enemies, he arranged for it to hold five councils in the first century, sixteen in the second, and thirty in the third—that is, tolerated assemblies. These assemblies were sometimes forbidden when the false prudence of magistrates feared they might grow tumultuous. Few official records survive of the proconsuls and praetors who

condemned Christians to death. These would be the only documents from which one could establish the accusations brought against them and their punishments.

We have a fragment of Dionysius of Alexandria in which he reports an extract from the register of a proconsul of Egypt under the emperor Valerian. Here it is:

“Dionysius, Faustus, Maximus, Marcellus, and Chaeremon having been brought to the hearing, the prefect Aemilianus said to them: ‘You have been able to learn, from my conversations with you and everything I have written to you, how much kindness our princes have shown you. I am willing to tell you again: they make your preservation and safety depend on yourselves, and your destiny is in your hands. They ask only one thing of you, which reason demands of every reasonable person: that you worship the gods who protect their empire, and abandon this other worship, so contrary to nature and good sense.’”

“Dionysius answered: ‘Not everyone has the same gods, and everyone worships those he believes truly to be gods.’”

“The prefect Aemilianus replied: ‘I see clearly that you are ungrateful men who abuse the emperors’ kindness toward you. Very well: you shall remain no longer in this city, and I send you to Cephro in the depths of Libya. That shall be your place of banishment, according to the order I have received from our emperors. Moreover, do not think of holding your assemblies there, or going to offer your prayers in those places you call cemeteries: this is absolutely forbidden you, and I shall permit it to no one.’”

Nothing bears more marks of truth than this official record. It shows that there were times when assemblies were prohibited. In the same way, among us Calvinists are forbidden to assemble in Languedoc; we have even sometimes had ministers or preachers hanged or broken on the wheel for holding assemblies despite the laws. In the same way Roman Catholics are forbidden to assemble in England and Ireland, and there have been occasions when offenders were condemned to death.

Despite these prohibitions imposed by Roman laws, God inspired several emperors with indulgence toward Christians. Even Diocletian, regarded by the ignorant as a persecutor—Diocletian, whose first year of reign still marks the beginning of the era of martyrs—was Christianity’s declared protector for more than eighteen years, to the point that several Christians held principal offices in his personal service. He even allowed a magnificent church to rise opposite his palace in Nicomedia, his residence. Finally, he married a Christian woman.

Caesar Galerius, unfortunately prejudiced against the Christians, of whom he believed he had reason to complain, induced Diocletian to have Nicomedia’s cathedral destroyed. A Christian more zealous than wise tore the emperor’s edict to pieces, and from this came that famous persecution in which more than two hundred people were condemned to death throughout the Roman Empire, not counting those whom the fury of the common people, always fanatical and always barbarous, may have killed in violation of legal forms.

There were so many martyrs at various times that we must take great care not to shake the truth of the history of these genuine confessors of our holy religion by a dangerous admixture of fables and false martyrs.

The Benedictine Dom Ruinart, for example, a man otherwise as learned as he was estimable and zealous, ought to have chosen his *Authentic Acts* with greater discretion. It is not enough for a manuscript to come from the abbey of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire or a Celestine convent in Paris, agreeing with a manuscript of the Feuillants, to make an act authentic. The act must be ancient, written by contemporaries, and must otherwise bear all the marks of truth.

He could have spared us the adventure of young Romanus, which occurred in 303. This young Romanus had obtained his pardon from Diocletian at Antioch. Yet he says that the judge Asclepiades condemned him to be burned; that Jews present at the spectacle mocked young St. Romanus and reproached the Christians because their God let them burn, although he had delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the furnace; that immediately, in the clearest weather, a storm arose and put out the fire; that the judge then ordered young Romanus’ tongue cut out; that the emperor’s chief physician, happen-

ing to be there, obligingly performed the executioner's office and cut his tongue out at the root; that the young man, who had previously stammered, instantly spoke with great fluency; that the emperor was astonished that anyone could speak so well without a tongue; and that the physician, to repeat the experiment, at once cut the tongue out of a passerby, who died suddenly of it.

Eusebius, from whom the Benedictine Ruinart took this tale, ought to have respected the true miracles performed in the Old and New Testaments—which no one will ever doubt—enough not to associate them with such suspect stories, which could scandalize the weak.

This last persecution did not extend throughout the empire. There was then some Christianity in England, which soon vanished, to reappear later under the Saxon kings. Southern Gaul and Spain were full of Christians. Caesar Constantius Chlorus greatly protected them throughout these provinces. He had a Christian concubine, Constantine's mother, known as St. Helena; for no marriage between them was ever established, and he even dismissed her as early as 292, when he married the daughter of Maximian Herculus. But she had retained great influence over him and inspired him with a strong affection for our holy religion.

Divine providence prepared the triumph of its Church by ways that seem human. Constantius Chlorus died in 306 at York in England, when his children by a Caesar's daughter were very young and could not claim the empire. Constantine had the confidence to have himself elected at York by five or six thousand soldiers, chiefly Germans, Gauls, and Englishmen. There was little likelihood that this election, made without the consent of Rome, the senate, or the armies, could prevail; but God gave him victory over Maxentius, elected at Rome, and finally delivered him from all his colleagues. It cannot be concealed that he first made himself unworthy of heaven's favors by murdering all his relatives, his wife, and his son.

One may doubt what Zosimus reports on this subject. He says Constantine, troubled by remorse after so many crimes, asked the pontiffs of the empire whether there were any expiations for him, and they told him they knew of none. It is quite true that none had been available to Nero, and he had not

dared attend the sacred mysteries in Greece. Yet taurobolia were practiced; and it is very hard to believe that an all-powerful emperor could not find a priest willing to grant him expiatory sacrifices. Perhaps it is even less credible that Constantine, occupied with war, his ambition, his projects, and surrounded by flatterers, had time to feel remorse. Zosimus adds that an Egyptian priest arriving from Spain, who had access to his court, promised him expiation of all his crimes in the Christian religion. It has been suspected that this priest was Hosius, bishop of Córdoba.

However that may be, Constantine entered into communion with the Christians, although he was never more than a catechumen and reserved baptism for the moment of his death. He had Constantinople built, which became the center of the empire and of the Christian religion. Then the Church assumed an august form.

It should be noted that as early as 314, before Constantine resided in his new city, those who had persecuted Christians were punished by them for their cruelties. Christians threw Maximian's wife into the Orontes; they slaughtered all his relatives; in Egypt and Palestine they massacred the magistrates who had declared themselves most strongly against Christianity. Diocletian's widow and daughter, who had hidden in Thessalonica, were recognized, and their bodies were thrown into the sea. One might wish Christians had listened less to the spirit of vengeance; but God, who punishes according to justice, wished Christian hands to be stained with their persecutors' blood as soon as those Christians were free to act.

Constantine summoned and assembled at Nicaea, opposite Constantinople, the first ecumenical council, presided over by Hosius. There the great question agitating the Church concerning Jesus Christ's divinity was decided. Some invoked the opinion of Origen, who says in chapter 6 against Celsus: "*We present our prayers to God through Jesus, who stands between created natures and the uncreated nature, who brings us his Father's grace and presents our prayers to the great God as our pontiff.*" They also relied on several passages of St. Paul, some of which have been quoted. Above all they based themselves on these

words of Jesus Christ: "*My Father is greater than I*"; and they regarded Jesus as the firstborn of creation, the purest emanation of the Supreme Being, but not precisely as God.

The others, who were orthodox, cited passages more in keeping with Jesus' eternal divinity, such as this: "*My Father and I are the same thing*"—words their adversaries interpreted as meaning, "*My Father and I have the same design, the same will; I have no desires other than my Father's.*" Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, and after him Athanasius, headed the orthodox; Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, with seventeen other bishops, the priest Arius, and several other priests, belonged to the opposite party. The quarrel was poisoned from the beginning because St. Alexander called his adversaries Antichrists.

Finally, after many disputes, the Holy Spirit decided thus in the council, through the mouths of 299 bishops against eighteen: "*Jesus is the only Son of God, begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father; God of God, light of light, true God of true God, consubstantial with the Father; we also believe in the Holy Spirit,*" etc. This was the council's formula. This example shows how much bishops outweighed simple priests. Two thousand people of the second order shared Arius' opinion, according to two patriarchs of Alexandria who wrote the *Chronicle of Alexandria* in Arabic. Arius was exiled by Constantine, but Athanasius was also exiled soon afterward, and Arius was recalled to Constantinople. Yet St. Macarius prayed so fervently for God to make Arius die before this priest could enter the cathedral that God answered his prayer. Arius died on his way to church in 330. The emperor Constantine ended his life in 337. He placed his will in the hands of an Arian priest and died in the arms of the Arian leader Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, having been baptized only on his deathbed and leaving the Church triumphant but divided. The supporters of Athanasius and those of Eusebius waged cruel war on one another; and what is called Arianism was established for a long time in every province of the empire.

Julian the philosopher, surnamed the Apostate, wished to stifle these divisions and could not succeed.

The second general council was held at Constantinople in 381. It explained what the Council of Nicaea had not thought fit to say about the Holy Spirit, adding to the Nicene formula "*that the Holy Spirit is the life-giving Lord, that he proceeds from the Father, and that he is worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son.*"

Only around the ninth century did the Latin Church gradually establish that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

In 431 the third general council, held at Ephesus, decided that Mary was truly the mother of God, and that Jesus had two natures and one person. Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, who wished the Holy Virgin to be called the mother of Christ, was declared a *Judas* by the council; and the two natures were confirmed again by the Council of Chalcedon.

I shall pass lightly over the following centuries, which are well enough known. Unfortunately, none of these disputes failed to cause wars, and the Church was always obliged to fight. To exercise the patience of the faithful, God also allowed Greeks and Latins to break irretrievably in the ninth century; he further allowed twenty-nine bloody schisms in the West over the see of Rome.

Meanwhile almost the whole Greek Church and the entire Church of Africa became enslaved under the Arabs, and afterward under the Turks, who raised the Mohammedan religion on the ruins of the Christian. The Roman Church survived, but always stained with blood through more than six hundred years of discord between the Western Empire and the priesthood.

Those very quarrels made it powerful. The bishops and abbots in Germany all made themselves princes, and the popes gradually acquired absolute dominion in Rome and over a country a hundred leagues across. Thus God tried his Church through humiliations, disturbances, and splendor.

In the sixteenth century this Latin Church lost half of Germany, Denmark, Sweden, England, Scotland, Ireland, Switzerland, and Holland. It has gained more ground in America through the Spaniards' conquests than it lost in Europe; but with more territory it has far fewer subjects.

Divine providence seemed to destine Japan, Siam, India, and China to submit to the pope's obedience, to compensate him for Asia Minor, Syria, Greece, Egypt, Africa, Russia, and the other lost states we have mentioned. St. Francis Xavier, who carried the Holy Gospel to the East Indies and Japan when the Portuguese went there seeking merchandise, performed a very great number of miracles, all attested by the Reverend Jesuit Fathers. Some say he raised nine dead people; but the Reverend Father Ribadeneyra, in his *Flower of the Saints*, confines himself to saying he raised only four. That is quite enough. Providence willed that in less than a hundred years there should be thousands of Roman Catholics on the islands of Japan. But the devil sowed his tares among the good grain. Christians formed a conspiracy followed by a civil war, in which they were all exterminated in 1638. Then the nation closed its ports to all foreigners except the Dutch, who were regarded as merchants, not Christians, and who were at first obliged to trample the cross to obtain permission to sell their goods in the prison where they are confined on arriving at Nagasaki.

The Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion was proscribed in China in recent times, but less cruelly. The Reverend Jesuit Fathers had not, it is true, raised the dead at the court of Peking: they had contented themselves with teaching astronomy, casting cannon, and being mandarins. Their unfortunate disputes with Dominicans and others so scandalized the great emperor Yongzheng that this prince, who was justice and goodness itself, was blind enough to forbid any further teaching of our holy religion, on which our missionaries could not agree. He drove them out with paternal kindness, providing food and transportation to the borders of his empire.

All Asia, all Africa, half of Europe, everything belonging to the English and Dutch in America, all the unconquered American tribes, all the southern lands, which form a fifth part of the globe, have remained the devil's prey, to fulfill this holy saying: "*Many are called, but few are chosen.*" If there are about sixteen hundred million men on earth, as some learned men maintain, the holy universal Roman Catholic Church possesses roughly sixty million of them, which amounts to more than one two-hundred-and-thirtieth of the inhabitants of the known world.

C — Convulsions



Around 1724 people danced in the cemetery of Saint-Médard; many miracles took place there. Here is one reported in a song by the Duchess of Maine:

A royal shoe-cleaner,
Crippled in his left heel,
Obtained as a special favor
A limp in the other foot.

The miraculous convulsions, as everyone knows, continued until a guard was posted at the cemetery.

By order of the king, God is forbidden
To frequent this place again.

The Jesuits, as everyone also knows, could no longer perform such miracles, since their Xavier had exhausted the Society's graces by raising nine dead people, a verified count. To counterbalance the Jansenists' credit, they therefore took it into their heads to have a print engraved of Jesus Christ dressed as a Jesuit. A wit of the Jansenist party, as everyone also knows, put these words beneath the print:

Admire the consummate artifice
Of these ingenious monks:
They have dressed you like themselves,
My God, for fear you might be loved.

To prove more convincingly that Jesus Christ could never have taken the Jesuit habit, the Jansenists filled Paris with convulsions and drew the world to their precinct. Carré de Montgeron, a councilor of the Parlement, went to present the king with a quarto collection of all these miracles, attested by a thousand witnesses. Naturally, he was put in a château, where they tried to restore his brain through diet; but truth always triumphs over persecution. The miracles continued for thirty years without interruption. People had Sister Rose, Sister Illuminée, Sister Promise, Sister Confite brought to their homes. They had themselves whipped, with no trace showing the next day; logs were struck against their well-armored, well-padded stomachs without hurting them; they were laid before a great fire, their faces rubbed with ointment, without being burned. Finally, since all the arts improve, they ended by having swords thrust into their flesh and being crucified. A famous theologian has even had the advantage of being put on the cross himself: all this to convince the world that a certain bull was ridiculous, which could have been proved at less expense. Yet Jesuits and Jansenists all united against *The Spirit of the Laws*, and against ... and against ... and against ... and against ... And after that we dare mock the Lapps, the Samoyeds, and the Negroes!

C — Critique



I do not mean to speak here of that criticism of scholiasts which badly restores a word in an ancient author that was perfectly well understood before. I do not touch on the genuine criticism that has disentangled what can be disentangled of ancient history and philosophy. I have in mind criticism bordering on satire. A lover of literature was reading Tasso with me one day; he came upon this stanza:

The harsh sound of the infernal trumpet
Calls the dwellers in eternal shade;
The vast black caverns tremble,
And the blind air echoes with the noise.
Not so shrill from the highest
Regions of heaven does the thunderbolt fall;
Nor does the earth ever shake so violently
When, pregnant, it seals vapors in its breast.

He then read several stanzas at random of this strength and harmony. “Ah!” he exclaimed, “so this is what your Boileau calls tinsel! Is this how he wishes to belittle a great man who lived a hundred years before him, the better to exalt another great man who lived sixteen hundred years earlier and would himself have done Tasso justice?”

“Take comfort,” I told him; “let us take up Quinault’s operas.” On opening the book we found cause enough to be angry with criticism; the admirable poem of *Armide* presented itself, and we found these words:

Sidonie.

Hatred is dreadful and barbarous;
Love forces the hearts it seizes
To suffer cruel pains.
If your fate is in your power,
Choose indifference:
It ensures a happier destiny.

Armide.

No, no, it is not possible for me
To pass from my turmoil into peace;
My heart can no longer grow calm.
Renaud offends me too much; he is only too lovable;
Henceforth a choice is forced upon me:
To hate him or to love him.

We read all of *Armide*, in which Tasso’s genius receives new charms at Quinault’s hands. “Well,” I told my friend, “yet this is the Quinault whom Boileau always strove to have regarded as the most contemptible of writers. He even persuaded Louis XIV that this graceful, touching, moving, elegant writer had no merit except what he borrowed from the musician Lully.” “I understand that easily enough,” my friend answered. “Boileau was not jealous of the musician; he was jealous of the poet. What reliance can we place on the judgment of a man who, to rhyme with a line ending in *aut*, would disparage now *Boursault*, now *Hénault*, now *Quinault*, depending on whether he was on good or bad terms with those gentlemen?

“But not to let your zeal against injustice cool, merely put your head out the window. Look at that beautiful façade of the Louvre, through which Perrault immortalized himself. This able man was the brother of a very learned academician with whom Boileau had had some dispute: reason enough to be called an ignorant architect.”

After reflecting a little, my friend resumed with a sigh: “Human nature is made that way. In his memoirs the Duke of Sully finds Cardinal d’Ossat and Secretary Villeroy to be bad ministers; Louvois did what he could not to esteem the great Colbert.” “They printed nothing against each other in their lifetimes,” I replied. “That is a folly belonging almost exclusively to literature, legal wrangling, and theology.

“We had a man of merit, La Motte, who wrote some very fine stanzas:

“Sometimes, against the fire that enchants her,
A young beauty stands firm,
And arms herself against herself
With a painful firmness.
Alas, this extreme constraint
Deprives her of the vice she loves
To escape the shame she hates.
Her severity is only show,
And the honor of passing for chaste
Makes her resolve to be so in fact.

“In vain this stern Stoic,
Weighed down by a thousand faults,
Boasts of a heroic soul
Wholly devoted to virtue.
It is not virtue that he loves;
But his heart, drunk on itself,
Would usurp the altars;
And with his frivolous wisdom
He seeks only to adorn the idol
He offers for mortals’ worship.

“The fields of Pharsalus and Arbela
Saw two conquerors triumph,
Both worthy models
For great hearts to set before themselves.
But success made their glory;
And had the seal of victory
Not consecrated these demigods,
Alexander, in the common eye,
Would have been merely reckless,
And Caesar merely seditious.”

“This author,” he said, “was a sage who more than once lent philosophy the charm of verse. Had he always written such stanzas, he would be the first of lyric poets. Yet it was while he was producing these fine pieces that one of his contemporaries called him:

“A certain gosling, barnyard game.

“Elsewhere he says of La Motte:

“The tedious beauty of his discourses.

“And elsewhere:

*"... I see only one fault in them:
The author ought to have written them in prose.
Those odes smell strongly of Quinault.*

"He pursues him everywhere, everywhere reproaches him with dryness and lack of harmony.

"Would you be curious to see the odes written a few years later by this same censor, who judged La Motte like a master and discredited him like an enemy? Read:

"This sovereign influence
Is for him only an illustrious chain
Binding him to others' happiness;
All the brilliancies that adorn him,
All the talents that ennoble him,
Are in him, but are not his.

"There is nothing time does not absorb, devour;
And facts unknown
Differ little from facts that never happened.

"The goodness shining in her,
Among her sweetest charms,
Is an image of that goodness
She sees shining in you.
And enriched by you alone,
Her politeness, freed
From the slightest obscurities,
Is the reflected gleam
Of your sublime illuminations.

“Through your good faith they have seen
The fears of their terrified peoples
Happily disappointed,
And uprooted forever
The hatred so often received
In reversion after peace.

“Unveil to my eager sight
These adopted deities,
Synonyms of thought,
Symbols of abstraction.

“Is it not good fortune,
When of a common burden
Two halves bear the weight,
For the lesser to claim it,
And for the body’s part alone
To pay for the soul’s happiness?”

“He ought not,” my judicious lover of literature then said, “he certainly ought not to have offered such detestable works as models to the man he criticized so bitterly. It would have been better to let his adversary enjoy his merit in peace, and keep his own. But what can you expect? *The irritable race of poets* suffers from the same bile that tormented it long ago. The public forgives these wretched things in talented men because the public thinks only of amusement. In an allegory entitled *Pluto*, it sees judges condemned to be flayed and to sit in hell on a seat covered with their skin instead of fleurs-de-lis; the reader does not trouble himself whether these judges deserve it or not, whether the complainant summoning them before Pluto is right or wrong. He reads these verses solely for pleasure. If they give him pleasure, he wants nothing more; if they displease him, he leaves the allegory there and would not take a single step to have the sentence confirmed or quashed.”

Racine's inimitable tragedies have all been criticized, and very badly: because the critics were rivals. Artists are the competent judges of art, it is true; but these competent judges are almost always corrupt.

An excellent critic would be an artist with great knowledge and taste, without prejudice or envy. That is hard to find.

D — Destin



Of all the books that have reached us, Homer is the oldest. There we find the manners of profane antiquity: crude heroes, crude gods made in man's image. But there too we find the seeds of philosophy, and above all the idea of destiny, master of the gods as the gods are masters of the world.

Jupiter wishes in vain to save Hector. He consults the fates; he weighs Hector's and Achilles' destinies in a balance; he finds that the Trojan must absolutely be killed by the Greek. He cannot oppose it, and from that moment Apollo, Hector's guardian spirit, is obliged to abandon him. (*Iliad*, book 22.) Not that Homer does not often lavish entirely contrary ideas on his poem, by the privilege of antiquity; but after all, he is the first in whom we find the notion of destiny. It was therefore very fashionable in his time.

The Pharisees among the little Jewish people adopted destiny only several centuries later. For these Pharisees themselves, the first learned men among the Jews, were very new. At Alexandria they mixed some Stoic doctrines with the old Jewish ideas. St. Jerome even maintains that their sect scarcely predates our common era.

Philosophers never needed either Homer or the Pharisees to persuade themselves that everything happens through immutable laws, that everything is arranged, that everything is a necessary effect.

Either the world subsists by its own nature, through its physical laws, or a Supreme Being formed it according to his supreme laws. In either case these laws are immutable; in either case everything is necessary. Heavy bodies tend toward the earth's center, unable to tend toward remaining suspended in the air. Pear trees can never bear pineapples. A spaniel's instinct cannot be an ostrich's. Everything is arranged, meshed, and limited.

Man can have only a certain number of teeth, hairs, and ideas. A time comes when he necessarily loses his teeth, his hair, and his ideas.

It is contradictory for what was yesterday not to have been, for what is today not to be; it is equally contradictory for what must be to be able not to be.

If you could disrupt a fly's destiny, there would be no reason to prevent you from determining the destiny of all other flies, all other animals, all men, all nature; in the end you would find yourself more powerful than God.

Fools say, "My doctor pulled my aunt through a fatal illness; he made my aunt live ten years longer than she ought to have lived." Other fools, playing the clever man, say, "The prudent man makes his own destiny."

*No divinity is absent where prudence is present; but we,
Fortune, make you a goddess and set you in heaven.*

Profound statesmen assure us that if Cromwell, Ludlow, Ireton, and a dozen other parliamentarians had been assassinated eight days before Charles I was beheaded, that king might have lived longer and died in his bed. They are right; they may also add that if all England had been swallowed by the sea, this monarch would not have perished on a scaffold beside Whitehall, beside the white hall. But things were arranged so that Charles had to have his head cut off.

Cardinal d'Ossat was doubtless more prudent than a madman in the asylum; but is it not evident that wise d'Ossat's organs were made differently from that lunatic's, just as a fox's organs differ from those of a crane or a lark?

Your doctor saved your aunt; but certainly in doing so he did not contradict the order of nature: he followed it. Clearly your aunt could not help being born in a certain town; she could not help having a certain illness at a certain time; the doctor could not be anywhere but the town where he was; your aunt had to call him; he had to prescribe the drugs that cured her.

A peasant thinks it hailed on his field by chance; but the philosopher knows there is no chance, and that in the constitution of this world it was impossible for hail not to fall that day in that place.

Some people, frightened by this truth, concede half of it, like debtors offering their creditors half and asking time for the rest. There are necessary events, they say, and others that are not necessary. It would be amusing if one part of this world were arranged and the other not; if some of what happens had to happen, and some of what happens did not have to happen. Look closely, and you see that the doctrine contrary to destiny is absurd. But many people are destined to reason badly, others not to reason at all, others to persecute those who reason.

You ask me what will become of liberty? I do not understand you. I do not know what this liberty is that you speak of. You have argued about its nature for so long that you certainly do not know it. If you wish—or rather, if you can—to examine quietly with me what it is, turn to the letter L.

D — Dieu



Under the empire of Arcadius, Logomacos, theological canon of Constantinople, went to Scythia and stopped at the foot of the Caucasus, in the fertile plains of Zephirim on the borders of Colchis. Good old Dondindac was in the great ground-floor hall between his large sheepfold and his vast barn. He was kneeling with his wife, his five sons and five daughters, his relatives and servants, all singing God's praises after a light meal. "What are you doing there, idolater?" Logomacos asked him. "I am not an idolater," said Dondindac. "You must be an idolater," said Logomacos, "since you are a Scythian, not a Greek. Come, tell me: what were you singing in your barbarous Scythian jargon?" "All languages are equal in God's ears," answered the Scythian. "We were singing his praises." "That is very extraordinary," the canon resumed. "A Scythian family praying to God without having been taught by us!" He soon entered into conversation with the Scythian Dondindac; for the canon knew a little Scythian, and the other a little Greek. This conversation has been found in a manuscript preserved in the library of Constantinople.

Logomacos.

"Let us see whether you know your catechism. Why do you pray to God?"

Dondindac.

"Because it is just to worship the Supreme Being from whom we receive everything."

Logomacos.

“Not bad for a barbarian! And what do you ask him for?”

Dondindac.

“I thank him for the blessings I enjoy, and even for the evils through which he tries me; but I take care to ask him for nothing. He knows better than we do what we need. Besides, I should be afraid of asking for fine weather when my neighbor was asking for rain.”

Logomacos.

“Ah! I suspected he was going to say something foolish. Let us begin higher up. Barbarian, who told you there is a God?”

Dondindac.

“All nature.”

Logomacos.

“That is not enough. What idea do you have of God?”

Dondindac.

“The idea of my creator, my master, who will reward me if I do good and punish me if I do evil.”

Logomacos.

“Trifles, nonsense! Let us come to essentials. Is God infinite *in some respect*, or in essence?”

Dondindac.

“I do not understand you.”

Logomacos.

“Brute beast! Is God in one place, outside all place, or in every place?”

Dondindac.

“I know nothing about it.—Just as you please.”

Logomacos.

“Ignoramus! Can he make what has been not to have been, and a stick not to have two ends? Does he see the future as future or as present? How does he draw being from nothingness, and annihilate being?”

Dondindac.

“I have never examined these things.”

Logomacos.

“What a clod! Come, one must stoop, accommodate oneself. Tell me, my friend, do you believe matter can be eternal?”

Dondindac.

“What does it matter to me whether it has existed from all eternity or not? I have not existed from all eternity. God is still my master. He has given me the notion of justice; I must follow it. I do not want to be a philosopher; I want to be a man.”

Logomacos.

“These thick heads are hard work. Let us go step by step. What is God?”

Dondindac.

“My sovereign, my judge, my father.”

Logomacos.

“That is not what I am asking. What is his nature?”

Dondindac.

“To be powerful and good.”

Logomacos.

“But is he corporeal or spiritual?”

Dondindac.

“How do you expect me to know?”

Logomacos.

“What! You do not know what a spirit is?”

Dondindac.

“Not the first word. What use would it be to me? Would it make me more just? Would I be a better husband, a better father, a better master, a better citizen?”

Logomacos.

“You absolutely must be taught what a spirit is. Listen: it is, it is, it is ... I shall tell you another time.”

Dondindac.

“I am very much afraid you will tell me less what it is than what it is not. Allow me to ask you a question in turn. I once saw one of your temples: why do you paint God with a long beard?”

Logomacos.

“That is a very difficult question, requiring preliminary instruction.”

Dondindac.

“Before receiving your instruction, I must tell you what happened to me one day. I had just had a summerhouse built at the end of my garden. I heard a mole reasoning with a cockchafer. ‘There is a fine structure,’ said the mole; ‘a very powerful mole must have made that work.’ ‘You are joking,’ said the cockchafer; ‘the architect of that building is a cockchafer full of genius.’ Ever since then I have resolved never to argue.”

E — Egalité



What does one dog owe another dog, one horse another horse? Nothing: no animal depends on its fellow. But man has received that ray of divinity called reason; what is its fruit? Slavery almost everywhere on earth.

If this earth were what it seems it ought to be—that is, if man found easy, assured subsistence everywhere, and a climate suited to his nature—clearly it would have been impossible for one man to enslave another. Let this globe be covered with wholesome fruits; let the air, which ought to sustain our life, bring us neither disease nor death; let man need no other lodging or bed than the fallow deer and roe deer: then the Genghis Khans and Tamerlanes will have no servants but their children, decent enough to help them in old age.

In this most natural state, enjoyed by all quadrupeds, birds, and reptiles, man would be as happy as they. Dominion would then be a chimera, an absurdity no one would think of; for why seek servants when you need no service?

If some individual with a tyrannical head and sinewy arms took it into his mind to enslave his weaker neighbor, the thing would be impossible: the oppressed man would be a hundred leagues away before the oppressor had taken his measures.

All men would therefore necessarily be equal if they had no needs. The misery attached to our species subordinates one man to another. Inequality is not the real misfortune: dependence is. It matters very little that one man calls himself His Highness and another His Holiness; but it is hard to serve either.

A large family has cultivated good land; two small neighboring families have barren, stubborn fields. The two poor families must serve the wealthy family or slaughter it: that follows easily enough. One of the needy families offers its labor to the rich one for bread; the other attacks it and is beaten. The serving family is the origin of servants and laborers; the beaten family is the origin of slaves.

On our unhappy globe it is impossible for men living in society not to be divided into two classes, one of oppressors, the other of oppressed; and these two subdivide into a thousand, and those thousand have further shades of difference.

Not all the oppressed are utterly unhappy. Most are born in that state, and continual labor prevents them from feeling their situation too keenly; but when they do feel it, then we see wars, like that of the popular party against the senatorial party in Rome, those of the peasants in Germany, England, France. Sooner or later all these wars end in the people's enslavement, because the powerful have money, and money is master of everything within a state. I say within a state, for it is not the same between nation and nation. The nation that uses iron best will always subjugate the one with more gold and less courage.

Every man is born with a fairly violent inclination toward dominion, wealth, and pleasures, and with a strong taste for laziness. Consequently, every man would like to have other people's money and wives or daughters, to be their master, subject them to all his whims, and do nothing—or at least do only very agreeable things. You can see that, with these fine dispositions, it is as impossible for men to be equal as it is impossible for two preachers or two professors of theology not to be jealous of one another.

The human race as it is cannot subsist unless there are innumerable useful men who possess nothing at all. For certainly a comfortably situated man will not leave his land to come and plow yours; and if you need a pair of shoes, a master of requests will not make them for you. Equality is therefore both the most natural thing and, at the same time, the most chimerical.

Since men are excessive in everything whenever they can be, this inequality has been pushed too far. In several countries it has been maintained that a citizen is not permitted to leave the land where chance caused him to be born. The plain meaning of this law is: "*This country is so bad and so badly governed that we forbid each individual to leave, for fear everyone might leave.*" Do better: give all your subjects the desire to remain with you, and foreigners the desire to come. In the depths of his heart every man has the right to believe himself entirely equal to other men. It does not follow that a cardinal's cook ought to order his master to make his dinner; but the cook may say: "I am a man like my master; like him, I was born crying; like me, he will die in the same anguish and amid the same ceremonies. We both perform the same animal functions. If the Turks take Rome, and I am then a cardinal and my master a cook, I shall take him into my service." All this reasoning is sound and just; but until the Grand Turk takes Rome, the cook must do his duty, or all human society is subverted. As for a man who is neither a cardinal's cook nor invested with any other office in the state; a private individual attached to nothing, but annoyed at being received everywhere with an air of patronage or contempt, who plainly sees that several *Monsignors* have no more knowledge, wit, or virtue than he, and is tired of sometimes waiting in their antechambers—what course should he take? Leave.

E — Enfer



As soon as men lived in society, they must have noticed that many guilty people escaped the severity of the laws. They punished public crimes; a restraint had to be established for secret crimes, and religion alone could supply it. The Persians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Greeks imagined punishments after life; and of all the ancient peoples we know, the Jews alone admitted only temporal punishments. It is ridiculous to believe, or pretend to believe, on the strength of a few very obscure passages, that hell was admitted in the Jews' ancient laws, their Leviticus, their Decalogue, when the author of these laws says not one word with the slightest relation to punishments in a future life. One would be entitled to tell the compiler of the Pentateuch: "You are an inconsistent man, without honesty or reason, very unworthy of the name of legislator that you claim. What! You know a doctrine as restraining and as necessary to the people as hell, and you do not announce it expressly! While it is admitted among every nation around you, you content yourself with leaving this doctrine to be guessed at by a few commentators who will come four thousand years after you and torture some of your words to find in them what you did not say? Either you are an ignoramus who did not know this belief was universal in Egypt, Chaldea, and Persia, or you are a very ill-advised man if, knowing this doctrine, you did not make it the basis of your religion."

The authors of the Jewish laws could at most answer: "We admit that we are exceedingly ignorant, that we learned to write very late, that our people was a savage, barbarous horde which, by our own admission, wandered nearly half a century through impassable deserts and finally usurped a little country through the most odious plunder and most detestable cruelties history has ever mentioned. We had no dealings with civilized nations. How do you expect that we, the most earthly of men, could invent an entirely spiritual system?

"We used the word corresponding to *soul* only to mean *life*. We knew our God and his ministers, the angels, only as corporeal beings. The distinction between soul and body, the idea of life after death, can be only the fruit of long meditation and very subtle philosophy. Ask the Hottentots and the Negroes, who inhabit a country a hundred times larger than ours, whether they know the life to come. We thought we had done enough by persuading our people that God punished wrongdoers to the fourth generation, whether by leprosy, sudden deaths, or the loss of what little property one might possess."

The reply to this defense would be: "You invented a system whose absurdity leaps to the eye; for a wrongdoer in good health whose family prospered necessarily had to laugh at you."

The apologist for the Jewish law would then answer: "You are mistaken; for every criminal who reasoned soundly, there were a hundred who did not reason at all. A man who had committed a crime and felt no punishment in either his own body or his son's feared for his grandson. Moreover, if he had no stinking ulcer today (we were very prone to them), he would suffer one within a few years. There are always misfortunes in a family, and we easily persuaded people that these misfortunes were sent by a divine hand avenging secret faults."

It would be easy to reply to that answer: "Your excuse is worthless, for very honest people lose their health and property every day; and if there is no family that has not suffered misfortunes, and these misfortunes are God's punishments, then all your families were families of rogues."

The Jewish priest could reply again. He would say there are misfortunes attached to human nature, and others sent expressly by God. But this reasoner would be shown how ridiculous it is to think that fever and hail are sometimes

a divine punishment, sometimes a natural effect.

At last the Pharisees and Essenes among the Jews admitted a belief in a hell of their own fashion. This doctrine had already passed from the Greeks to the Romans and was adopted by Christians.

Several Church Fathers did not believe punishments eternal; it seemed absurd to them to burn a poor man for all eternity for stealing a goat. In vain does Virgil say in the sixth canto of the *Aeneid*:

Unhappy Theseus sits, and will sit forever.

In vain he maintains that Theseus sits forever on a chair and that this posture is his punishment. Others believed Theseus a hero who is not sitting in hell, but is in the Elysian Fields.

Not long ago a good, honest Huguenot minister preached and wrote that the damned would one day receive their pardon, that sin and punishment must be proportionate, and that a moment's fault cannot deserve infinite punishment. His fellow priests deposed this indulgent judge. One of them told him: "My friend, I believe in eternal hell no more than you; but it is good for your maid, your tailor, and even your attorney to believe in it."

E — Etats, Gouvernemens



Which is best?

So far I have known no one who has not governed some state. I do not mean the ministers, who really do govern, some for two or three years, others for six months, others for six weeks. I mean all the other men who, over supper or in their studies, display their systems of government, reforming the armies, the Church, the judiciary, and the finances.

Around 1645 the Abbé de Bourzeis set about governing France under the name of Cardinal Richelieu, and made that political testament in which he wishes to enroll the nobility in the cavalry for three years, make the audit chambers and parlements pay the taille, and deprive the king of the proceeds of the salt tax. Above all, he assures us that to take the field with fifty thousand men, economy requires raising a hundred thousand. He affirms that *Provence alone has far more fine seaports than Spain and Italy together*.

The Abbé de Bourzeis had not traveled. Moreover, his work swarms with anachronisms and errors; he makes Cardinal Richelieu sign in a fashion in which he never signed, just as he makes him speak as he never spoke. Besides this, he spends a whole chapter saying that *reason must be a state's rule* and trying to prove this discovery. This work of darkness, this bastard of the Abbé de Bourzeis, long passed for Cardinal Richelieu's legitimate son; and all the academicians, in their admission speeches, never failed to praise this masterpiece of politics beyond measure.

Seeing the success of Richelieu's *Political Testament*, a certain Gratien de Courtilz had Colbert's testament printed at The Hague, with a fine letter from Mr. Colbert to the king. Clearly, had that minister made such a testament, he would have had to be declared incompetent; yet some authors have cited this book. Another scoundrel, whose name is unknown, did not fail to produce Louvois' testament, worse still, if possible, than Colbert's; and an Abbé de Chèvremont also made Charles, Duke of Lorraine, draw up a will.

Mr. de Boisguilbert, author of *The Detail of France*, printed in 1695, produced the impracticable scheme of the royal tithe under the name of Marshal Vauban. In 1720 a madman named La Jonchère, who had no bread, produced a financial scheme in four volumes; and some fools have cited this production as a work of La Jonchère the treasurer-general, imagining that a treasurer cannot write a bad book on finance.

But it must be admitted that very wise men, perhaps very worthy of governing, have written on the administration of states, in France, Spain, and England. Their books have done much good: not that they corrected the ministers in office when these books appeared, for a minister does not correct himself and cannot correct himself. He is fully grown; no more instruction, no more advice—he has no time to listen. The current of affairs carries him away. But these good books train the young people destined for office; they train princes, and the second generation is instructed.

The strengths and weaknesses of all governments have been closely examined in recent times. Tell me, then, you who have traveled, read, and seen: in what state, under what kind of government, would you wish to have been born? I can understand that a great landed lord in France would not mind having been born in Germany: he would be a sovereign instead of a subject. A peer of France would be very glad to have the privileges of an English peer: he would be a legislator.

The magistrate and the financier would find themselves better off in France than elsewhere.

But what country would a wise, free, unprejudiced man of moderate fortune choose?

A fairly learned member of the council of Pondicherry was returning to Europe overland with a Brahmin more knowledgeable than ordinary Brahmins. "What do you think of the Great Mogul's government?" asked the councilor. "Abominable," answered the Brahmin. "How do you expect a state to be happily governed by Tartars? Our rajas, our omrahs, our nawabs are very content; but the citizens are hardly so, and millions of citizens count for something."

The councilor and the Brahmin traveled through all Upper Asia, reasoning as they went. "Something occurs to me," said the Brahmin: "there is not a republic in this whole vast part of the world." "There was once Tyre," said the councilor, "but it did not last long. There was another toward Arabia Petraea, in a little corner called Palestine—if one can honor with the name of republic a horde of thieves and usurers, governed now by judges, now by a kind of kings, now by high pontiffs, enslaved seven or eight times and finally driven from the country it had usurped."

"I can understand," said the Brahmin, "that very few republics are to be found on earth. Men are seldom worthy of governing themselves. This happiness can belong only to little peoples hiding on islands or among mountains, like rabbits escaping carnivorous animals; but in the long run they are discovered and devoured."

When the two travelers reached Asia Minor, the councilor said to the Brahmin: "Would you believe that a republic formed in a corner of Italy lasted more than five hundred years and possessed this Asia Minor, Asia, Africa, Greece, Gaul, Spain, and all Italy?" "Then it very quickly turned into a monarchy," said the Brahmin. "You have guessed it," said the other. "But this monarchy fell, and every day we write fine dissertations to discover the causes of its decline and fall." "You take a great deal of trouble," said the Indian. "That empire fell because it existed. Everything must fall. I very much hope the same will happen to the Great Mogul's empire."

"By the way," said the European, "do you think more honor is needed in a despotic state and more virtue in a republic?" After having the meaning of honor explained to him, the Indian answered that honor was more necessary in a republic and virtue far more needed in a monarchical state. "For," he said, "a

man who hopes to be elected by the people will not be elected if he is dishonored; whereas at court he may easily obtain an office, according to a great prince's maxim that to succeed a courtier must have neither honor nor temper. As for virtue, a prodigious amount is needed at court to dare speak the truth. The virtuous man is far more comfortable in a republic: he has no one to flatter."

"Do you believe," said the European, "that laws and religions are made for climates, just as furs are needed in Moscow and gauze fabrics in Delhi?" "Yes, undoubtedly," said the Brahmin. "All laws concerning physical things are calculated for the meridian where one lives. A German needs only one wife; a Persian needs three or four.

"Religious rites are of the same nature. If I were a Christian, how could you expect me to say Mass in my province, where there is neither bread nor wine? Doctrines are another matter: climate has nothing to do with them. Did your religion not begin in Asia, from which it was driven out? Does it not exist near the Baltic Sea, where it was unknown?"

"In what state, under what dominion, would you most like to live?" asked the councilor. "Anywhere but my own country," said his companion; "and I have found many Siamese, Tonkinese, Persians, and Turks who said the same." "But once again," said the European, "what state would you choose?" The Brahmin answered, "One where only the laws are obeyed." "That is an old answer," said the councilor. "It is no worse for that," said the Brahmin. "Where is this country?" asked the councilor. The Brahmin said, "We must look for it."

D — D'Ezechiel



On certain singular passages in this prophet, and certain ancient customs.

It is well enough known today that ancient customs must not be judged by modern ones. Anyone who wished to reform Alcinous' court in the *Odyssey* on the model of the Grand Turk's or Louis XIV's would not be well received by scholars. Anyone who reproached Virgil for depicting King Evander in a bearskin, accompanied by two dogs, receiving ambassadors, would be a poor critic.

The manners of the ancient Jews differ still more from ours than those of King Alcinous, his daughter Nausicaa, and good Evander. Ezekiel, a slave among the Chaldeans, had a vision beside the little river Chebar, which empties into the Euphrates.

We ought not to be astonished that he saw animals with four faces and four wings, with calves' feet, or wheels moving by themselves and possessing the spirit of life. These symbols even please the imagination; but several critics have revolted against the Lord's command that for three hundred and ninety days he eat bread of barley, wheat, and millet covered with shit.

The prophet cried, "Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! My soul has not been polluted until now"; and the Lord answered, "Very well, I give you ox dung instead of human excrement, and you will knead your bread with this dung."

Since eating such preserves on one's bread is not customary, most men find these commands unworthy of divine majesty. Yet it must be admitted that cow dung and all the Great Mogul's diamonds are perfectly equal, not only in the eyes of a divine being but in those of a true philosopher. As for the reasons God might have had for ordering the prophet such a breakfast, it is not for us to ask them.

It is enough to show that these commands, which seem strange to us, did not seem so to the Jews. It is true that in St. Jerome's time the synagogue did not permit Ezekiel to be read before the age of thirty; but that was because in chapter 18 he says the son will no longer bear his father's iniquity, and people will no longer say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

In this he stood in express contradiction to Moses, who in chapter 28 of Numbers declares that children bear their fathers' iniquity to the third and fourth generation.

In chapter 20 Ezekiel also has the Lord say that he gave the Jews *precepts that are not good*. That is why the synagogue forbade young people a reading that could raise doubts about the irrefutability of Moses' laws.

The critics of our day are still more astonished by chapter 16 of Ezekiel. Here is how this prophet sets about making Jerusalem's crimes known. He introduces the Lord speaking to a girl, and the Lord says to her: "When you were born, the gut of your navel had not yet been cut, you had not been salted, you were quite naked. I pitied you. You grew up, your breasts formed, your hair appeared. I passed by, I saw you; I recognized that it was the time for lovers. I covered your shame; I spread myself over you with my cloak; you were mine. I washed you, perfumed you, dressed you well, shod you well; I gave you a cotton scarf, bracelets, a necklace; I put a jewel in your nose, pendants in your ears, and a crown on your head, etc.

"Then, trusting in your beauty, you fornicated on your own account with every passerby ... And you built yourself a brothel ... And you prostituted yourself even in the public squares, and opened your legs to every passerby ... And you slept with Egyptians ... And finally you paid lovers, and gave them presents so

that they would sleep with you ... And by paying instead of being paid, you did the opposite of other girls ... The proverb is, 'Like mother, like daughter,' and that is what is said of you," etc.

Still stronger objections are raised against chapter 23. A mother had two daughters who lost their virginity early; the elder was called Oholah, the younger Oholibah. "... *Oholah was mad for young lords, magistrates, horsemen; she slept with Egyptians from her earliest youth ... Her sister Oholibah fornicated still more with officers, magistrates, and handsome horsemen; she exposed her shame, multiplied her fornications, passionately sought the embraces of those whose member is like a donkey's and who shed their seed like horses ...*"

Yet these descriptions, which frighten so many weak minds, signify only the iniquities of Jerusalem and Samaria. Expressions that seem licentious to us were not so then. The same simplicity shows itself without fear in a certain passage of Scripture. It often speaks of opening the vulva. The terms it uses to express Boaz's coupling with Ruth, Judah's with his daughter-in-law, are not indecent in Hebrew, and would be in our language.

One does not cover oneself with a veil when one is not ashamed of nakedness. How, in those times, would people have blushed to name the genitals, since they touched the genitals of those to whom they made a promise? It was a mark of respect, a symbol of fidelity, just as formerly among us castellans placed their hands between those of their paramount lords.

We have translated genitals as thigh. Eliezer puts his hand under Abraham's thigh; Joseph puts his hand under Jacob's thigh. This custom was very ancient in Egypt. The Egyptians were so far from attaching shame to what we dare neither uncover nor name that they carried in procession a great figure of the virile member called the phallus, to thank the gods for their goodness in making this member serve the propagation of the human race.

All this proves well enough that our proprieties are not those of other peoples. When were the Romans more polished than in the age of Augustus? Yet Horace has no difficulty saying in a moral poem:

Nor do I fear, while I fuck, lest the husband come hurrying back from the country.

A man who uttered among us the word corresponding to *futuo* would be regarded as a drunken porter. This word, and several others used by Horace and other authors, seem still more indecent to us than Ezekiel's expressions. Let us rid ourselves of all our prejudices when we read ancient authors or travel among distant nations. Nature is the same everywhere; customs everywhere differ.

F — Fables



Are the oldest fables not visibly allegorical? According to our way of reckoning time, is the first we know not the one reported in the ninth chapter of the book of Judges? A king had to be chosen among the trees. The olive would not abandon the care of its oil, nor the fig tree that of its figs, nor the vine that of its wine, nor the other trees that of their fruit. The thistle, which was good for nothing, made itself king because it had thorns and could do harm.

Is the ancient fable of Venus, as reported in Hesiod, not an allegory of all nature? The generative organs have fallen from the ether onto the seashore; Venus is born from this precious foam. Her first name is lover of generation: is there a more palpable image? This Venus is the goddess of beauty. Beauty ceases to be lovable if it walks without the Graces; beauty gives birth to Love; Love has darts that pierce hearts; he wears a blindfold that conceals the faults of what one loves.

Wisdom is conceived in the brain of the master of the gods under the name of Minerva. Man's soul is a divine fire that Minerva shows Prometheus, who uses this divine fire to animate man.

It is impossible not to recognize in these fables a living picture of all nature. Most other fables are either corruptions of ancient histories or whims of the imagination. Ancient fables are like our modern tales: some are moral and charming, others insipid.

F — Fanatisme



Fanaticism is to superstition what delirium is to fever, what rabid fury is to anger. A man who has ecstasies and visions, who takes dreams for realities and imaginings for prophecies, is an enthusiast; a man who upholds his madness by murder is a fanatic. Bartholomew Diaz, retired to Nuremberg, firmly convinced that the pope is the Antichrist of the Apocalypse and bears the mark of the beast, was only an enthusiast. His brother Bartholomew Diaz, who left Rome to go and piously assassinate his brother, and did kill him for the love of God, was one of the most abominable fanatics superstition has ever formed.

Polyeucte, who goes to the temple on a solemn festival day to overturn and smash statues and ornaments, is a less horrible fanatic than Diaz, but no less foolish. The assassins of Duke Francis of Guise, William, Prince of Orange, King Henry III, King Henry IV, and so many others, were possessed madmen sick with the same rage as Diaz.

The most detestable example of fanaticism is that of the citizens of Paris who, on St. Bartholomew's Night, ran to assassinate, cut the throats of, throw from windows, and tear to pieces their fellow citizens who did not go to Mass.

There are cold-blooded fanatics: the judges who condemn to death people whose only crime is not thinking as they do. These judges are all the guiltier, all the more deserving of the human race's execration, because, not being in a fit of fury like the Cléments, Châtels, Ravaillacs, Gérards, and Damiens, they seem capable of listening to reason.

Once fanaticism has gangrened a brain, the disease is almost incurable. I have seen convulsionaries who, speaking of the miracles of St. Pàris, grew gradually heated in spite of themselves. Their eyes blazed, their limbs trembled, fury disfigured their faces; they would have killed anyone who contradicted them.

There is no remedy for this epidemic disease except the philosophical spirit, which, spreading little by little, at last softens men's manners and prevents attacks of the illness. For once this illness makes progress, one must flee and wait for the air to be purified. Laws and religion are not enough against the plague of souls. Religion, far from being wholesome nourishment for them, turns to poison in infected brains. These wretches constantly keep before their minds the example of Ehud, who assassinates King Eglon; Judith, who cuts off Holofernes' head while sleeping with him; Samuel, who hacks King Agag to pieces. They do not see that these examples, venerable in antiquity, are abominable in the present age. They draw their frenzy from the very religion that condemns them.

Laws too are powerless against these fits of rage; it is as though you were reading an order of council to a raving madman. These people are persuaded that the Holy Spirit penetrating them is above the laws, that their enthusiasm is the only law they ought to hear.

What can you answer a man who tells you he would rather obey God than men, and consequently is certain of earning heaven by cutting your throat?

Usually it is rogues who lead fanatics and put the dagger into their hands. They resemble that Old Man of the Mountain who, they say, gave fools a taste of paradise's joys and promised them an eternity of those pleasures he had let them sample, on condition that they go and assassinate everyone he named. Only one religion in the world has remained unstained by fanaticism: that of China's scholars. The philosophical sects were not only free of this plague; they were its remedy.

For philosophy's effect is to make the soul tranquil, and fanaticism is incompatible with tranquility. If our holy religion has so often been corrupted by this infernal fury, it is men's madness that must be blamed.

Thus, with the plumage he received,
Icarus perverted its use;
He received it for his safety,
He used it for his ruin.

Bertaut, *Bishop of Sées*.

F — Fausseté des vertus humaines



When the Duke de La Rochefoucauld had written his thoughts on self-love and laid bare this spring of human action, a certain Mr. *Esprit* of the Oratory wrote a specious book entitled *On the Falsity of Human Virtues*. This *Esprit* says there is no virtue; but as a favor he ends each chapter by referring us to Christian charity. Thus, according to Mr. *Esprit*, neither Cato, Aristides, Marcus Aurelius, nor Epictetus was a good man: good men can be found only among Christians. Among Christians only Catholics possess virtue; among Catholics he must further except the Jesuits, enemies of the Oratorians. Consequently, virtue was scarcely to be found except among the Jesuits' enemies.

This Mr. *Esprit* begins by saying that prudence is not a virtue; his reason is that it is often deceived. One might as well say Caesar was not a great captain because he was defeated at Dyrrhachium.

Had Mr. *Esprit* been a philosopher, he would have examined prudence not as a virtue, but as a talent, a useful, fortunate quality; for a villain can be very prudent, and I have known some of that kind. Oh, the mania for maintaining that *No one shall have virtue but ourselves and our friends!*

What is virtue, my friend? Doing good. Do us some, and that is enough. Then we shall overlook your motive. What! According to you, there will be no difference between President de Thou and Ravaillac? Between Cicero and that Popilius whose life he had saved, who cut off his head for money? And will you declare Epictetus and Porphyry scoundrels for not having followed our doctrines? Such insolence is revolting. I shall say no more, for I should lose my temper.

F — Fin, Causes Finales



It seems one must be raving mad to deny that stomachs are made to digest, eyes to see, ears to hear.

On the other hand, one must have a strange love of final causes to declare that stone was formed for building houses, and that silkworms were born in China so that we might have satin in Europe.

But, people say, if God has visibly made one thing by design, then he has made all things by design. It is ridiculous to admit providence in one case and deny it in others. Everything made was foreseen and arranged. No arrangement without an object, no effect without a cause: therefore everything is equally the result, the product of a final cause. Therefore it is as true to say that noses were made to carry spectacles and fingers to be adorned with diamonds as it is to say that ears were formed to hear sounds and eyes to receive light.

I think this difficulty can easily be cleared up. When effects are invariably the same in every place and at every time, when these uniform effects are independent of the beings to which they belong, then there is visibly a final cause.

All animals have eyes and see; all have ears and hear; all have a mouth through which they eat, a stomach or something similar through which they digest; all have an orifice that expels excrement, all an instrument of generation. And these gifts of nature operate within them without any art intervening. Here are final causes clearly established, and to deny so universal a truth is to pervert our faculty of thought.

But stones do not compose buildings everywhere and at every time; not all noses carry spectacles; not all fingers have a ring; not all legs are covered in silk stockings. A silkworm is therefore not made to cover my legs as your mouth is made to eat and your backside to relieve yourself. There are therefore effects produced by final causes, and very many effects that cannot be called by that name.

But both are equally within the plan of general providence. Doubtless nothing happens against it, or even without it. Everything belonging to nature is uniform and immutable, and is the master's immediate work. It is he who created the laws through which the moon contributes three quarters of the cause of the ocean's ebb and flow, and the sun its quarter. It is he who gave the sun a rotary motion by which that star sends rays of light in five and a half minutes into the eyes of men, crocodiles, and cats.

But if after many centuries we took it into our heads to invent shears and spits, to shear the wool from sheep with the first and roast them with the second to eat them, what can one infer except that God made us in such a way that one day we would necessarily become ingenious and carnivorous?

Sheep certainly were not made absolutely to be cooked and eaten, since several nations abstain from this horror. Men were not created essentially to massacre one another, since Brahmins and Quakers kill no one; but the dough of which we are kneaded often produces massacres, just as it produces slanders, vanities, persecutions, and impertinences. Not that man's formation is precisely the final cause of our frenzies and follies; for a final cause is universal and invariable at every time and in every place. But the horrors and absurdities of the human species are nonetheless within the eternal order of things. When we thresh our wheat, the flail is the final cause of the grain's separation; but if that flail crushes a thousand insects while threshing my grain, it is not by my deliberate will, nor is it by chance. It is because these insects found themselves beneath my flail on this occasion, and had to find themselves there.

It follows from the nature of things that a man should be ambitious, that this man should sometimes enlist other men, that he should conquer or be beaten. But no one will ever be able to say, "Man was created by God to be killed in

war.”

The instruments nature has given us cannot always be final causes in motion, producing their unfailing effect. Eyes given for seeing are not always open; each sense has its times of rest. There are even senses one never uses. For example, an unhappy foolish girl shut in a convent at fourteen closes forever the door through which a new generation ought to emerge; but the final cause subsists nonetheless. It will act as soon as it is free.

F — Folie



There is no question of reviving Erasmus's book, which today would be no more than a rather insipid commonplace.

We call madness that disease of the brain's organs which necessarily prevents a man from thinking and acting like other people. Unable to manage his property, he is placed under legal disability; unable to form ideas suited to society, he is excluded from it; if he is dangerous, he is confined; if he is violent, he is bound.

What matters is to observe that this man is not without ideas. He has them, like everyone else, while awake and often while asleep. We may ask how his spiritual, immortal soul, lodged in his brain and receiving through the senses ideas that are perfectly clear and distinct, nevertheless never forms a sound judgment of them. It sees objects as the souls of Aristotle and Plato, Locke and Newton saw them; it hears the same sounds and has the same sense of touch. How, then, receiving the perceptions experienced by the wisest people, does it combine them into extravagant patterns without being able to help itself? If this simple and eternal substance has the same instruments for its actions as the souls of the wisest brains, it ought to reason as they do. What can prevent it? I can just about conceive that if my madman sees red where the wise see blue; if, when the wise hear music, my madman hears an ass braying; if, when they are at a sermon, he thinks he is at a comedy; if, when they hear yes, he hears no—then his soul must think the reverse of theirs. But my madman has the same perceptions as they do. There is no apparent reason why his soul, having received all its tools

through the senses, cannot use them. It is pure, we are told; in itself it is subject to no infirmity. Here it is, equipped with every necessary aid: whatever happens in his body, nothing can change its essence. And yet it is taken, inside its case, to the *Petites-Maisons* asylum.

This reflection may lead us to suspect that the faculty of thought God gave man is liable to disorder, like the other senses. A madman is a sick man whose brain suffers, just as a gout sufferer is a sick man with pain in his feet and hands. He thought with his brain as he walked with his feet, knowing nothing either of his incomprehensible power to walk or of his no less incomprehensible power to think. One has gout in the brain as in the feet. In the end, after a thousand arguments, perhaps faith alone can convince us that a simple, immaterial substance can be ill.

The learned men, or the doctors, will tell the madman: "My friend, though you have lost your common sense, your soul is as spiritual, as pure, as immortal as ours. But our soul is well housed, and yours badly; the windows of its house are blocked, it lacks air, it is suffocating." In his lucid moments the madman would answer: "My friends, as usual you assume the very point at issue. My windows are as open as yours, since I see the same objects and hear the same words. Necessarily, then, either my soul misuses its senses, or my soul itself is merely a damaged sense, a corrupted quality. In short, either my soul is mad in itself, or I have no soul."

One of the doctors may reply: "My colleague, perhaps God created mad souls as he created wise ones." The madman will retort: "If I believed what you tell me, I would be madder still. Please, you who know so much, tell me why I am mad."

If the doctors still have a little sense, they will answer: "I know nothing about it." They will not understand why one brain has incoherent ideas; nor will they understand any better why another has orderly, connected ideas. They will think themselves wise, and they will be as mad as he is.

F — Fraude



Should pious frauds be practiced on the people?

The fakir Bambabef once met one of the disciples of Confutsée, whom we call Confucius; this disciple was named Ouang. Bambabef maintained that the people need to be deceived, while Ouang held that no one should ever be deceived. Here is the substance of their dispute.

Bambabef.

We must imitate the Supreme Being, who does not show us things as they are. He makes the sun appear two or three feet across, although that star is a million times larger than the earth; he makes the moon and stars appear fixed against the same blue background, although they lie at different distances. He wills that a square tower should look round to us from afar; he wills that fire should seem hot, although it is neither hot nor cold. In short, he surrounds us with errors suited to our nature.

Ouang.

What you call an error is not one. The sun, situated as it is millions of millions of lis¹ beyond our globe, is not the one we see. What we actually perceive, and all we can perceive, is the sun pictured on our retina at a determined angle. Our eyes were not given to us to ascertain sizes and distances; other aids and other operations are needed to ascertain them.

Bambabef seemed greatly astonished by this statement. Ouang, who was very patient, explained the theory of optics to him; and Bambabef, who was quick to understand, yielded to the demonstrations of Confucius's disciple. Then he resumed the dispute in these terms.

Bambabef.

If God does not deceive us through our senses, as I believed, admit at least that physicians always deceive children for their own good: they tell them they are giving them sugar, when in fact they give them rhubarb. So I, a fakir, may deceive the people, who are as ignorant as children.

Ouang.

I have two sons; I have never deceived them. When they were ill I told them, "Here is a very bitter medicine; you must have the courage to take it. It would harm you if it were sweet." I have never allowed their governesses and tutors to frighten them with spirits, ghosts, goblins, or sorcerers. In this way I have made them courageous, sensible young citizens.

Bambabef.

The people were not born as fortunate as your family.

Ouang.

All men resemble one another; they are born with the same dispositions. It is the fakirs who corrupt human nature.

Bambabef.

We teach them errors, I admit, but it is for their own good. We make them believe that if they do not buy our blessed nails, if they do not atone for their sins by giving us money, they will become post horses, dogs, or lizards in another life. This frightens them, and they become honest people.

Ouang.

Do you not see that you are corrupting these poor people? Among them there are many more than you imagine who reason, who laugh at your nails, your miracles, your superstitions, and who see perfectly well that they will not be changed into lizards or post horses. What happens? They have enough sense to see that you preach an absurd religion, but not enough to rise to a pure religion

free of superstition, such as ours. Their passions lead them to believe there is no religion, because the only one they are taught is ridiculous. You become guilty of all the vices into which they plunge.

Bambabef.

Not at all, for we teach them nothing but sound morality.

Ouang.

The people would stone you if you taught them a corrupt morality. Men are made in such a way that they are willing to do evil, but unwilling to have it preached to them. You need only refrain from mixing wise morality with absurd fables, because your impostures, which you could do without, weaken the very morality you are obliged to teach.

Bambabef.

What! You believe truth can be taught to the people without supporting it with fables?

Ouang.

I firmly believe it. Our scholars are made of the same clay as our tailors, our weavers, and our plowmen. They worship a God who creates, rewards, and avenges. They do not sully their worship with absurd systems or extravagant ceremonies; and there is far less crime among the scholars than among the people. Why not condescend to instruct our workers as we instruct our scholars?

Bambabef.

You would be doing something very foolish. It is as though you wanted them to have the same polish, to be legal scholars. That is neither possible nor appropriate. There must be white bread for masters and brown bread for servants.

Ouang.

I agree that all men need not possess the same learning; but some things are necessary to everyone. Everyone must be just; and the surest way to inspire justice in all men is to inspire them with religion without superstition.

Bambabef.

A fine plan, but impracticable. Do you think it enough for men to believe in a God who punishes and rewards? You have told me that the shrewdest among the people often rebel against my fables; they will rebel in the same way against

your truth. They will say, "Who can assure me that God punishes and rewards? Where is the proof? What authority have you been given? What miracle have you performed to make me believe you?" They will laugh at you far more than at me.

Ouang.

That is where your error lies. You imagine that because people reject dishonest, absurd, useless, dangerous things that make common sense shudder, they will throw off the restraint of an honest, plausible idea useful to everyone, an idea with which human reason agrees?

The people are very disposed to believe their magistrates. When their magistrates offer them only a reasonable belief, they embrace it willingly. No prodigies are needed to believe in a just God who reads the human heart; this idea is too natural to be opposed. There is no need to say precisely how God will punish and reward; belief in his justice is enough. I assure you that I have seen whole cities that had scarcely any other dogmas, and those are the cities where I have seen the most virtue.

Bambabef.

Take care: in those cities you will find philosophers who deny both punishments and rewards.

Ouang.

You will admit that these philosophers will deny your inventions much more vehemently; so you gain nothing there. Even if there were philosophers who did not agree with my principles, they would be no less honest men; they would cultivate virtue no less, for virtue should be embraced out of love, not fear. But I maintain, moreover, that no philosopher could ever be certain that providence does not reserve punishments for the wicked and rewards for the good. For if they ask me who told me that God punishes, I shall ask them who told them that God does not punish. Finally, I maintain that philosophers will help me, far from contradicting me. Would you like to be a philosopher?

Bambabef.

Gladly—but do not tell the fakirs.

¹ *Alis is 124 paces.*

G — Gloire



Ben-al-Betif, that worthy head of the dervishes, once told them: “My brothers, it is very good that you often use this sacred formula from our Koran: *In the name of God, the most merciful*. For God shows mercy, and by often repeating the words that commend a virtue without which few people would remain on earth, you learn to practice it. But, my brothers, take care not to imitate those rash men who boast at every turn of laboring for the glory of God. If some young fool defends a thesis on the categories, presided over by an ignoramus in a fur gown, he never fails to write in large letters at its head: *Ek allhà abron doxa: To the greater glory of God*. Has a good Muslim had his drawing room whitewashed? He engraves this nonsense over his door. A water carrier carries water for the greater glory of God. This is an impious custom piously observed. What would you say of some petty palace officer who, emptying our sultan’s chamber pot, cried, ‘To the greater glory of our invincible monarch’? Surely the distance from the sultan to God is greater than that from the sultan to the petty palace officer.

“What have you, miserable earthworms called men, to do with the glory of the infinite being? Can he love glory? Can he receive it from you? Can he enjoy it? How long, featherless two-legged animals, will you make God in your own image? What! Because you are vain, because you love glory, you would have God love it too! If there were several gods, perhaps each would seek the approval of his peers. That would be a god’s glory. If infinite greatness may be

compared with utter lowliness, this god would resemble King Alexander, or Scander, who would compete only against kings. But you, poor people, what glory can you give God? Stop profaning his sacred name. An emperor named Octavian Augustus forbade people to praise him in the schools of Rome, lest his name be debased. But you can neither debase the supreme being nor honor him. Reduce yourselves to nothing, worship, and be silent.”

So spoke Ben-al-Betif, and the dervishes cried: “Glory to God! Ben-al-Betif has spoken well.”

G — Guerre



Famine, plague, and war are the three most celebrated ingredients of this world below. Under famine we may classify all the bad food to which scarcity forces us to resort, shortening our lives in the hope of sustaining them.

Plague includes all contagious diseases, of which there are two or three thousand. These two gifts come to us from providence; but war, which combines all these blessings, comes from the imagination of three or four hundred people scattered over the surface of this globe under the name of princes or ministers. Perhaps that is why so many dedications call them the living images of the divinity.

The most determined flatterer will readily agree that war always drags plague and famine in its train, if he has so much as seen the army hospitals in Germany and passed through a few villages where some great feat of arms has been performed.

It is doubtless a very fine art that lays waste the countryside, destroys homes, and kills, in an average year, forty thousand men out of a hundred thousand. This invention was first cultivated by nations assembled for their common good. For example, the assembly of the Greeks declared to the assembly of Phrygia and the neighboring peoples that it was about to set out in a thousand fishing boats to exterminate them if it could.

The assembled Roman people judged it in their interest to go out before harvest and fight the people of Veii or the Volscians. And a few years later, all the Romans being angry with all the Carthaginians, they fought for a long time by sea and land. Things are different today.

A genealogist proves to a prince that he descends in a direct line from a count whose relatives, three or four hundred years ago, made a family compact with a house of which even the memory has vanished. That house had remote claims to a province whose last possessor died of apoplexy. The prince and his council conclude without difficulty that this province belongs to him by divine right. The province, a few hundred leagues away, protests in vain that it does not know him, that it has no desire to be governed by him, that to give people laws one must at least have their consent. These speeches do not even reach the ears of the prince, whose right is incontestable. He promptly finds a great many men with nothing to do and nothing to lose; he dresses them in coarse blue cloth at a hundred and ten sous an ell, trims their hats with coarse white thread, makes them turn right and left, and marches off to glory.

The other princes who hear of this escapade take part, each according to his means, and cover a small stretch of country with more hired murderers than Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, and Bayezid ever dragged behind them.

Peoples at some distance hear that there is going to be fighting and that they can earn five or six sous a day if they care to join in. They immediately divide into two bands, like harvesters, and go off to sell their services to anyone willing to employ them.

These multitudes fall furiously upon one another, not merely without any stake in the dispute, but without even knowing what it is about.

Five or six belligerent powers are involved at once: now three against three, now two against four, now one against five, all hating one another equally, allying with and attacking one another in turn, agreeing on only one point—to do all the harm they can.

The marvelous thing about this infernal enterprise is that each chief of the murderers has his flags blessed and solemnly invokes God before going out to exterminate his neighbor. If a chief has had the good fortune to have only two

or three thousand men slaughtered, he does not thank God for it; but when some ten thousand have been exterminated by fire and sword, and, to crown the favor, some town has been destroyed from top to bottom, then a rather long song is sung in four parts, composed in a language unknown to all those who fought, and moreover stuffed with barbarisms. The same song serves for weddings and births as for murders: an unpardonable thing, especially in the nation most renowned for new songs.

Everywhere a certain number of declaimers are paid to celebrate these murderous days. Some wear a long black coat under a shortened cloak; others wear a shirt over a robe; a few wear two hanging strips of motley cloth over their shirt. They all speak at length; they cite what was done long ago in Palestine, apropos of a battle in Wetterau.

For the rest of the year these people declaim against vice. In three points and by antitheses they prove that ladies who lightly spread a little carmine on their fresh cheeks will be the eternal objects of the Eternal's eternal vengeance; that *Polyeucte* and *Athalie* are works of the Devil; that a man who has two hundred écus' worth of fresh fish served at his table on a day in Lent unfailingly secures his salvation, while a poor man who eats two and a half sous' worth of mutton goes to all the devils forever.

Out of five or six thousand declamations of this kind, there are at most three or four, composed by a Gaul named Massillon, that an honest man can read without disgust. But among all these discourses there is not one in which the orator dares to rise against the scourge and crime of war, which contains every scourge and every crime. The wretched declaimers speak ceaselessly against love, the human race's sole consolation and its sole means of renewal; they say nothing of the abominable efforts we make to destroy it.

You delivered a very bad sermon on impurity, Bourdaloue, but none on these murders in so many forms, on this plunder, this brigandage, this universal frenzy that lays the world waste. All the vices of all ages and all places combined will never equal the evils produced by a single campaign.

Miserable physicians of souls, you shout for an hour and a quarter about a few pinpricks and say nothing of the disease that tears us into a thousand pieces! Moral philosophers, burn all your books. As long as the whim of a few men can cause thousands of our brothers to be lawfully slaughtered, the portion of the human race dedicated to heroism will be the most dreadful thing in all nature. What becomes of humanity, beneficence, modesty, temperance, gentleness, wisdom, piety—and what do they matter to me—when half a pound of lead fired from six hundred paces shatters my body, and I die at twenty in unspeakable torment among five or six thousand dying men; when my eyes, opening for the last time, see the town where I was born destroyed by sword and flame, and the last sounds my ears hear are the cries of women and children expiring under the ruins—all for the supposed interests of a man we do not know? Worst of all, war is an inevitable scourge. If we look closely, all men have worshiped the god Mars. Among the Jews, Sabaoth means the God of armies; but in Homer, Minerva calls Mars a furious, senseless, infernal god.

G — Grace



Sacred counselors of modern Rome, illustrious and infallible theologians, no one has more respect than I for your divine decisions. But if Aemilius Paullus, Scipio, Cato, Cicero, Caesar, Titus, Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius returned to this Rome whose reputation they once did something to establish, you will admit that they would be a little astonished by your decisions on grace. What would they say if they heard of the grace of health according to St. Thomas, and medicinal grace according to Cajetan; of external and internal grace, gratuitous, sanctifying, actual, habitual, cooperating, efficacious grace, which sometimes has no effect, sufficient grace, which sometimes does not suffice, resistible grace, and congruous grace? In good faith, would they understand any more of it than you and I?

What need would these poor men have of your sublime instructions? I seem to hear them saying:

“My reverend fathers, you are formidable geniuses. We foolishly thought that the eternal Being never acts by particular laws, like lowly mortals, but by his general laws, eternal as himself. None of us ever imagined God resembling a senseless master who gives one slave a private fund and refuses another food; who orders a one-armed man to knead flour, a mute to read aloud to him, a man without legs to serve as his courier.

“On God’s part, everything is grace. He granted the globe we inhabit the grace of forming it; trees, the grace of making them grow; animals, that of feeding them. But will anyone say that if one wolf finds a lamb in its path for supper, while another wolf starves, God has bestowed a particular grace on the first wolf? Has he employed prevenient grace to make one oak grow in preference to another oak whose sap failed it? If throughout nature all beings are subject to general laws, how could a single species of animal not be subject to them?

“Why should the absolute master of everything be more concerned with directing the inner life of one man than with guiding the whole of the rest of nature? By what strange whim would he alter something in the heart of a Courlander or a Biscayan while altering nothing in the laws he has imposed on all the stars?

“How pitiful to suppose that he continually makes, unmakes, and remakes feelings within us! And how audacious to believe ourselves exceptions among all beings! Even then, all these changes are imagined only for those who go to confession. On Monday a Savoyard, a man of Bergamo, will have the grace to pay twelve sous for a mass; on Tuesday he will go to the tavern, and grace will fail him; on Wednesday he will have a cooperating grace that leads him to confession, but he will not have the efficacious grace of perfect contrition; on Thursday it will be a sufficient grace that does not suffice for him, as we have already said. God will work continually in this Bergamasque’s head, now forcefully, now feebly, and the rest of the earth will mean nothing to him! He will not deign to concern himself with the inner lives of Indians and Chinese! If you have a grain of reason left, my reverend fathers, do you not find this system prodigiously ridiculous?

“Unhappy men, look at this oak that raises its head to the clouds, and this reed that creeps at its feet. You do not say that efficacious grace was given to the oak and denied to the reed. Raise your eyes to heaven; see the eternal Demiurge creating millions of worlds, all gravitating toward one another by general and eternal laws. See the same light reflected from the sun to Saturn and from Saturn to us; and amid this harmony of so many stars borne along in their swift courses,

amid this universal obedience of all nature, dare to believe, if you can, that God busies himself giving resistible grace to Sister Teresa and concomitant grace to Sister Agnes!

“Atom, whom a foolish atom has told that the Eternal has particular laws for a few atoms in your neighborhood; that he gives his grace to that one and refuses it to this one; that someone who lacked grace yesterday will have it tomorrow: do not repeat this folly. God made the universe; he is not going to create new winds to stir a few straws in a corner of that universe. Theologians are like Homer’s warriors, who believed that the gods took up arms now against them, now in their favor. If Homer were not regarded as a poet, he would be regarded as a blasphemer.”

It is Marcus Aurelius speaking, not I; for God, who inspires you, grants me the grace to believe everything you say, everything you have said, and everything you will say.

H — Histoire des Rois Juifs & Paralipomènes



All peoples have written their history as soon as they could write. The Jews, too, wrote theirs. Before they had kings, they lived under a theocracy; they were supposed to be governed by God himself.

When the Jews wanted a king like the other peoples, their neighbors, the prophet Samuel declared to them on God's behalf that it was God himself they were rejecting. Thus theocracy ended among the Jews when monarchy began.

One might therefore say, without blasphemy, that the history of the Jewish kings was written like that of other peoples, and that God did not take the trouble to dictate himself the history of a people he no longer governed.

This opinion is advanced only with the most extreme diffidence. What might confirm it is that Chronicles very often contradicts the Book of Kings in chronology and in facts, just as our secular historians sometimes contradict one another. Moreover, if God has always written the history of the Jews, we must believe that he is still writing it, for the Jews are still his beloved people. They must be converted one day, and it appears that they will then be as entitled to regard the history of their dispersion as sacred as they are entitled to say that God wrote the history of their kings.

Another reflection may be made: since God was their only king for a very long time and afterward their historian, we must have the deepest respect for every Jew. There is no Jewish secondhand-clothes dealer who is not infinitely above Caesar and Alexander. How can we fail to prostrate ourselves before a second-hand-clothes dealer who proves to us that his history was written by the divinity himself, while Greek and Roman histories have been handed down to us only by secular writers?

If the style of the history of Kings and Chronicles is divine, it is still possible that the actions related in these histories are not divine. David murders Uriah. Ish-bosheth and Mephibosheth are murdered. Absalom murders Amnon; Joab murders Absalom; Solomon murders Adonijah his brother; Baasha murders Nadab; Zimri murders Elah; Omri murders Zimri; Ahab murders Naboth; Jehu murders Ahab and Joram; the inhabitants of Jerusalem murder Amaziah son of Joash. Shallum son of Jabesh murders Zechariah son of Jeroboam. Menahem murders Shallum son of Jabesh. Pekah son of Remaliah murders Pekahiah son of Menahem. Hoshea son of Elah murders Pekah son of Remaliah. We pass over many other minor murders in silence. It must be admitted that if the Holy Spirit wrote this history, he did not choose a very edifying subject.

I — Idole, Idolatre, Idolatrie



Idol comes from the Greek *eidos*, figure; *eidolos*, representation of a figure; *latreuein*, to serve, revere, worship. The word *adorer*, to worship, is Latin and has many different meanings: it means bringing the hand to the mouth while speaking respectfully; bowing, kneeling, saluting; and finally, in common usage, rendering supreme homage.

It is worth noting here that the *Dictionary of Trévoux* begins this article by saying that all pagans were idolaters and that the Indians are still idolatrous peoples. First, no one was called a pagan before Theodosius the Younger; the name was then given to the inhabitants of the villages of Italy, *Pagorum incolae Pagani*, who retained their ancient religion. Second, Hindustan is Mohammedan, and Mohammedans are the implacable enemies of images and idolatry. Third, many Indian peoples who follow the ancient religion of the Parsis should not be called idolaters, nor should certain castes that have no idols.

An inquiry

Whether there has ever been an idolatrous government.

It appears that no people on earth has ever assumed the name of idolater. The word is an insult, an abusive term like *Gavache*, which the Spaniards once applied to the French, or *Maranes*, which the French applied to the Spaniards. If the Roman senate, the Areopagus of Athens, or the court of the Persian kings had been asked, “*Are you idolaters?*” they would scarcely have understood

the question. No one would have answered, "We worship images, idols." Neither *idolater* nor *idolatry* is found in Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, or any author of the Gentile religion. There has never been an edict or law ordering that idols be worshiped, served as gods, regarded as gods.

When Roman and Carthaginian commanders made a treaty, they called all their gods to witness. "It is in their presence," they said, "that we swear to peace." Now the statues of all these gods, whose enumeration was very long, were not in the generals' tent. They regarded the gods as present at men's actions, as witnesses, as judges; and certainly the image was not what constituted the divinity.

How, then, did they regard the statues of their false divinities in the temples? In the same way, if we may put it so, that we regard images of the objects of our veneration. Their error was not to worship a piece of wood or marble, but to worship a false divinity represented by that wood and marble. The difference between them and us is not that they had images and we have none; the difference is that their images depicted imaginary beings in a false religion, while ours depict real beings in a true religion. The Greeks had a statue of Hercules, and we have one of St. Christopher; they had Aesculapius and his goat, and we have St. Roch and his dog; Jupiter armed with thunder, and we have St. Anthony of Padua and St. James of Compostela.

When the consul Pliny addresses his prayers *to the immortal gods* in the opening of his panegyric on Trajan, he does not address them to images; these images were not immortal.

Neither the last days of paganism nor its remotest beginnings offer a single fact from which it can be concluded that an idol was worshiped. Homer speaks only of gods who inhabit high Olympus. The Palladium, although fallen from heaven, was merely a sacred pledge of Pallas's protection; it was she who was venerated in the Palladium.

But the Romans and Greeks knelt before statues, gave them crowns, incense, flowers, carried them in triumph through public squares. We have sanctified these customs, and we are not idolaters.

In times of drought women carried the statues of the gods after fasting. They walked barefoot with their hair loose, and immediately it rained buckets, as Petronius says, *et statim urceatim pluebat*. Have we not consecrated this practice, illegitimate among the Gentiles and doubtless legitimate among us? In how many towns do people not carry saints' shrines barefoot to obtain heaven's blessings through their intercession? If a Turk or a Chinese scholar witnessed these ceremonies, ignorance might lead him at first to accuse us of placing our trust in the images we thus carry in procession; but one word would be enough to undeceive him.

We are astonished at the prodigious number of declamations poured out in every age against the idolatry of the Romans and Greeks; then we are more astonished still when we see that they were not idolaters.

Some temples were more privileged than others. The great Diana of Ephesus enjoyed a greater reputation than a village Diana. More miracles were performed in the temple of Aesculapius at Epidaurus than in another of his temples. The statue of Olympian Jupiter drew more offerings than that of Paphlagonian Jupiter. But since we must continually contrast the customs of a true religion with those of a false one here, have we not for several centuries shown greater devotion to certain altars than to others? Do we not bring more offerings to Our Lady of Loreto than to Our Lady of the Snows? It is for us to consider whether this pretext should be seized upon to accuse us of idolatry.

Only one Diana, one Apollo, one Aesculapius had been imagined—not as many Apollos, Dianas, and Aesculapiuses as they had temples and statues. It is therefore proved, as far as a point of history can be, that the ancients did not believe a statue to be a divinity, that their worship could not be directed to that statue, that idol, and consequently that the ancients were not idolaters.

A coarse and superstitious populace that did not reason, that knew neither how to doubt, nor deny, nor believe; that flocked to temples out of idleness and because the humble stand equal there with the great; that brought its offering out of habit; that spoke continually of miracles without having examined a single one, and was scarcely above the sacrificial beasts it brought—this populace, I say, might well, at the sight of the great Diana and of Jupiter the Thunderer,

be struck with religious awe and unknowingly worship the statue itself. This has sometimes happened in our temples to our ignorant peasants, and care has been taken to teach them that they must ask the intercession of the blessed, the immortals received into heaven, not of figures of wood and stone, and that they must worship God alone.

The Greeks and Romans increased the number of their gods by apotheoses. The Greeks deified conquerors, such as Bacchus, Hercules, Perseus. Rome raised altars to its emperors. Our apotheoses are of a different kind. We have saints instead of their demigods, their secondary gods; but we pay no regard to rank or conquests. We have raised temples to men who were simply virtuous, most of whom would be unknown on earth had they not been placed in heaven. The apotheoses of the ancients sprang from flattery; ours spring from respect for virtue. But these ancient apotheoses are further convincing proof that the Greeks and Romans were not idolaters in the proper sense. Plainly they supposed no more divine power in the statues of Augustus and Claudius than in their medals.

In his philosophical works Cicero does not leave room even to suspect that anyone could mistake the statues of the gods and confuse them with the gods themselves. His speakers thunder against the established religion, but none thinks of accusing the Romans of taking marble and bronze for divinities. Lucretius, who reproaches the superstitious with everything, reproaches no one with this folly. Once again, then: this opinion did not exist; no one had any notion of it. There were no idolaters.

Horace makes a statue of Priapus speak. He makes it say, "*I was once a fig-tree trunk; a carpenter, not knowing whether to make me a god or a bench, finally decided to make me a god, etc.*" What are we to conclude from this joke? Priapus was one of those minor subordinate divinities left to the mockers; and this very joke is the strongest proof that the figure of Priapus set in vegetable gardens to frighten the birds was not greatly revered.

Giving free rein to the commentator's spirit, Dacier did not fail to observe that Baruch had foretold this adventure when he said, "*They will be only what the workmen choose*"; but he might also have observed that the same can be said of

every statue.

A basin can be carved from a block of marble just as readily as a figure of Alexander, Jupiter, or something more respectable still. The material from which the cherubim in the Holy of Holies were formed might equally have served the basest purposes. Are a throne and an altar any less revered because the craftsman could have made a kitchen table out of them?

Instead of concluding that the Romans worshiped the statue of Priapus and that Baruch had foretold it, Dacier should therefore have concluded that the Romans laughed at it. Consult all the authors who speak of statues of their gods: you will find none who speaks of idolatry; they expressly say the contrary. You read in Martial:

*He who shaped sacred faces in gold or marble
Does not make gods.*

In Ovid: "*Jupiter's form is worshiped in place of Jupiter.*"

In Statius: "*But no image, no form of God entrusted to metal:
He delights to inhabit minds and divine powers.*"

In Lucan: "*Is there any dwelling of God but earth and sea and air?*"

A volume could be made of all the passages testifying that images were only images.

Only the cases in which statues delivered oracles could have led anyone to think that these statues had something divine within them. But certainly the prevailing opinion was that the gods had chosen certain altars, certain images, to come and dwell in from time to time, to give men audience there, to answer them. In Homer and the choruses of Greek tragedies we see nothing but prayers to Apollo, who delivers his oracles on the mountains, in this temple, in that town; in all antiquity there is not the slightest trace of a prayer addressed to a statue. Those who practiced magic, who believed it a science or pretended to believe it, claimed to possess the secret of making the gods descend into statues—not the great gods, but the secondary gods, the spirits. This is what Mercury

Trismegistus called making gods, and what St. Augustine refutes in *The City of God*. But this very thing plainly shows that the images had nothing divine in themselves, since a magician had to animate them. And it seems to me that it very rarely happened that a magician was skillful enough to give a statue a soul and make it speak.

In short, images of the gods were not gods. Jupiter, not his image, hurled the thunderbolt; it was not Neptune's statue that stirred up the seas, nor Apollo's that gave light. The Greeks and Romans were Gentiles, polytheists, and not idolaters.

Whether the Persians, Sabaeans, Egyptians, Tartars, and Turks were idolaters; and how ancient is the origin of the images called idols. History of their worship.

It is a great mistake to call the peoples who worshiped the sun and stars idolaters. These nations long had neither images nor temples. If they erred, it was in rendering to the stars what they owed to the creator of the stars. Even so, the doctrine of Zoroaster, or Zerdust, collected in the *Sadder*, teaches a supreme being who avenges and rewards, and that is very far from idolatry. The government of China has never had an idol; it has always preserved the simple worship of the master of heaven, Kingtien. Among the Tartars, Genghis Khan was not an idolater and had no image. The Muslims who fill Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Persia, India, and Africa call Christians idolaters, *giaours*, because they believe Christians worship images. They broke many statues they found at Constantinople in Hagia Sophia, in the Church of the Holy Apostles, and in other churches they converted into mosques. Appearances deceived them, as they always deceive men, and led them to believe that temples dedicated to saints who had once been men, images of these saints revered on bended knees, miracles performed in these temples, were irresistible proofs of the most complete idolatry. Yet it is nothing of the kind. Christians in fact worship only one God, and in the blessed they revere only the very power of God acting in his saints. The iconoclasts and Protestants have made the same charge of idolatry against the Church, and have received the same answer.

As men have very rarely had precise ideas, and have even less often expressed their ideas in precise, unambiguous words, we gave the name *idolaters* to the Gentiles, especially the polytheists. Immense volumes have been written and various opinions aired on the origin of this worship rendered to God, or to several gods, under visible forms. This multitude of books and opinions proves only ignorance.

We do not know who invented clothes and shoes, yet we want to know who first invented *idols*! What does a passage of *Sanchoniathon*, who lived before the Trojan War, matter? What does he teach us when he says that chaos, spirit—that is, breath—in love with its own principles, drew mud from them; that it made the air luminous; that the wind Colp and his wife Baau begot Eon; that Eon begot Genos; that Cronos, their descendant, had two eyes behind as well as in front; that he became a god and gave Egypt to his son Thoth? There is one of antiquity's most respectable monuments.

Orpheus, earlier than Sanchoniathon, will teach us no more in his *Theogony*, preserved for us by Damascius. He represents the origin of the world as a dragon with two heads, one a bull's, the other a lion's, a face in the middle, which he calls the god-face, and golden wings at the shoulders.

But from these strange ideas you can draw two great truths: one, that visible images and hieroglyphs are of the highest antiquity; the other, that all the ancient philosophers acknowledged a first principle.

As for polytheism, common sense will tell you that as soon as there were men—that is, weak animals capable of reason and folly, subject to every accident, to illness and death—these men felt their weakness and dependence. They readily acknowledged that something was more powerful than themselves. They felt a force in the earth that supplied their food, one in the air that often destroyed them, one in the fire that consumed and the water that submerged. What could be more natural for ignorant men than to imagine beings presiding over these elements? What could be more natural than to revere the invisible force that made the sun and stars shine before their eyes? And as soon as they wished to form an idea of these powers superior to man, what could be more natural than to depict them in visible forms? Could they even have gone about it otherwise?

The Jewish religion, which preceded ours and was given by God himself, was full of these images under which God is represented. He deigns to speak human language in a bush; he appears on a mountain. The heavenly spirits he sends all come in human form; finally, the sanctuary is filled with cherubim, human bodies with wings and animals' heads. This gave rise to the error of Plutarch, Tacitus, Appian, and so many others in reproaching the Jews with worshipping an ass's head. Despite his prohibition on painting or carving any figure, God therefore deigned to accommodate himself to human weakness, which required that the senses be addressed through images.

In chapter VI Isaiah sees the Lord seated on a throne, and the hem of his robe filling the temple. In chapter I of Jeremiah, the Lord stretches out his hand and touches the prophet's mouth. In chapter III Ezekiel sees a sapphire throne, and God appears to him as a man seated upon that throne. These images do not impair the purity of the Jewish religion, which never employed paintings, statues, or idols to represent God before the people's eyes.

Chinese scholars, Persis, and the ancient Egyptians had no idols; but soon Isis and Osiris were depicted; soon Bel at Babylon became a huge colossus. Brahma was a strange monster on the Indian peninsula. The Greeks above all multiplied the names of gods, statues, and temples, while always attributing supreme power to their Zeus, called Jupiter by the Latins, master of gods and men. The Romans imitated the Greeks. These peoples always placed all their gods in heaven, without knowing what they meant by heaven and their Olympus. There was no likelihood of these superior beings inhabiting clouds, which are only water. At first seven had been placed in the seven planets, among which the sun was counted; afterward the dwelling of all the gods was the expanse of heaven.

The Romans had their twelve great gods, six male and six female, whom they called *Dii majorum gentium*: Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, Vulcan, Mars, Mercury; Juno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Venus, Diana. Pluto was forgotten then; Vesta took his place.

Next came the gods *minorum gentium*, the native gods, the heroes, such as Bacchus, Hercules, Aesculapius; the infernal gods, Pluto, Proserpina; those of the sea, such as Thetis, Amphitrite, the Nereids, Glaucus; then the Dryads, the Naiads; the gods of gardens, those of shepherds. There were gods for every profession, for every action of life, for children, for marriageable girls, for married women, for women in childbirth; there was a god *Fart*. Finally the emperors were deified. Neither these emperors, nor the god *Fart*, nor the goddess Pertunda, nor Priapus, nor Rumilia, goddess of teats, nor Stercutius, god of the privy, were in truth regarded as masters of heaven and earth. The emperors sometimes had temples; the little Penates had none; but all had their figure, their idol.

They were little figurines used to ornament a private room. They were the amusements of old women and children, sanctioned by no public worship. Each individual's superstition was allowed to act as it pleased. These little idols are still found in the ruins of ancient cities.

If no one knows when men began making idols, we know that they are of the highest antiquity. Terah, Abraham's father, made them at Ur in Chaldea. Rachel stole and carried away the idols of her father-in-law Laban. We cannot go back any further.

But what precise notion did the ancient nations have of all these images? What virtue, what power was attributed to them? Did people believe that the gods descended from heaven to hide inside these statues, or communicated part of the divine spirit to them, or communicated nothing at all? This, too, has been written about to very little purpose. Plainly each man judged according to the degree of his reason, his credulity, or his fanaticism. Evidently the priests attached as much divinity as possible to their statues, to attract more offerings. We know that philosophers condemned these superstitions, that warriors laughed at them, that magistrates tolerated them, and that the people, always absurd, did not know what they were doing. That, in a few words, is the history of all the nations to whom God has not made himself known.

The same idea may be formed of the worship that all Egypt paid to an ox, and that several cities paid to a dog, a monkey, a cat, onions. It is very likely that these were emblems at first. Later a certain ox, Apis, and a certain dog named Anubis were worshiped; people continued to eat beef and onions, but it is difficult to know what the old women of Egypt thought about sacred onions and oxen.

Idols spoke fairly often. At Rome, on Cybele's feast day, people commemorated the fine words the statue had uttered when it was removed from King Attalus's palace:

I myself wished to undergo it; do not delay; send me, willing as I am.

Rome is a worthy place for every god to come.

"I wished to be taken away; bring me quickly. Rome is worthy of having every god settle there."

The statue of Fortune had spoken. The Scipios, Ciceros, and Caesars, to be sure, believed none of it; but the old woman to whom Encolpius gave an écu to buy geese and gods might very well believe it.

Idols also delivered oracles, and priests hidden in the hollow of the statues spoke in the divinity's name.

How, amid so many gods, so many different theogonies and particular cults, was there never a religious war among the peoples called idolaters? This peace was a good born of an evil, of error itself. For each nation, acknowledging several lesser gods, found it quite proper that its neighbors should have theirs as well. Apart from Cambyeses, who is accused of killing the ox Apis, we find in secular history no conqueror who mistreated the gods of a conquered people. The Gentiles had no exclusive religion, and their priests thought only of multiplying offerings and sacrifices.

The first offerings were fruits. Soon animals were needed for the priests' table; they slaughtered the animals themselves; they became butchers and grew cruel. At last they introduced the horrible practice of sacrificing human victims, espe-

cially children and young girls. Neither the Chinese, the Parsis, nor the Indians were ever guilty of these abominations. But at Hieropolis in Egypt, according to Porphyry, men were sacrificed.

In Tauris strangers were sacrificed. Fortunately the priests of Tauris cannot have had many customers. The early Greeks, the Cypriots, Phoenicians, Tyrians, and Carthaginians practiced this abominable superstition. The Romans themselves fell into this religious crime; Plutarch relates that they sacrificed two Greeks and two Gauls to atone for the love affairs of three Vestals. Procopius, a contemporary of Theudebert, king of the Franks, says that the Franks sacrificed men when they entered Italy with that prince. The Gauls and Germans commonly performed these dreadful sacrifices. One can scarcely read history without conceiving a horror of the human race.

It is true that among the Jews Jephthah sacrificed his daughter and Saul was ready to sacrifice his son. It is true that those devoted to the Lord by anathema could not be redeemed as animals were redeemed, and had to perish. Samuel, a Jewish priest, hacked to pieces with a holy cleaver King Agag, a prisoner of war whom Saul had pardoned; and Saul was rejected for having observed the law of nations toward this king. But God, the master of men, may take their lives when he wishes, as he wishes, and through whom he wishes. It is not for men to put themselves in the place of the master of life and death and usurp the rights of the Supreme Being.

To console the human race for this horrible picture, for these pious sacrileges, it is important to know that among almost all the nations called idolaters there was sacred theology and popular error, secret worship and public ceremonies, the religion of the wise and that of the vulgar. Only one God was taught to initiate in the mysteries. We need only glance at the hymn attributed to the ancient Orpheus, sung in the mysteries of Eleusinian Ceres, so celebrated in Europe and Asia: "Contemplate the divine nature; illuminate your mind; govern your heart; walk in the path of justice. Let the God of heaven and earth be always present before your eyes. He is one; he alone exists by himself; all beings owe their existence to him; he sustains them all; he has never been seen by mortals, and he sees all things."

Read also this passage from the philosopher Maximus of Madaura, in his letter to St. Augustine: "What man is so ignorant, so stupid as to doubt that there is a supreme, eternal, infinite God, who has begotten nothing like himself and is the common father of all things?"

There are a thousand testimonies that the wise abhorred not only idolatry but polytheism as well.

Epictetus, that model of resignation and patience, a man so great in so lowly a condition, never speaks of more than one God. Here is one of his maxims: "God created me; God is within me; I carry him everywhere. Could I sully him with obscene thoughts, unjust actions, infamous desires? My duty is to thank God for everything, praise him for everything, and cease blessing him only when I cease to live." All Epictetus's ideas turn on this principle.

Marcus Aurelius, perhaps as great on the Roman imperial throne as Epictetus in slavery, often speaks of gods, it is true, either to conform to accepted language or to express beings intermediate between the Supreme Being and men; but in how many places does he not show that he acknowledges only one eternal, infinite God? "Our soul," he says, "is an emanation of the divinity. My children, my body, my spirits come to me from God."

The Stoics and Platonists admitted a divine, universal nature; the Epicureans denied it. The pontiffs spoke of only one God in the mysteries. Where, then, were the idolaters?

Besides, it is one of the great errors of Moréri's dictionary to say that in the time of Theodosius the Younger no idolaters remained except in remote parts of Asia and Africa. In Italy many peoples were still Gentiles even in the seventh century. Northern Germany, from the Weser onward, was not Christian in Charlemagne's time. Poland and the whole north remained in what is called idolatry long after him. Half of Africa, all the kingdoms beyond the Ganges, Japan, the common people of China, a hundred Tartar hordes have preserved their ancient worship. In Europe there remain only a few Lapps, a few Samoyeds, a few Tartars who have persisted in the religion of their ancestors.

Let us end by noting that in the times we call the Middle Ages, we called the land of the Mohammedans Paganism. We branded as idolaters, as worshipers of images, a people who abhor images. Let us admit once more that the Turks are more excusable for believing us idolaters when they see our altars laden with images and statues.

J — Jephthe, ou des sacrifices de sang humain



Or, of sacrifices of human blood.

The text of the Book of Judges makes it plain that Jephthah promised to sacrifice the first person who came out of his house to congratulate him on his victory over the Ammonites. His only daughter came to meet him; he tore his garments and sacrificed her, after allowing her to go into the mountains to lament the misfortune of dying a virgin. For a long time Jewish girls commemorated this event by weeping for Jephthah's daughter for four days. (See chapter 12 of Judges.)

Whenever this story was written, whether it was imitated from the Greek stories of Agamemnon and Idomeneus or served as their model, whether it preceded or followed similar Assyrian stories, is not what I am examining. I keep to the text: Jephthah vowed his daughter as a burnt offering and fulfilled his vow.

Jewish law expressly commanded the sacrifice of men devoted to the Lord. "*No man so devoted may be redeemed; he must be put to death without remission.*"

The Vulgate translates it, *non redimetur, sed morte morietur*. Leviticus, chap. 27, verse 29.

It was by virtue of this law that Samuel cut to pieces King Agag, whom Saul had pardoned; and it was precisely for sparing Agag that Saul was rejected by the Lord and lost his kingdom.

Here, then, sacrifices of human blood are clearly established. No point of history is better attested. A nation can be judged only by its archives and by what it relates about itself.

I — Inondation



Was there ever a time when the globe was entirely flooded? That is physically impossible. The sea may have covered every region in succession, one after another; and this can only have happened by slow progression over a prodigious multitude of centuries. In five hundred years the sea has withdrawn from Aigues-Mortes, Fréjus, and Ravenna, which were great ports, leaving about two leagues of land dry. At this rate it would clearly take two million two hundred and fifty thousand years to make its way around our globe. What is very remarkable is that this period comes very close to the time required for the earth's axis to rise and coincide with the equator: a very probable movement, first suspected in the last fifty years, which can take place only over two million and more than three hundred thousand years.

The beds and layers of shells discovered everywhere, sixty, eighty, even a hundred leagues from the sea, are incontestable proof that it gradually deposited these marine products on ground that once formed the ocean's shores. But that water should have covered the entire globe all at once is a physically absurd fantasy, proved impossible by the laws of gravitation, the laws of fluids, and the insufficient quantity of water. Not that we intend the slightest attack on the great truth of the universal flood related in the Pentateuch. On the contrary: it is a miracle, therefore it must be believed; it is a miracle, therefore it could not have been brought about by physical laws.

Everything in the story of the flood is miraculous. A miracle, that forty days of rain flooded the four parts of the world and the water rose fifteen cubits above all the highest mountains; a miracle, that there were floodgates, doors, openings in the sky; a miracle, that all the animals came into the ark from every part of the world; a miracle, that Noah found enough to feed them for ten months; a miracle, that all the animals fitted into the ark with their provisions; a miracle, that most of them did not die there; a miracle, that they found food on leaving the ark; and another miracle, though of a different kind, that a man named Pelletier believed he had explained how all the animals could naturally have fitted into Noah's ark and fed there.

Now, since the story of the flood is the most miraculous thing ever heard of, it would be senseless to explain it. It is one of those mysteries believed through faith; and faith consists in believing what reason does not believe, which is yet another miracle.

Thus the story of the universal flood is like that of the Tower of Babel, Balaam's she-ass, the fall of Jericho at the sound of trumpets, the waters changed to blood, the crossing of the Red Sea, and all the prodigies God deigned to perform for the elect of his people. These are depths the human mind cannot fathom.

J — Joseph



The story of Joseph, considered merely as an object of curiosity and literature, is one of the most precious monuments of antiquity that have come down to us. It seems to be the model for all Eastern writers. It is more moving than Homer's *Odyssey*, for a hero who forgives touches us more than one who takes revenge.

We regard the Arabs as the first authors of those ingenious fictions that have passed into every language; but I see no adventure among them comparable to Joseph's. Almost everything in it is marvelous, and the ending can draw tears of tenderness. Here is a young man of sixteen whose brothers are jealous of him. They sell him to a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants; he is taken to Egypt and bought by one of the king's eunuchs. This eunuch had a wife, which is not at all surprising. The Kizlar Agha, a complete eunuch from whom everything has been cut away, has a seraglio in Constantinople today. He has been left his eyes and hands, and nature has not lost her rights over his heart. Other eunuchs, from whom only the two appendages of the organ of generation have been cut, still often employ that organ; and Potiphar, to whom Joseph was sold, might very well have been one of these eunuchs.

Potiphar's wife falls in love with young Joseph, who, faithful to his master and benefactor, rejects her advances. Angered, she accuses Joseph of trying to seduce her. It is the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra, Bellerophon and

Sthenoboea, Hebrus and Damasippe, Tanis and Periboea, Myrtilus and Hippodamia, Peleus and Demaenete.

It is difficult to know which of all these stories is the original; but in the ancient Arab authors there is a very ingenious detail concerning Joseph's adventure with Potiphar's wife. The author supposes that Potiphar, uncertain between his wife and Joseph, did not regard Joseph's tunic, which his wife had torn, as proof of the young man's assault. There was a child in a cradle in the wife's room; Joseph said that she had torn and pulled off his tunic in the child's presence. Potiphar consulted the child, whose intelligence was very advanced for its age. The child said to Potiphar, "Look whether the tunic is torn in front or behind. If it is in front, that proves Joseph tried to take your wife by force while she defended herself; if it is behind, that proves your wife was running after him." Thanks to this child's genius, Potiphar recognized his slave's innocence. This is how the adventure is related in the Koran, following the ancient Arab author. He does not trouble to tell us whose child it was that judged so cleverly. If it was a son of Madame Potiphar, Joseph was not the first man this woman had pursued.

However that may be, according to Genesis Joseph is put in prison and finds himself there in the company of the king of Egypt's cupbearer and baker. These two state prisoners both dream during the night. Joseph explains their dreams and predicts that in three days the cupbearer will be restored to favor and the baker hanged, which duly happens.

Two years later the king of Egypt dreams as well. His cupbearer tells him there is a young Jew in prison who is the foremost man in the world at understanding dreams. The king sends for the young man, who predicts seven years of abundance and seven years of barrenness.

Let us interrupt the thread of the story here for a moment to see how prodigiously ancient the interpretation of dreams is.

Jacob had seen in a dream the mysterious ladder at whose summit God himself stood; in a dream he learned a method of multiplying his flocks, a method that has never worked for anyone but him. Joseph himself had learned through a

dream that one day he would rule over his brothers. Long before, Abimelech had been warned in a dream that Sarah was Abraham's wife. (See the article *Songe*.)

Let us return to Joseph. As soon as he had explained Pharaoh's dream, he was made prime minister on the spot. It is doubtful whether today one could find a king, even in Asia, who would bestow such an office for explaining a dream. Pharaoh had Joseph marry a daughter of Potiphar. This Potiphar is said to have been high priest of Heliopolis, so he was not the eunuch who had first been Joseph's master; or if he was, he certainly had another title besides that of high priest, and his wife had been a mother more than once.

Meanwhile the famine came, as Joseph had foretold, and Joseph, to earn his king's favor, forced the entire people to sell their lands to Pharaoh, and the whole nation became enslaved to obtain grain. This is apparently the origin of despotic power. It must be admitted that no king had ever made a better bargain; but then the people could scarcely have blessed the prime minister.

At last Joseph's father and brothers also needed grain, for *famine then ravaged all the earth*. There is no need to relate here how Joseph received his brothers, how he forgave and enriched them. This story contains everything that makes a compelling epic poem: exposition, complication, recognition, reversal, and the marvelous. Nothing is more deeply stamped with Eastern genius.

The answer that good old Jacob, Joseph's father, gave Pharaoh must strike those who know how to read. "How old are you?" the king asked. "I am a hundred and thirty," said the old man, "and I have not yet had one happy day in this short pilgrimage."

D — De la Liberté



A.

“Here is a battery of cannon firing in our ears. Are you free to hear it or not to hear it?”

B.

“Certainly, I cannot help hearing it.”

A.

“Do you want this cannon to carry off your head, and those of your wife and daughter, who are walking with you?”

B.

“What a suggestion! As long as I am in my right mind, I cannot want such a thing. It is impossible for me.”

A.

“Good. You necessarily hear this cannon, and you necessarily want neither yourself nor your family to be killed by a cannonball while out walking. You have neither the power not to hear it nor the power to want to remain here.”

B.

“That is clear.”

A.

“You have consequently taken some thirty steps to find shelter from the cannon. You had the power to walk these few steps with me?”

B.

“That, too, is perfectly clear.”

A.

“And if you had been paralyzed, you could not have avoided exposure to this battery; you would not have had the power to be where you are. You would necessarily have heard and received a cannon shot, and you would necessarily have died.”

B.

“Nothing could be truer.”

A.

“What, then, does your freedom consist in, if not the power you exercised as an individual to do what your will demanded of absolute necessity?”

B.

“You puzzle me. So freedom is nothing but the power to do what I want?”

A.

“Reflect on it, and see whether freedom can be understood otherwise.”

B.

“In that case my hunting dog is as free as I am. He necessarily has the will to run when he sees a hare, and the power to run if his legs are not injured. Then I have nothing above my dog: you reduce me to the condition of beasts.”

A.

“There are the poor sophisms of the poor sophists who taught you. What a dreadful misfortune, to be free like your dog! Do you not resemble your dog in a thousand things? Do you not share hunger, thirst, waking, sleeping, the five senses with him? Would you want to smell with something other than your nose? Why do you want to possess freedom in a different way from him?”

B.

“But I have a soul that reasons a great deal, and my dog reasons very little. He has almost nothing but simple ideas, while I have a thousand metaphysical ideas.”

A.

“Well then, you are a thousand times freer than he is—that is, you have a thousand times more power to think than he has; but you are not free in a different way.”

B.

“What? I am not free to want what I want?”

A.

“What do you mean by that?”

B.

“I mean what everyone means. Do people not say every day, ‘The will is free’?”

A.

“A proverb is not an argument. Explain yourself better.”

B.

“I mean that I am free to will as I please.”

A.

“With your permission, that has no meaning. Do you not see that it is ridiculous to say, ‘I will to will’? You necessarily will as a consequence of the ideas that have presented themselves to you. Do you want to marry, yes or no?”

B.

“But what if I told you I want neither?”

A.

“You would be answering like the man who said, ‘Some believe Cardinal Mazarin dead, others believe him alive, and I believe neither.’”

B.

“Well, I want to marry.”

A.

“Ah, that is an answer! Why do you want to marry?”

B.

“Because I am in love with a young woman who is beautiful, gentle, well brought up, fairly rich, sings very well, and has thoroughly respectable parents; and I flatter myself that she loves me and that her family welcomes me warmly.”

A.

"There is a reason. You see that you cannot will without a reason. I declare that you are free to marry—that is, you have the power to sign the contract."

B.

"What! I cannot will without a reason? Then what becomes of that other proverb, *sit pro ratione voluntas*: my will is my reason; I want to because I want to?"

A.

"That is absurd, my dear friend. There would be an effect in you without a cause."

B.

"What! When I play odd or even, I have a reason for choosing even rather than odd?"

A.

"Yes, certainly."

B.

"And what is that reason, please?"

A.

"It is that the idea of odd presented itself to your mind before the opposite idea. It would be amusing if there were cases in which you will because there is a cause for willing, and other cases in which you willed without a cause. When you want to marry, you plainly feel the prevailing reason; you do not feel it when you play odd or even, yet there must be one."

B.

"But once again, then, I am not free?"

A.

"Your will is not free, but your actions are. You are free to act when you have the power to act."

B.

"But all the books I have read on freedom of indifference..."

A.

"Are foolishness. There is no freedom of indifference. It is a meaningless expression invented by people who had little sense themselves."

D — Des Loix



In the days of Vespasian and Titus, while the Romans were disemboweling the Jews, a very rich Israelite who had no wish to be disemboweled fled with all the gold he had earned in his trade as a usurer, and took his whole family toward Ezion-geber. It consisted of his old wife, a son, and a daughter. In his retinue he had two eunuchs, one serving as cook, the other as plowman and vine grower. A good Essene who knew the Pentateuch by heart served him as chaplain. All these people embarked at the port of Ezion-geber, crossed the sea called Red, which is not red, and entered the Persian Gulf to look for the land of Ophir, without knowing where it was. You may be sure a horrible storm arose and drove the Hebrew family toward the coast of India. The ship was wrecked on one of the Maldives, now called Padrabranca, which was then deserted.

The rich old man and his wife drowned; the son, daughter, two eunuchs, and chaplain survived. They salvaged what provisions they could from the ship, built little huts on the island, and lived fairly comfortably. You know that the island of Padrabranca is five degrees from the equator, and that the world's largest coconuts and best pineapples are found there. It was very pleasant to live there while the rest of the beloved nation was being slaughtered elsewhere; but the Essene wept to think that perhaps they were the only Jews left on earth and that Abraham's seed was about to die out.

"It is up to you to revive it," said the young Jew. "Marry my sister." "I would gladly," said the chaplain, "but the law forbids it. I am an Essene; I have vowed never to marry; the law says one must fulfill one's vow. Let the Jewish race die out if it pleases, but I certainly will not marry your sister, pretty as she is."

"My two eunuchs cannot give her children," the Jew continued. "Then I shall give her some, if you please, and you will bless the marriage."

"I would a hundred times rather be disemboweled by Roman soldiers," said the chaplain, "than help you commit incest. If she were your sister on your father's side, it might pass; the law allows that. But she is your sister on your mother's side: it is abominable."

"I quite understand," replied the young man, "that it would be a crime in Jerusalem, where I should find other girls; but on the island of Padrabranca, where I see nothing but coconuts, pineapples, and oysters, I believe it is entirely permissible." So the Jew married his sister and had a daughter by her despite the Essene's protests. This was the only fruit of a marriage that one thought perfectly legitimate and the other abominable.

After fourteen years the mother died. The father said to the chaplain, "Have you finally rid yourself of your old prejudices? Will you marry my daughter?"

"God preserve me," said the Essene. "Very well, I shall marry her myself," said the father. "Come what may, I do not want Abraham's seed reduced to nothing." Appalled by this horrible proposal, the Essene refused to remain any longer with a man who broke the law and fled. In vain the newlywed shouted, "Stay, my friend! I am observing natural law; I am serving my country. Do not abandon your friends!" The other let him shout, his head still full of the law, and swam away to the neighboring island.

It was the large island of Attole, very populous and very civilized. As soon as he landed, he was enslaved. He learned to stammer the language of Attole and complained bitterly of the inhospitable way he had been received. He was told that it was the law, and that since the island had nearly been taken by surprise by the inhabitants of Ada, it had been wisely decreed that all foreigners landing on Attole should be put into servitude. "That cannot be a law," said the Essene,

“for it is not in the Pentateuch.” He was told that it was in the country’s digest, and he remained a slave. Fortunately he had a very good, very rich master who treated him well and to whom he became greatly attached.

One day assassins came to kill the master and steal his treasures. They asked the slaves whether he was at home and whether he had much money. “We swear to you,” said the slaves, “that he has no money and is not at home.” But the Essene said, “The law does not permit lying. I swear to you that he is at home and has a great deal of money.” So the master was robbed and killed. Before the judges the slaves accused the Essene of betraying his patron. The Essene said that he would not lie, that he would not lie for anything in the world, and he was hanged.

I was told this story, and many similar ones, on my last voyage from India to France.

When I arrived, I went to Versailles on some business. I saw a beautiful woman pass, followed by several beautiful women. “Who is that beautiful woman?” I asked my lawyer at the parlement, who had come with me; for I had a lawsuit before the Parlement of Paris over the clothes I had had made in India, and I always wanted my lawyer at my side. “That is the king’s daughter,” he said. “She is charming and benevolent. What a pity that under no circumstances can she ever be queen of France.” “What!” I said. “If we had the misfortune to lose all her relatives and the princes of the blood—which God forbid—could she not inherit her father’s kingdom?” “No,” said the lawyer, “Salic law expressly forbids it.” “And who made this Salic law?” I asked the lawyer. “I know nothing about it,” he said, “but it is claimed that among an ancient people called the Salians, who could neither read nor write, there was a written law saying that on Salic land a daughter should not inherit an allodial estate; and this law has been adopted on non-Salic land.” “Well,” I told him, “I annul it. You have assured me that this princess is charming and benevolent; therefore she would have an incontestable right to the crown if the misfortune occurred that she alone remained of the royal blood. My mother inherited from her father, and I want this princess to inherit from hers.”

The next day my case was heard in a chamber of the parlement, and I lost by a unanimous vote. My lawyer told me that in another chamber I would have won by a unanimous vote. "That is very comical," I said. "So each chamber has its own law?" "Yes," he said. "There are twenty-five commentaries on the custom of Paris; that is, it has been proved twenty-five times that the custom of Paris is ambiguous; and if there were twenty-five chambers of judges, there would be twenty-five different bodies of jurisprudence. Fifteen leagues from Paris," he continued, "we have a province called Normandy, where you would have been judged quite differently from here." This gave me a desire to see Normandy. I went with one of my brothers. At the first inn we met a young man in despair. I asked him what his misfortune was; he replied that it was having an elder brother. "Where is the great misfortune in having a brother?" I asked. "My brother is older than I am, and we live very well together." "Alas, sir," he said, "here the law gives everything to the eldest and leaves the younger sons nothing." "You are right to be angry," I said. "Where we come from, the shares are equal, and sometimes the brothers love one another no better for it."

These little adventures led me to fine and profound reflections on laws, and I saw that they are like our clothes: I had to wear a dolman in Constantinople and a close-fitting coat in Paris.

"If all human laws are matters of convention," I said, "we need only make our bargains well. The citizens of Delhi and Agra say they made a very bad bargain with Tamerlane; the citizens of London congratulate themselves on having made a very good bargain with King William of Orange." A citizen of London once told me, "Necessity makes laws, and force makes people observe them." I asked him whether force did not sometimes make laws as well, and whether William the Bastard and Conqueror had not given them orders without making any bargain with them. "Yes," he said, "we were oxen then. William put us under a yoke and drove us forward with goads. Since then we have been changed into men, but our horns remain, and we strike with them at anyone who wants to make us plow for him rather than for ourselves."

Full of all these reflections, I took pleasure in thinking that there is a natural law independent of all human conventions: the fruit of my labor must belong to me; I must honor my father and mother; I have no right over my neighbor's life, nor he over mine, etc. But when I reflected that from Chedorlaomer down to Mentzel, colonel of hussars, everyone lawfully kills and plunders his neighbor with a commission in his pocket, I was greatly distressed.

I was told that there were laws among thieves and laws in war as well. I asked what these laws of war were. "They mean," I was told, "hanging a brave officer who has held a poor position without cannon against a royal army; hanging a prisoner if one of yours has been hanged; putting villages to fire and sword if they have not brought all their provisions on the appointed day, according to the orders of the gracious sovereign next door." "Good," I said. "There is *the spirit of the laws*."

After being thoroughly instructed, I discovered that there are wise laws by which a shepherd is condemned to nine years in the galleys for giving his sheep a little foreign salt. My neighbor was ruined by a lawsuit over two oaks of his own that he had had cut in his wood, because he had been unable to comply with a formality he could not have known about. His wife died in poverty, and his son drags out a still more miserable life. I admit that these laws are just, although their enforcement is a little harsh; but I resent laws that authorize a hundred thousand men to go and lawfully slaughter a hundred thousand neighbors. It seemed to me that most men have received enough common sense from nature to make laws, but that not everyone has enough justice to make good laws.

Gather simple, peaceful farmers from one end of the earth to the other: they will all readily agree that one should be allowed to sell one's surplus grain to one's neighbors, and that the contrary law is inhuman and absurd; that coins representing commodities should be adulterated no more than the fruits of the earth; that the father of a family should be master in his own home; that religion should bring men together to unite them, not make them fanatics and

persecutors; that those who work should not deprive themselves of the fruits of their labor to endow superstition and idleness. In an hour they will make thirty laws of this kind, all useful to the human race.

But let Tamerlane arrive and subjugate India: then you will see nothing but arbitrary laws. One will crush a province to enrich one of Tamerlane's tax collectors; another will make it high treason to speak ill of the mistress of a raja's chief valet; a third will seize half the farmer's harvest and dispute his right to the rest. Finally there will be laws by which a Tartar bailiff will come and seize your children in their cradles, make the strongest a soldier and the weakest a eunuch, and leave their father and mother without help and without consolation.

Now which is better: to be Tamerlane's dog or his subject? Clearly his dog's condition is far superior.

L — Loix civiles & ecclésiastiques



The following notes were found among a jurist's papers; perhaps they deserve a little examination.

Let no ecclesiastical law ever have force unless expressly sanctioned by the government. It was by this means that Athens and Rome never had religious quarrels.

Such quarrels are the lot of barbarous nations, or nations that have become barbarous.

Let the magistrate alone have power to permit or forbid work on feast days, because it is not for priests to forbid men to cultivate their fields.

Let everything concerning marriages depend solely on the magistrate, and let priests confine themselves to the august function of blessing them.

Let lending at interest be purely a matter for civil law, because civil law alone governs commerce.

Let all ecclesiastics be subject to the government in every case, because they are subjects of the state.

Let us never commit the shameful absurdity of paying a foreign priest the first year's revenue from an estate that citizens have given to a priest who is their fellow citizen.

Let no priest ever be able to deprive a citizen of the slightest prerogative on the pretext that this citizen is a sinner, because a priest, himself a sinner, must pray for sinners, not judge them.

Let magistrates, plowmen, and priests bear the charges of the state equally, because all belong equally to the state.

Let there be only one weight, one measure, one customary law.

Let the punishments of criminals be useful. A hanged man is good for nothing, while a man sentenced to public works still serves his country and is a living lesson.

Let every law be clear, uniform, and precise. To interpret it is almost always to corrupt it.

Let nothing be infamous but vice.

Let taxes always be proportional.

Let the law never contradict established practice. For if the practice is good, the law is worthless.

L — Luxe



For two thousand years people have declaimed against luxury in verse and prose, and have always loved it.

What has not been said of the early Romans! When those brigands ravaged and plundered their neighbors' harvests, when, to enlarge their poor village, they destroyed the poor villages of the Volscians and Samnites, they were disinterested and virtuous men! They had not yet been able to steal gold, silver, or jewels, because there were none in the villages they sacked. Their woods and marshes produced neither partridges nor pheasants, and their temperance is praised.

When, advancing little by little, they had plundered and stolen everything from the head of the Adriatic Gulf to the Euphrates, and had sense enough to enjoy the fruits of their robbery for seven or eight hundred years; when they cultivated all the arts, tasted every pleasure, and even let the conquered taste them, then, we are told, they ceased to be wise and honest men.

All these declamations amount to proving that a thief must never eat the dinner he has taken, wear the coat he has stolen, or adorn himself with the ring he has pilfered. All this, we are told, should have been thrown into the river so that they could live as honest men. Say instead that they should not have stolen. Condemn the brigands when they plunder, but do not call them mad when they enjoy their gains in good faith. When a great many English sailors grew

rich at the capture of Pondicherry and Havana, were they wrong to enjoy themselves afterward in London as the reward for their hardship in the depths of Asia and America?

Would the declaimers have people bury the wealth amassed by the fortunes of war, agriculture, commerce, and industry? They cite Lacedaemon; why not cite the Republic of San Marino as well? What good did Sparta do Greece? Did it ever have its Demostheneses, Sophocleses, Apelleses, and Phidiases? The luxury of Athens produced great men in every field. Sparta had a few commanders, and fewer even of those than other cities. But by all means let so small a republic as Lacedaemon preserve its poverty. We reach death just as surely by lacking everything as by enjoying what can make life pleasant. The savage of Canada subsists and reaches old age like the English citizen with an income of fifty thousand guineas. But who will ever compare the country of the Iroquois with England?

Let the Republic of Ragusa and the canton of Zug make sumptuary laws; they are right: the poor must not spend beyond their means. But I have read somewhere:

Know above all that luxury enriches
A great state, though it ruins a small one.

If by luxury you mean excess, everyone knows that excess is harmful in every sphere, in abstinence as in gluttony, in thrift as in liberality. I do not know how it has happened that in my villages, where the soil is unforgiving, taxes heavy, and the ban on exporting the grain one has sown intolerable, there is nevertheless scarcely a farmer without a good cloth coat, good shoes, and good food. If this farmer plows in his fine coat, in white linen, with his hair curled and powdered, that is certainly the greatest luxury and the most absurd. But if a citizen of Paris or London appears at the theater dressed like this peasant, that is the coarsest and most ridiculous stinginess.

*There is a measure in things; there are, in short, fixed bounds,
Beyond or short of which right cannot stand.*

When scissors were invented, which certainly do not date from the remotest antiquity, what was not said against the first people to trim their nails and cut off some of the hair falling over their noses? No doubt they were called fops and spendthrifts, paying dearly for an instrument of vanity to spoil the creator's work. What an enormous sin, to shorten the horn God makes grow at the ends of our fingers! It was an outrage against the divinity. Things were far worse when shirts and slippers were invented. We know how furiously the old councilors, who had never worn them, cried out against the young magistrates who indulged in this fatal luxury.

M — Matière



When the wise are asked what the soul is, they answer that they know nothing about it. If asked what matter is, they give the same answer. Professors, it is true, and especially schoolboys, know all this perfectly; once they have repeated that matter has extension and is divisible, they think they have said everything. But when asked to say what this extended thing is, they find themselves at a loss. "It is composed of parts," they say. And what are these parts composed of? Are the elements of these parts divisible? Then they either fall silent or speak at great length, which is equally suspicious. Is this almost unknown being called matter eternal? All antiquity believed so. Does it possess active force in itself? Several philosophers have thought so. Are those who deny it entitled to deny it? You cannot conceive of matter possessing anything in itself. But how can you be certain that it does not possess in itself the properties necessary to it? You do not know its nature, yet you deny it modes that are nevertheless in its nature. For after all, as soon as it exists, it must exist in a certain way, must have a shape; and since it necessarily has a shape, is it impossible that other modes should be attached to its configuration? Matter exists; you know it only through your sensations. Alas, what use have all the mind's subtleties been since reasoning began? Geometry has taught us many truths, metaphysics very few. We weigh matter, measure it, decompose it; and if we want to take one step beyond these crude operations, we find impotence within us and an abyss before us.

Please forgive the whole universe for having erred in believing matter self-existent. Could it do otherwise? How can we imagine that what exists without succession has not always existed? If matter's existence was not necessary, why does it exist? And if it had to exist, why should it not always have existed? No axiom has ever been more universally accepted than this: *Nothing is made from nothing*. Indeed, the contrary is incomprehensible. Among all peoples, chaos preceded the ordering of the whole world by a divine hand. The eternity of matter did not impair the worship of the divinity among any people. Religion never took fright at the acknowledgment of an eternal God as master of eternal matter. Today we are fortunate enough to know through faith that God drew matter out of nothingness; but no nation had been instructed in this dogma. Even the Jews were ignorant of it. The first verse of Genesis says that the gods Elohim, not Elohi, made heaven and earth; it does not say that heaven and earth were created from nothing.

Philo, who lived in the only period when the Jews had any learning, says in his chapter on creation: "God, being good by nature, did not envy substance, matter, which in itself had nothing good, which by nature has only inertia, confusion, disorder. He deigned to make it good instead of the bad thing it was."

The idea of chaos disentangled by a God is found in all the ancient theogonies. Hesiod repeated Eastern thought when he said in his *Theogony*, "Chaos was the first thing to exist." Ovid spoke for the whole Roman Empire when he said:

*So when that one of the gods, whoever he was,
Cut apart the mass he had set in order.*

Matter was therefore regarded in God's hands as clay beneath the potter's wheel, if such feeble images may be used to express divine power.

Matter, being eternal, had to possess eternal properties, such as configuration, inertia, motion, and divisibility. But this divisibility is only a consequence of motion, for without motion nothing is divided, separated, or arranged. Motion was therefore regarded as essential to matter. Chaos had been confused motion;

the ordering of the universe was regular motion imparted to all bodies by the master of the world. But how could matter possess motion in itself? As it possesses extension and impenetrability, according to all the ancients.

“But it cannot be conceived without extension, and it can be conceived without motion!” To this the answer was: “It is impossible for matter not to be permeable; now, being permeable, something must continually pass through its pores. What use are passages if nothing passes through them?”

From reply to reply there would be no end. The system of eternal matter has very great difficulties, like all systems. That of matter formed from nothing is no less incomprehensible. We must admit it without flattering ourselves that we can account for it; philosophy does not account for everything. How many incomprehensible things must be admitted even in geometry! Can we conceive of two lines that will always approach and never meet?

Geometers, it is true, will tell us: “The properties of asymptotes are demonstrated to you; you cannot help admitting them. But creation is not demonstrated: why do you admit it? What difficulty do you find in believing matter eternal, as all antiquity did?” On the other hand the theologian will press you and say, “If you believe matter eternal, then you acknowledge two principles, God and matter. You fall into the error of Zoroaster, of Mani.”

We shall answer the geometers nothing, because those people know only their lines, surfaces, and solids. But we may say to the theologian: “In what way am I a Manichaeon? Here are stones an architect did not make; he has raised an immense building from them. I do not admit two architects; the rough stones obeyed power and genius.”

Fortunately, whatever system one embraces, none harms morality; for what does it matter whether matter is made or arranged? God is equally our absolute master. We must be equally virtuous upon a chaos disentangled or upon a chaos created from nothing. Almost none of these metaphysical questions influences the conduct of life. Disputes are like the idle talk people exchange at table: after dinner everyone forgets what he said and goes where interest and inclination call him.

M — Méchant



We are told at the top of people's voices that human nature is essentially perverse, that man is born a child of the devil, and wicked. Nothing could be more ill advised. For, my friend, you who preach to me that everyone is born perverse, you are warning me that you were born so yourself, that I must distrust you as I would a fox or a crocodile. "Oh, not at all!" you tell me. "I have been regenerated; I am neither a heretic nor an infidel; you can trust me." But the rest of the human race, which is either heretical or what you call infidel, will therefore be nothing but a collection of monsters; and whenever you speak to a Lutheran or a Turk, you must be certain they will rob and murder you, for they are children of the devil, born wicked: one has not been regenerated, and the other has degenerated. It would be far more reasonable, far finer, to tell men, "*You were all born good; see how dreadful it would be to corrupt the purity of your being.*" We ought to have dealt with the human race as we deal with each man in particular. Does a canon lead a scandalous life? We say to him, "Is it possible that you dishonor the dignity of a canon?" We remind a magistrate that he has the honor of being a counselor to the king, and that he must set an example.

To encourage a soldier we say, "Remember that you belong to the Champagne regiment." We should say to every individual, "Remember your dignity as a man."

In fact, like it or not, we always come back to this. For what does that expression, so frequently used among all nations, *look within yourself*, mean? If you were born a child of the devil, if your origin were criminal, if your blood were formed of an infernal fluid, *look within yourself* would mean, "Consult and follow your diabolical nature; be an impostor, a thief, a murderer: that is your father's law."

Man is not born wicked; he becomes so, as he becomes ill. Physicians appear and tell him, "You were born ill." It is quite certain that these physicians, whatever they say and do, will not cure him if his illness is inherent in his nature; and these reasoners are very ill themselves.

Gather all the children in the universe: you will see in them only innocence, gentleness, and fear. If they were born wicked, harmful, cruel, they would show some sign of it, as little snakes try to bite and little tigers to tear. But nature, having given man no more offensive weapons than pigeons and rabbits, cannot have given him an instinct that drives him to destroy.

Man, then, was not born bad. Why are so many infected with this plague of wickedness? Because those at their head, stricken with the disease, communicate it to the rest of mankind, as a woman afflicted with the illness Christopher Columbus brought back from America spreads that poison from one end of Europe to the other. The first ambitious man corrupted the earth.

You will tell me that this first monster developed the seed of pride, plunder, fraud, and cruelty that is in all men. I admit that in general most of our brothers can acquire these qualities; but does everyone have putrid fever, bladder stones, and gravel because everyone is exposed to them?

There are whole nations that are not wicked. The Philadelphians and the Banians have never killed anyone. The Chinese, the peoples of Tonkin, Laos, Siam, even Japan, have known no war for more than a hundred years. In the cities of Rome, Venice, Paris, London, and Amsterdam, where greed, the mother of all crimes, is nevertheless extreme, scarcely one of those great crimes that astonish human nature is seen in ten years.

If men were essentially wicked, if they were all born subject to a being as malicious as he is unhappy, who inspired them with all his frenzies to avenge his torment, every morning we should see husbands murdered by their wives and fathers by their children, as at daybreak we see hens strangled by a marten that has come to suck their blood.

If there are a billion people on earth, that is a great many. It gives us about five hundred million women who sew, spin, nurse their little ones, keep their house or hut clean, and gossip a little about their neighbors. I do not see what great harm these poor innocents do on earth. Of this number of the globe's inhabitants, there are at least two hundred million children, who certainly neither kill nor plunder, and about as many old or sick people who have not the power to do so. There remain at most a hundred million young people strong enough and capable of crime. Of these hundred million, ninety million are continually occupied in forcing the earth, through prodigious labor, to furnish them with food and clothing. These people have scarcely any time to do harm.

The remaining ten million will include people of leisure and good society who want to enjoy life peacefully; talented men occupied with their professions; magistrates and priests, who plainly have an interest in leading a pure life, at least in appearance. The only truly wicked people left will therefore be a few schemers, whether secular or monastic, who are always trying to trouble the world, and a few thousand vagabonds who hire out their services to these schemers. Now there are never a million of these ferocious beasts employed at once, and in that number I include highwaymen. So at most, in the most turbulent times, there is one man in a thousand on earth who can be called wicked; and even he is not always so.

There is therefore infinitely less evil on earth than people say and believe. There is still too much, no doubt; we see horrible misfortunes and crimes. But the pleasure of complaining and exaggerating is so great that at the slightest scratch you cry that the earth is awash in blood. Have you been deceived? All men are perjurers. A melancholy mind that has suffered an injustice sees the universe covered with the damned, just as a young voluptuary, dining with his lady after the opera, cannot imagine that there are any unhappy people.

M — Messie



*Messiah or Meshiah in Hebrew; Christos or Celomenos in Greek; Unctus in Latin:
anointed.*

In the Old Testament we see that the name *Messiah* was often given to idolatrous or infidel princes. We are told¹ that God sent a prophet to anoint Jehu king of Israel; he announced the sacred anointing to Hazael, king of Damascus and Syria, these two princes being the Most High's *Messiahs* for the punishment of Ahab's house.

In the 16th of Isaiah the name *Messiah* is expressly given to Cyrus: "Thus has the Eternal spoken to Cyrus, his anointed, his *Messiah*, whose right hand I have taken that I may cast down nations before him, etc."

In the 28th chapter of his revelations, Ezekiel gives the name *Messiah* to the king of Tyre, whom he also calls *Cherub*: "Son of man," the Eternal says to the prophet, "raise your voice in lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him: Thus has the Lord, the Eternal, spoken. You were the seal of the likeness of God, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty; you were the Lord's garden of Eden (or, according to other versions, you were all the Lord's delights). Your garments were of sard, topaz, jasper, chrysolite, onyx, beryl, sapphire, carbuncle, emerald, and gold; what your drums and flutes knew how to make was found within you; they were ready on the day you were created; you were a Cherub, a *Messiah*."

This name *Messiah*, *Christ*, was given to the kings, prophets, and high priests of the Hebrews. In I Kings xii, 3, we read: “The Lord and his *Messiah* are witnesses”—that is, the Lord and the king he has established. And elsewhere: “Do not touch my anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” David, inspired by the spirit of God, in more than one place gives Saul, his rejected father-in-law who persecuted him, the name and rank of the Lord’s anointed, his *Messiah*. “God preserve me,” he frequently says, “from laying my hand upon the Lord’s anointed, upon God’s *Messiah*!”

If the name *Messiah*, the Eternal’s anointed, has been given to idolatrous kings and rejected men, it has very often been employed in our ancient oracles to designate the Lord’s true anointed, the *Messiah* above all others, Christ, son of God—in short, God himself.

If all the various oracles ordinarily applied to the *Messiah* are brought together, some apparent difficulties may result, which the Jews have used to justify their obstinacy, if they could. Several great theologians concede to them that, in the state of oppression under which the Jewish people groaned, and after all the promises the Eternal had so often made them, they might long for the coming of a conquering, liberating *Messiah*, and are thus in some measure excusable for not at first recognizing this liberator in the person of Jesus.

It was part of eternal wisdom’s plan that spiritual conceptions of the true *Messiah* should remain unknown to the blind multitude. So unknown were they that Jewish doctors have taken it into their heads to deny that the passages we cite should be understood of the *Messiah*. Several say that the *Messiah* has already come in the person of Hezekiah: this was the opinion of the celebrated Hillel. A great many others maintain that belief in the coming of a *Messiah* is not a fundamental article of faith, and that, since this dogma is found neither in the Decalogue nor in Leviticus, it is only a consoling hope.

Several rabbis tell you they do not doubt that, according to the ancient oracles, the *Messiah* came at the appointed time, but that he does not grow old, remains hidden on this earth, and waits to reveal himself until Israel has duly observed the Sabbath.

The celebrated Rabbi Solomon Jarchi, or Rashi, who lived at the beginning of the twelfth century, says in his Talmudic writings that the ancient Hebrews believed the *Messiah* was born on the day of Jerusalem's last destruction by the Roman armies. This is, as they say, calling the physician after the patient's death.

Rabbi Kimchi, who also lived in the twelfth century, announced that the *Messiah*, whose coming he believed very near, would drive from Judea the Christians who then possessed it. It is true that the Christians lost the Holy Land, but it was Saladin who conquered them. Had this conqueror given the Jews the least protection and declared himself for them, they would probably, in their enthusiasm, have made him their *Messiah*.

The sacred authors, and our Lord Jesus himself, often compare the *Messiah's* reign and eternal beatitude to wedding days and feasts; but the Talmudists have strangely abused these parables. According to them, the *Messiah* will give his people, assembled in the land of Canaan, a meal whose wine will be that which Adam himself made in the earthly paradise, preserved in vast cellars dug by angels at the center of the earth.

For the first course the famous fish called the great Leviathan will be served. It swallows in a single gulp a smaller fish, which is nevertheless three hundred leagues long. The entire mass of the waters rests upon Leviathan. In the beginning God created one male and one female; but fearing that they would overturn the earth and fill the universe with their kind, God killed the female and salted her for the *Messiah's* feast.

The rabbis add that for this meal the bull Behemoth will be killed, so huge that every day he eats the hay of a thousand mountains. This bull's female was killed at the beginning of the world so that so prodigious a species would not multiply, which could only have harmed the other creatures. But they assure us that the Eternal did not salt her, because salted cow is not as good as salted female leviathan. The Jews still put such faith in all these rabbinical dreams that they often swear by their share of the ox Behemoth.

After such crude ideas about the *Messiah*'s coming and reign, should we be surprised that the Jews, ancient and modern alike, and even several of the first Christians, unhappily imbued with all these dreams, could not rise to the idea of the divine nature of the Lord's Anointed and did not attribute the quality of God to the *Messiah*? See how the Jews express themselves on this subject in the work entitled *Judaei Lusitani quaestiones ad christianos*.² "To acknowledge a man-God," they say, "is to deceive oneself, to fashion a monster, a centaur, the strange compound of two natures that cannot unite." They add that the prophets do not teach that the *Messiah* is a man-God; that they expressly distinguish between God and David, declaring the first master and the second servant, etc.

It is well known that the Jews, slaves to the letter, have never penetrated the meaning of the Scriptures as we have.

When the Savior appeared, Jewish prejudices rose against him. Jesus Christ himself, so as not to revolt their blinded minds, seems extremely reserved on the subject of his divinity. He wished, says St. Chrysostom, *to accustom his hearers imperceptibly to believe a mystery so far above reason*. If he assumes God's authority by forgiving sins, the action rouses all its witnesses against him; his most evident miracles cannot convince even those for whose benefit he performs them of his divinity. When, before the high priest's tribunal, he acknowledges with modest indirection that he is the son of God, the high priest tears his robe and cries blasphemy. Before the sending of the Holy Spirit, the apostles do not even suspect their master's divinity. He asks them what the people think of him; they reply that some take him for Elijah, others for Jeremiah or some other prophet. St. Peter needs a particular revelation to know that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God.

The Jews, rebelling against the divinity of Jesus Christ, have resorted to every sort of means to destroy this great mystery. They twist the sense of their own oracles or do not apply them to the *Messiah*. They maintain that the name *God*, *Eloi*, is not peculiar to the divinity, and that the sacred authors even give it to judges, magistrates, and in general those raised to authority. They do indeed

cite a very great number of passages from Holy Scripture that justify this observation, but do not in any way impair the express terms of the ancient oracles concerning the *Messiah*.

Finally they maintain that if the Savior, and after him the evangelists, apostles, and first Christians, call Jesus the son of God, this august term in Gospel times meant nothing but the opposite of the sons of Belial—that is, a good man, a servant of God, as opposed to a wicked man, a man who does not fear God.

If the Jews have disputed Jesus Christ's rank as *Messiah* and his divinity, they have also left nothing undone to make him contemptible, to cast upon his birth, life, and death all the ridicule and disgrace their criminal fury could imagine.

Of all the works produced by Jewish blindness, none is more odious or extravagant than the ancient book entitled *Sepher Toldos Jeschut*, brought out of the dust by Mr. Wagenseil in the second volume of his work entitled *Tela ignea*, etc.

In this *Sepher Toldos Jeschut* we read a monstrous history of our Savior's life, forged with every possible passion and bad faith. Thus, for example, they have dared to write that a man named Panther or Pandera, an inhabitant of Bethlehem, fell in love with a young woman married to Jochaman. From this impure union he had a son named Jesua or Jesu. The child's father was obliged to flee and withdrew to Babylon. As for young Jesu, he was sent to school; but, the author adds, he had the insolence to raise his head and uncover himself before the priests, instead of appearing before them with lowered head and covered face, as was customary. This boldness was sharply rebuked and led to an examination of his birth, which was found impure and soon exposed him to ignominy.

This detestable book, *Sepher Toldos Jeschut*, was known as early as the second century. Celsus confidently quotes it, and Origen refutes it in chapter nine.

There is another book, also entitled *Toledos Jesu*, published in 1705 by Mr. Huldric, which follows the Gospel of the Infancy more closely, but continually commits the grossest anachronisms and errors. It has Jesus Christ born and

dying under the reign of Herod the Great; it claims that complaints about the adultery of Panther and Mary, Jesus's mother, were made to this prince.

The author, who assumes the name Jonathan, claims to be a contemporary of Jesus Christ living in Jerusalem, and asserts that Herod consulted the senators of a town in the land of Caesarea about Jesus Christ. We shall not follow so absurd an author through all his contradictions.

Nevertheless it is with the aid of all these calumnies that the Jews sustain their implacable hatred of Christians and the Gospel. They have neglected nothing to alter the chronology of the Old Testament and spread doubts and difficulties concerning the time of our Savior's coming.

Ahmed-ben-Cassum-al-Andacousy, a Moor of Granada who lived toward the end of the sixteenth century, cites an ancient Arabic manuscript found with sixteen lead plates engraved with Arabic characters in a cave near Granada. Don Pedro y Quiñones, archbishop of Granada, himself testified to it. These lead plates, called the plates of Granada, were later taken to Rome, where, after an examination lasting several years, they were finally condemned as apocryphal under the pontificate of Alexander VII. They contain only fabulous stories concerning the lives of Mary and her son.

The name *Messiah*, accompanied by the epithet *false*, is also given to those impostors who at various times have sought to deceive the Jewish nation. There were such false *Messiahs* even before the coming of God's true anointed. The wise Gamaliel speaks³ of a certain Theudas, whose history is found in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*, book 20, chap. 2. He boasted that he would cross the Jordan dry-shod. He drew many followers, but the Romans fell upon his little band, scattered it, cut off their unhappy leader's head, and displayed it in Jerusalem.

Gamaliel also speaks of Judas the Galilean, doubtless the same man Josephus mentions in the 12th chapter of the second book of *The Jewish War*. He says that this false prophet had gathered nearly thirty thousand men; but hyperbole is the Jewish historian's distinguishing trait.

As early as apostolic times there was Simon, surnamed the Magician,⁴ who had so seduced the inhabitants of Samaria that they regarded him as *the power of God*.

In the following century, in the years 178 and 179 of the Christian era, under Hadrian's rule, the false *Messiah* Bar-Kokhba appeared at the head of an army. The emperor sent Julius Severus against him; after several encounters, he shut the rebels up in the town of Bither. It sustained an obstinate siege and was taken; Bar-Kokhba was captured there and put to death. Hadrian thought he could best prevent the Jews' continual revolts by issuing an edict forbidding them to go to Jerusalem. He even stationed guards at the city gates to bar entry to the remnants of the people of Israel.

In the ecclesiastical historian Socrates⁵ we read that in the year 434 a false *Messiah* appeared on the island of Crete, calling himself Moses. He claimed to be the Hebrews' ancient liberator, risen from the dead to deliver them again.

A century later, in 530, there was a false *Messiah* in Palestine named Julian. He proclaimed himself a great conqueror who, at the head of his nation, would destroy the whole Christian people by force of arms. Seduced by his promises, the armed Jews massacred several Christians. The emperor Justinian sent troops against him; battle was given to the false Christ, who was captured and condemned to death.

At the beginning of the eighth century, Serenus, a Spanish Jew, proclaimed himself *Messiah*, preached, acquired disciples, and died, like them, in poverty.

Several false *Messiahs* arose in the twelfth century. One appeared in France under Louis the Young; he and his adherents were hanged, without the names of either master or disciples ever becoming known.

The thirteenth century was fertile in false *Messiahs*. Seven or eight are counted, appearing in Arabia, Persia, Spain, and Moravia. One of them, named David el Re, is said to have been a very great magician. He seduced the Jews and found himself at the head of a considerable party; but this *Messiah* was murdered.

Jacques Zieglerne of Moravia, who lived in the middle of the sixteenth century, announced the imminent manifestation of the *Messiah*. Born fourteen years earlier, so he maintained, the *Messiah* had been seen by him, he said, in

Strasbourg. He looked carefully at a sword and scepter, intending to place them in his hands as soon as he was old enough to teach.

In 1624 another Zieglerne confirmed the first man's prediction.

In 1666, Sabbatai Zevi, born in Aleppo, called himself the *Messiah* foretold by the Zieglernes. He began by preaching on highways and in the open country. The Turks laughed at him while his disciples admired him. He does not seem to have gained the support of the bulk of the Jewish nation at first, since the leaders of the synagogue of Smyrna passed a death sentence against him; but he escaped with a fright and banishment.

He contracted three marriages and is said to have consummated none, declaring that it was beneath him. He associated with a man named Nathan Levi, who played the part of the prophet Elijah, destined to precede the *Messiah*. They went to Jerusalem, where Nathan proclaimed Sabbatai Zevi the liberator of nations. The Jewish populace declared for them, but those with something to lose anathematized them.

To escape the storm, Zevi withdrew to Constantinople and from there to Smyrna. Nathan Levi sent him four ambassadors, who publicly acknowledged and saluted him as *Messiah*. This embassy impressed the people and even some doctors, who declared Sabbatai Zevi *Messiah* and king of the Hebrews. But the synagogue of Smyrna condemned its king to be impaled.

Sabbatai placed himself under the protection of the *cadi* of Smyrna and soon had the whole Jewish people on his side. He had two thrones erected, one for himself and the other for his favorite wife; he assumed the name king of kings, and gave his brother Joseph Zevi that of king of Judah. He promised the Jews the certain conquest of the Ottoman Empire. He even carried his insolence so far as to have the emperor's name removed from the Jewish liturgy and his own substituted.

He was imprisoned in the Dardanelles. The Jews spread the report that his life was spared only because the Turks knew very well that he was immortal. The governor of the Dardanelles grew rich from the gifts the Jews lavished on him to visit their king, their imprisoned *Messiah*, who preserved all his dignity in chains and had his feet kissed.

Meanwhile the sultan, who held his court at Adrianople, wanted to put an end to this comedy. He sent for Zevi and told him that if he were *Messiah*, he must be invulnerable. Zevi agreed. The Grand Signor had him set up as a target for his pages' arrows. The *Messiah* admitted that he was not invulnerable and protested that God had sent him only to bear witness to the holy Muslim religion. Flogged by the ministers of the law, he became a Mohammedan, and lived and died equally despised by Jews and Muslims. This so thoroughly discredited the profession of false *Messiah* that Zevi is the last to have appeared.

¹ *iv. Reg. viij.* 12. 13. 14.

² *Quæst.* 1. 2. 4. 23. &c.

³ *Act. Apost. c. v.* 34. 35. 36.

⁴ *Act. Apost. c.* 8. 9.

⁵ *Socr. hist. eccl. l. 2. chap.* 38.

M — Métamorphose, Métempsicose



Is it not perfectly natural that all the metamorphoses covering the earth should have led people in the East, where everything has been imagined, to imagine that our souls pass from one body to another? An almost imperceptible speck becomes a worm, that worm becomes a butterfly; an acorn changes into an oak, an egg into a bird; water becomes cloud and thunder; wood changes into fire and ashes. In short, everything in nature appears metamorphosed. People soon attributed to souls, which they regarded as airy forms, what they visibly saw in grosser bodies. The idea of metempsychosis is perhaps the oldest dogma in the known universe, and it still reigns in a large part of India and China.

It is also very natural that all the metamorphoses we witness should have produced those ancient fables Ovid collected in his admirable work. Even the Jews had their metamorphoses. If Niobe was changed into marble, Hedith, Lot's wife, was changed into a statue of salt. If Eurydice remained in the underworld for having looked behind her, it was also for the same indiscretion that Lot's wife was deprived of her human nature. The village inhabited by Baucis and Philemon in Phrygia is changed into a lake; the same thing happens to Sodom. The daughters of Anius changed water into oil; in Scripture we have a roughly similar metamorphosis, but truer and more sacred. Cadmus was changed into a serpent; Aaron's rod became a serpent as well.

The gods very often changed themselves into men; the Jews never saw angels except in human form. Angels dined at Abraham's house. In his Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says that Satan's angel slapped him: *Angelos Sathana me colaphisei*.

M — Miracles



A miracle, in the full force of the word, is something wonderful. In that sense everything is a miracle. The prodigious order of nature, the revolution of a hundred million globes around a million suns, the activity of light, the life of animals, are perpetual miracles.

According to received ideas, we call a miracle a violation of these divine and eternal laws. A solar eclipse during the full moon, a dead man walking two leagues with his head in his arms—these we call miracles.

Several natural philosophers maintain that in this sense there are no miracles, and here are their arguments.

A miracle is a violation of mathematical, divine, immutable, eternal laws. By that statement alone, a miracle is a contradiction in terms. A law cannot be both immutable and violated. “But,” they are told, “since a law is established by God himself, cannot its author suspend it?” They have the audacity to answer no: it is impossible that the infinitely wise Being should have made laws in order to violate them. He could disturb his machine, they say, only to make it work better; but it is clear that, being God, he made this immense machine as good as he could. If he foresaw some imperfection arising from the nature of matter, he provided for it from the beginning; thus he will never change anything in it.

Moreover, God can do nothing without a reason; and what reason would induce him to disfigure his own work for a time?

“It is for the benefit of humanity,” they are told. “Then at least it must benefit all humanity,” they reply, “for it is impossible to conceive that the divine nature works for certain individuals and not for the entire human race. Even the human race is a very small thing: compared with all the beings that fill immensity, it is far less than a little anthill. Is it not the most absurd madness to imagine that, for the sake of three or four hundred ants on this little heap of mud, the infinite Being should overturn the eternal workings of those immense mechanisms that move the whole universe?”

“But suppose God wished to distinguish a small number of people with particular favors: must he change what he established for all times and all places? Surely he has no need of such a change, such inconstancy, to favor his creatures. His favors lie in the laws themselves. He foresaw everything, arranged everything for them; all obey irrevocably the force he has imprinted forever on nature.

“Why would God perform a miracle? To accomplish some purpose concerning a few living beings! He would therefore be saying: ‘Through the construction of the universe, through my divine decrees, through my eternal laws, I have been unable to fulfill a certain purpose; I am going to change my eternal ideas, my immutable laws, to try to accomplish what I could not do through them.’ This would confess his weakness, not his power. It would seem the most inconceivable contradiction in him. To venture, then, to attribute miracles to God is really to insult him—if human beings can insult God. It is to tell him: ‘You are a weak and inconsistent being.’ Believing in miracles is therefore absurd; it is, in a sense, to dishonor the Divinity.”

These philosophers are pressed: “You may extol the immutability of the supreme Being, the eternity of his laws, the regularity of his infinite worlds as much as you please: our little heap of mud has been covered with miracles. Histories are as full of prodigies as of natural events. The daughters of the high priest Anius turned anything they wished into wheat, wine, or oil; Aethalides, daughter of Mercury, rose from the dead several times; Aesculapius raised Hippolytus; Hercules snatched Alcestis from death; Er returned to the world after spending fifteen days in the infernal realms; Romulus and Remus were

born of a god and a Vestal; the Palladium fell from heaven into the city of Troy; Berenice's hair became a constellation; the hut of Baucis and Philemon was changed into a magnificent temple; the head of Orpheus delivered oracles after his death; the walls of Thebes built themselves to the sound of the flute, in the presence of the Greeks; the cures performed in the temple of Aesculapius were innumerable; and we still have monuments inscribed with the names of eyewitnesses to Aesculapius's miracles.

"Name a people among whom incredible prodigies have not been performed, especially in times when people scarcely knew how to read and write."

The philosophers answer these objections only by laughing and shrugging their shoulders. But Christian philosophers say: "We believe in the miracles performed in our holy religion; we believe in them through faith, not through our reason, which we take good care not to consult; for when faith speaks, everyone knows that reason must not say a single word. We have a firm and complete belief in the miracles of Jesus Christ and the Apostles; but allow us a little doubt about several others. Allow us, for example, to suspend our judgment on the story told by a simple man who has been given the name of Great. He assures us that a little monk had become so accustomed to performing miracles that the prior finally forbade him to exercise his talent. The little monk obeyed; but when he saw a poor roofer falling from a roof, he hesitated between the desire to save his life and holy obedience. He merely ordered the roofer to remain in the air until further notice, and ran to tell his prior how matters stood. The prior absolved him of the sin he had committed by beginning a miracle without permission, and allowed him to finish it, provided he stopped there and never did it again." The philosophers are granted that this story should be regarded with some distrust.

"But how would you dare deny," they are told, "that St. Gervasius and St. Protasius appeared in a dream to St. Ambrose and showed him where their relics lay? That St. Ambrose dug them up, and that they cured a blind man? St. Augustine was then in Milan; he himself relates this miracle, *with an immense crowd as witness*, as he says in his *City of God*, book 22. Here is one of the best-attested miracles." The philosophers say they do not believe a word of it; that

Gervasius and Protasius appear to no one; that it matters very little to the human race whether anyone knows where the remains of their carcasses lie; that they have no more faith in this blind man than in Vespasian's; that it is a useless miracle; that God does nothing useless. And they stand firm in their principles. My respect for St. Gervasius and St. Protasius does not allow me to agree with these philosophers; I merely report their disbelief. They set great store by the passage in Lucian's *Death of Peregrinus*: "When a clever juggler becomes a Christian, he is sure to make his fortune." But since Lucian is a profane author, he must carry no authority among us.

These philosophers cannot bring themselves to believe in the miracles performed in the second century. Eyewitnesses may write that when St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, had been condemned to be burned and thrown into the flames, they heard a voice from heaven crying: "Courage, Polycarp; be strong; show yourself a man"; that the flames of the pyre then drew away from his body and formed a canopy of fire above his head; and that a dove emerged from the middle of the pyre. In the end they were obliged to cut off Polycarp's head. "What good was this miracle?" the unbelievers ask. "Why did the flames lose their nature, and why did the executioner's ax not lose its own? How is it that so many martyrs came unharmed out of boiling oil, yet could not withstand the edge of a sword?" The answer is that such is God's will. But the philosophers would like to have seen all this with their own eyes before believing it.

Those who reinforce their reasoning with learning will tell you that the Fathers of the Church themselves often admitted that miracles no longer occurred in their time. St. Chrysostom expressly says: "The extraordinary gifts of the spirit were given even to the unworthy, because the Church then needed miracles; but today they are not given even to the worthy, because the Church no longer needs them." He then admits that there is no longer anyone who raises the dead, or even cures the sick.

St. Augustine himself, despite the miracle of Gervasius and Protasius, says in the *City of God*: "Why do those miracles that used to occur no longer occur today?" And he gives the same reason. "*Why,*" they ask, "*do those miracles you*

declare to have happened not occur now? I could indeed say that they were necessary before the world believed, so that the world might believe.”

The philosophers are reminded that, despite this admission, St. Augustine nevertheless speaks of an old cobbler of Hippo who, having lost his coat, went to pray at the chapel of the *twenty martyrs*; that on his return he found a fish with a gold ring inside its body; and that the cook who cooked the fish said to the cobbler: “Here is what the twenty martyrs give you.”

To this the philosophers reply that nothing in this story contradicts the laws of nature; that physics suffers no injury whatever from a fish swallowing a gold ring and a cook giving that ring to a cobbler; that there is no miracle here.

If these philosophers are reminded that, according to St. Jerome in his life of the hermit Paul, this hermit had several conversations with satyrs and fauns; that every day for thirty years a raven brought him half a loaf for his dinner, and a whole loaf on the day St. Anthony came to see him, they may again reply that none of this is absolutely contrary to physics; that satyrs and fauns may have existed; and that, in any case, if this tale is childish nonsense, it has nothing in common with the true miracles of the Savior and his Apostles. Several good Christians have challenged the story of St. Simeon Stylites written by Theodoret; many miracles accepted as authentic in the Greek Church have been questioned by several Latins, just as Latin miracles have been suspect to the Greek Church. The Protestants came afterward and dealt very harshly with the miracles of both churches.

A learned Jesuit¹ who preached for a long time in the Indies complains that neither his colleagues nor he himself ever managed to perform a miracle. In several of his letters Xavier laments that he has not the gift of tongues; he says that among the Japanese he is only a mute statue. Yet the Jesuits wrote that he raised eight dead people: that is a great many; but we must also consider that he raised them six thousand leagues from here. There have since been people who maintained that the abolition of the Jesuits in France is a much greater miracle than those of Xavier and Ignatius.

Whatever the case, all Christians agree that the miracles of Jesus Christ and the Apostles are incontestably true, but that one may, if one insists, doubt certain miracles performed in recent times whose authenticity has not been established with certainty.

For a miracle to be well attested, one would wish, for example, that it be performed before the Academy of Sciences in Paris, or the Royal Society in London, and the faculty of medicine, assisted by a detachment of the guards regiment to restrain the crowd, whose indiscretion might prevent the miracle from taking place.

A philosopher was once asked what he would say if he saw the sun stand still—that is, if the earth’s motion around that star ceased; if all the dead rose again; and if all the mountains went together to throw themselves into the sea, all to prove some important truth, such as resistible grace. “What would I say?” replied the philosopher. “I would become a Manichaeon; I would say that there is one principle undoing what the other has done.”

¹ *Ospinian*, p. 230.

M — Moïse



Several scholars have believed that the Pentateuch could not have been written by Moses. They say that Scripture itself establishes that the first known copy was found in the time of King Josiah, and that this sole copy was brought to the king by the secretary Shaphan. Now between Moses and this adventure of the secretary Shaphan there are 867 years by the Hebrew reckoning. For God appeared to Moses in the burning bush in the year of the world 2213, and the secretary Shaphan published the book of the law in the year of the world 3380. This book found under Josiah remained unknown until the return from the Babylonian captivity, and we are told that it was Ezra, inspired by God, who brought all the Holy Scriptures to light.

Now whether Ezra or someone else made this book is entirely immaterial, provided the book is inspired. The Pentateuch does not say that Moses is its author; we are therefore free to attribute it to another man to whom the divine spirit dictated it.

Some critics add that no prophet quoted the books of the Pentateuch; that they are mentioned neither in the Psalms, nor in the books attributed to Solomon, nor in Jeremiah, nor in Isaiah, nor, finally, in any canonical book. The words corresponding to Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy occur in no other writing of either the Old or the New Testament.

Others, bolder still, have asked the following questions:

1°. In what language could Moses have written in a savage desert? It could only have been Egyptian. For this very book shows that Moses and all his people were born in Egypt. They probably spoke no other language. The Egyptians were not yet using papyrus; they engraved hieroglyphs on marble or wood. We are even told that the tables of the commandments were engraved on stone. Five volumes would therefore have had to be engraved on polished stones, which required prodigious effort and time.

2°. Is it plausible that in a desert where the Jewish people had neither shoemaker nor tailor, and where the God of the universe was obliged to perform a continual miracle to preserve the Jews' old clothes and shoes, men should have been found skillful enough to engrave the five books of the Pentateuch on marble or wood? It will be said that craftsmen were indeed found who made a golden calf and then reduced the gold to powder; who built the tabernacle and adorned it with thirty-four bronze columns with silver capitals; who wove and embroidered veils of linen, hyacinth blue, purple, and scarlet. But this very thing strengthens the critics' opinion. They reply that such elaborate works could not have been made in a desert where everything was lacking; that they should have begun by making shoes and tunics; that people who lack necessities do not indulge in luxury; and that it is an obvious contradiction to say that there were founders, engravers, sculptors, dyers, and embroiderers when there were neither clothes, sandals, nor bread.

3°. If Moses had written the first chapter of Genesis, would all young people have been forbidden to read that first chapter? Would so little respect have been shown to the lawgiver? If Moses had said that God punishes the iniquity of the fathers down to the fourth generation, would Ezekiel have dared say the opposite?

4°. If Moses had written Leviticus, could he have contradicted himself in Deuteronomy? Leviticus forbids marrying one's brother's wife; Deuteronomy commands it.

5°. Would Moses have spoken in his book of cities that did not exist in his time? Would he have said that cities which lay east of the Jordan from where he stood were to the west?

6°. Would he have assigned forty-eight cities to the Levites in a country where there have never been ten cities, and in a desert where he was always wandering without a house?

7°. Would he have prescribed rules for Jewish kings when not only were there no kings among this people, but kings were held in horror and seemed unlikely ever to exist? What! Moses would have given precepts for the conduct of kings who came only some eight hundred years after him, and said nothing about the judges and high priests who succeeded him? Does this reflection not lead us to believe that the Pentateuch was composed in the time of the kings, and that the ceremonies instituted by Moses had been only a tradition?

8°. Could he have said to the Jews: "I brought you out of the land of Egypt, six hundred thousand fighting men, under the protection of your God"? Would the Jews not have answered: "You must have been very timid not to lead us against the Pharaoh of Egypt. He could not have opposed us with an army of two hundred thousand men. Egypt has never had so many soldiers under arms; we would have defeated him easily; we would be masters of his country. What! The God who speaks to you slaughtered all the firstborn of Egypt to please us; and if there are three hundred thousand families in that country, that means three hundred thousand men killed in one night to avenge us. And you did not support your God? You did not give us that fertile country, which nothing could defend? You brought us out of Egypt like thieves and cowards to let us perish in deserts, among precipices and mountains! At least you could have led us by the direct road into that land of Canaan to which we have no right, which you promised us, and which we have still been unable to enter.

"It was natural for us to march from the land of Goshen toward Tyre and Sidon along the Mediterranean; but you made us cross almost the whole isthmus of Suez. You made us reenter Egypt and go up again beyond Memphis, and we found ourselves at Baal-zephon on the shore of the Red Sea, with our backs to the land of Canaan, having marched eighty leagues through the Egypt we wished to avoid, and finally on the point of perishing between the sea and Pharaoh's army!

“If you had wished to deliver us to our enemies, would you have taken another route or other measures? God saved us by a miracle, you say; the sea opened to let us pass. But after such a favor, did you have to let us die of hunger and exhaustion in the horrible deserts of Etham, Kadesh-barnea, Marah, Elim, Horeb, and Sinai? All our fathers perished in those dreadful wastes, and after forty years you come and tell us that God took particular care of our fathers!”

That is more or less what these murmuring Jews, these unjust children of the wandering Jews who died in the deserts, might have said to Moses if he had read them Exodus and Genesis. And what should they not have said and done at the passage about the golden calf? “What! You dare tell us that your brother made a golden calf for our fathers while you were with God on the mountain—you who tell us at one moment that you spoke to God face to face, and at another that you could only see him from behind! Still, you were with this God, and your brother cast a golden calf in a single day and gave it to us to worship. And instead of punishing your unworthy brother, you made him our high priest, and ordered your Levites to slaughter twenty thousand men of your people! Would our fathers have endured it? Would they have allowed themselves to be butchered like sacrificial victims by bloodthirsty priests? You tell us that, not content with this incredible butchery, you had another twenty-four thousand of your poor followers massacred because one of them had slept with a Midianite woman, while you yourself had married a Midianite. And you add that you are the gentlest of all men. A few more acts of such gentleness, and not a soul would have remained.

“No: if you had been capable of such cruelty, if you had been able to carry it out, you would be the most barbarous of all men, and every torture would be insufficient to atone for so monstrous a crime.”

These are roughly the objections scholars make to those who think Moses is the author of the Pentateuch. But they are answered that God’s ways are not human ways; that God tested, guided, and abandoned his people with a wisdom unknown to us; that the Jews themselves have believed for more than two

thousand years that Moses is the author of these books; that the Church, which succeeded the synagogue and is infallible like it, has decided this disputed point; and that scholars must be silent when the Church speaks.

P — Patrie



A country is a collection of families; and just as people generally support their family out of self-love when no opposing interest stands in the way, so out of that same self-love they support the town or village they call their country.

The larger this country becomes, the less it is loved; for love grows weaker when divided. It is impossible to love tenderly an overlarge family one scarcely knows.

The man burning with ambition to become aedile, tribune, praetor, consul, dictator cries out that he loves his country, and loves only himself. Everyone wants to be sure of sleeping at home without another man claiming the power to send him to sleep elsewhere. Everyone wants security for his property and his life. Since all thus form the same wishes, private interest becomes the general interest: people pray for the republic when they are praying only for themselves.

There cannot be a state on earth that did not begin by governing itself as a republic: that is the natural course of human nature. A few families first band together against bears and wolves; the family that has grain supplies it in exchange to the one that has only wood.

When we discovered America, we found all its peoples divided into republics; there were only two kingdoms in that entire part of the world. Out of a thousand nations, we found only two subjugated.

It was the same in the old world: all Europe was republican before the petty kings of Etruria and Rome. Even today we see republics in Africa. Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers, toward our north, are republics of brigands. The Hottentots to the south still live as people are said to have lived in the world's earliest ages: free, equal among themselves, without masters, without subjects, without money, and almost without needs. The flesh of their sheep feeds them; their skins clothe them; huts of wood and earth are their shelters. They are the foulest-smelling of all human beings, but they do not notice it; they live and die more peacefully than we do.

Eight republics without monarchs remain in our Europe: Venice, Holland, Switzerland, Genoa, Lucca, Ragusa, Geneva, and San Marino. Poland, Sweden, and England may be regarded as republics under a king, but Poland alone takes the name.

Now which is better: for your country to be a monarchy or a republic? This question has been debated for four thousand years. Ask the rich for the answer: they all prefer aristocracy. Ask the people: they want democracy. Only kings prefer kingship. How, then, is it possible that almost the whole earth is governed by monarchs? Ask the rats who proposed hanging a bell around the cat's neck. But in truth the real reason is, as has been said, that human beings are very rarely worthy of governing themselves.

It is sad that to be a good patriot one must often be the enemy of the rest of humanity. The elder Cato, that good citizen, always said when giving his opinion in the Senate: "Such is my view—and let Carthage be destroyed." To be a good patriot is to wish one's city enriched by commerce and powerful in arms. It is clear that one country cannot gain without another losing, and cannot conquer without making people miserable.

Such, then, is the human condition: to wish for the greatness of one's country is to wish harm to one's neighbors. The man who wished his country never to be larger or smaller, richer or poorer, would be a citizen of the universe.

P — Pierre



In Italian Piero, or Pietro; *in Spanish* Pedro; *in Latin* Petrus; *in Greek* Petros; *in Hebrew* Cepha.

Why have Peter's successors had so much power in the West and none in the East? That is to ask why the bishops of Würzburg and Salzburg claimed sovereign rights in times of anarchy, while the Greek bishops always remained subjects. Time, opportunity, the ambition of some and the weakness of others have done, and will do, everything in this world.

Opinion joined this anarchy, and opinion is the queen of mankind. Not that people actually have a very definite opinion; words serve them instead.

The Gospel relates that Jesus said to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Around the eleventh century the supporters of the bishop of Rome maintained that whoever gives the greater gives the lesser; that the heavens surround the earth; and that since Peter had the keys to the container, he also had the keys to its contents. If by the heavens we mean all the stars and all the planets, it is evident, according to Thomasius, that the keys given to Simon Barjona, surnamed Peter, were a master key. If by the heavens we mean the clouds, the atmosphere, the ether, the space in which the planets revolve, there are few locksmiths, according to Mursius, who could make a key for those doors.

Keys in Palestine were a wooden peg tied with a strap. Jesus said to Barjona: “What you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.” The pope’s theologians concluded that popes had received the right to bind peoples to their oath of allegiance to their kings, and release them from it, and to dispose of all kingdoms as they pleased. A magnificent conclusion. In their petition to the king at the Estates General of France in 1302, the Commons said that “Boniface VIII was a B—— who believed that God bound and imprisoned in heaven whatever Boniface bound on earth.”

A famous German Lutheran—I think it was Melanchthon—found it very hard to swallow that Jesus had said to Simon Barjona, Cepha or Cephas: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my assembly, my church.” He could not conceive that God had employed such wordplay, so extraordinary a conceit, and that the pope’s power was founded on a joke.

Peter has been regarded as bishop of Rome; but it is well known that at that time, and long afterward, there was no particular bishopric. Christian society took shape only toward the end of the second century.

Peter may have traveled to Rome; he may even have been crucified upside down, although that was not the custom; but there is no proof of any of this. We have a letter under his name in which he says he is in Babylon; judicious canonists have maintained that by Babylon we must understand Rome. Thus, supposing he had dated it from Rome, one might have concluded that the letter was written in Babylon. Such deductions were drawn for a long time, and that is how the world was governed.

There was a holy man who had been made to pay very dearly for a benefice in Rome—a practice called simony. Asked whether he believed Simon Peter had been in that country, he replied: “I see no evidence that Peter was there, but I am certain about Simon.”

As for Peter himself, we must admit that Paul was not the only one scandalized by his conduct; he and his successors have often been opposed to their faces. This Paul sharply reproached him for eating forbidden foods—that is, pork, blood sausage, hare, eels, ixion, and grison. Peter defended himself by saying that around the sixth hour he had seen heaven opened, and a great sheet

descending from the four corners of heaven, filled with eels, quadrupeds, and birds; and that an angel's voice had cried: "Kill and eat." Apparently it was this same voice that cried to so many pontiffs: "Kill everyone, and eat the people's substance," says Voloston.

Casaubon could not approve of the way Peter treated the good man Ananias and his wife Sapphira. "By what right," Casaubon asked, "did a Jew enslaved to the Romans order, or allow, everyone who believed in Jesus to sell their property and bring the proceeds to his feet? If some Anabaptist in London had all his brothers' money brought to his feet, would he not be arrested as a seditious deceiver, a thief certain to be sent to Tyburn? Is it not horrible to kill Ananias because, after selling his land and giving Peter the money, he had secretly kept a few crowns for himself and his wife to provide for their necessities? Ananias has scarcely died when his wife arrives. Instead of charitably warning her that he has just struck her husband dead with apoplexy for keeping a few pennies, and telling her to take good care, Peter makes her fall into the trap. He asks whether her husband gave all his money to the saints. The good woman answers yes, and dies on the spot. That is harsh."

Corringius asks why Peter, who thus killed those who had given him alms, did not instead go and kill all the doctors who had put Jesus Christ to death, and had Peter himself flogged more than once. "Peter! You kill two Christians who have given you alms, and let those who crucified your God live!"

Apparently Corringius was not in a country with an Inquisition when he asked these bold questions. Speaking of Peter, Erasmus noted something very singular: the head of the Christian religion began his apostleship by denying Jesus Christ, and the first high priest of the Jews had begun his ministry by making a golden calf and worshipping it.

Whatever the case, Peter is depicted to us as a poor man who instructed the poor in the faith. He resembled those founders of religious orders who lived in poverty and whose successors became great lords.

The pope, Peter's successor, has sometimes gained and sometimes lost; but he still has some fifty million people on earth subject to his laws in several respects, besides his immediate subjects.

To give oneself a master three or four hundred leagues from home; to wait to think until this man has seemed to think; to dare decide a lawsuit between a few of one's fellow citizens in the last resort only through commissioners appointed by this foreigner; to dare take possession of fields and vineyards granted by one's own king only after paying a considerable sum to this foreign master; to violate the laws of one's country that forbid marrying one's niece, and marry her lawfully by giving this foreign master an even greater sum; to dare not cultivate one's field on a day when this foreigner wishes the memory of some unknown person, whom he has placed in heaven on his private authority, to be celebrated—this is part of what it means to acknowledge a pope; these are the liberties of the Gallican Church.

Some other peoples carry their submission further. In our own day we have seen a sovereign ask the pope's permission to have monks accused of parricide tried by his royal court, fail to obtain that permission, and not dare to try them. It is well known that the popes' rights once went further. They were far above the gods of antiquity; for those gods were merely thought to dispose of empires, while the popes actually did so.

Sturbinus says that those who doubt the pope's divinity and infallibility may be forgiven when we reflect:

That forty schisms have profaned the chair of St. Peter, and twenty-seven have stained it with blood;

That Stephen VII, the son of a priest, dug up the body of his predecessor Formosus and had the corpse's head cut off;

That Sergius III, convicted of murders, had a son by Marozia who inherited the papacy;

That John X, Theodora's lover, was strangled in his bed;

That John XI, the son of Sergius III, was known only for his debauchery;

That John XII was murdered at his mistress's house;

That Benedict IX bought and resold the pontificate;

That Gregory VII was responsible for five hundred years of civil wars kept up by his successors;

That, finally, among so many ambitious, bloodthirsty, debauched popes there was an Alexander VI, whose name is spoken only with the same horror as those of Nero and Caligula.

“It proves the divinity of their office,” we are told, “that it has survived so many crimes.” But if the caliphs had behaved still more horribly, they would therefore have been still more divine. That is how Dermius reasons; but the Jesuits have answered him.

P — Préjugés



Prejudice is an opinion without judgment. Thus, throughout the earth, children are filled with whatever opinions people please before they are able to judge.

There are universal, necessary prejudices that are virtue itself. In every country children are taught to acknowledge a God who rewards and avenges; to respect and love their father and mother; to regard theft as a crime and self-serving falsehood as a vice, before they can guess what a vice or a virtue is.

There are therefore very good prejudices: those that judgment ratifies when we reason.

Feeling is not mere prejudice; it is something much stronger. A mother does not love her son because someone told her she must love him; fortunately, she cherishes him despite herself. It is not prejudice that makes you run to save an unknown child about to fall down a precipice or be devoured by a beast.

But it is prejudice that makes you respect a man dressed in certain clothes, walking gravely and speaking in the same fashion. Your parents told you to bow before this man; you respect him before knowing whether he deserves your respect. You grow in age and knowledge; you discover that this man is a charlatan, steeped in pride, self-interest, and deceit. You despise what you revered, and prejudice yields to judgment. Through prejudice you believed the fables

that cradled your childhood. You were told that the Titans made war on the gods and Venus fell in love with Adonis; at twelve you take these fables for truths; at twenty you regard them as ingenious allegories.

Let us briefly examine the different kinds of prejudice, to put our affairs in order. We may be like those who, in the days of *Law's* system, discovered that they had been calculating imaginary riches.

Prejudices of the senses.

Is it not amusing that our eyes always deceive us, even when we see very well, whereas our ears do not? Let your well-formed ear hear "*You are beautiful; I love you*": it is quite certain that no one has said "*I hate you; you are ugly*." But you see a smooth mirror: it is demonstrable that you are mistaken; its surface is very rough. You see the sun as about two feet in diameter: it is demonstrable that it is a million times larger than the earth.

It seems that God has put truth in your ears and error in your eyes. But study optics, and you will see that God has not deceived you, and that in the present state of things objects cannot appear otherwise than you see them.

Physical prejudices.

The sun rises, so does the moon, the earth is motionless: these are natural physical prejudices. But that crayfish are good for the blood because, when cooked, they are red like it; that eels cure paralysis because they wriggle; that the moon influences our illnesses because someone once observed a patient's fever grow worse during the waning moon—these ideas and a thousand others were the errors of old charlatans who judged without reasoning, and, being deceived, deceived others.

Historical prejudices.

Most histories have been believed without examination, and this belief is a prejudice. Fabius Pictor relates that several centuries before his time a Vestal of the city of Alba, going to fill her pitcher with water, was raped; that she gave birth to Romulus and Remus; that they were nursed by a she-wolf, etc. The Roman people believed this fable. They did not examine whether there were Vestals in

Latium at that time, whether it was plausible for a king's daughter to leave her convent with a pitcher, whether it was likely that a she-wolf would nurse two children instead of eating them. The prejudice took root.

A monk writes that Clovis, in great danger at the battle of Tolbiac, vowed to become a Christian if he escaped. But is it natural to appeal to a foreign god on such an occasion? Is that not precisely when the religion into which one was born acts most powerfully? What Christian in a battle against the Turks would not appeal to the Holy Virgin rather than Muhammad? It is added that a pigeon brought the holy ampulla in its beak to anoint Clovis, and an angel brought the oriflamme to guide him. Prejudice believed all the little stories of this kind. Those who know human nature know very well that the usurper Clovis and the usurper Rollo or Rol became Christians to govern Christians more securely, just as the Turkish usurpers became Muslims to govern Muslims more securely.

Religious prejudices.

If your nurse told you that Ceres presides over grain, or that Vishnu and Shaka became men several times, or that Sammonocodom came to cut down a forest, or that Odin awaits you in his hall near Jutland, or that Muhammad or someone else made a journey to heaven; in short, if your tutor then drives into your brain what your nurse engraved there, you have it for life. Does your judgment attempt to rise against these prejudices? Your neighbors, and especially your female neighbors, cry out that you are impious and frighten you. Your dervish, afraid of seeing his income fall, denounces you to the cadî, and the cadî has you impaled if he can, because he wants to command fools and believes fools obey better than other people. And this will last until your neighbors, the dervish, and the cadî begin to understand that stupidity is good for nothing, and persecution is abominable.

R — Religion



First question.

Warburton, bishop of Worcester, author of one of the most learned works ever written, expresses himself as follows on page 8 of volume 1:

“A religion, a society not founded on belief in another life, must be sustained by an extraordinary providence. Judaism is not founded on belief in another life; therefore Judaism was sustained by an extraordinary providence.”

Several theologians rose against him, and, since every argument can be turned around, his was turned around:

“Every religion not founded on the doctrine of the soul’s immortality and on eternal punishments and rewards is necessarily false. Now Judaism knew nothing of these doctrines; therefore, far from being sustained by providence, Judaism was, on your principles, a false and barbarous religion that attacked providence.”

This bishop had some other opponents who maintained that the immortality of the soul was known among the Jews in the very time of Moses. But he proved to them most clearly that neither the Decalogue, nor Leviticus, nor Deuteronomy had said a single word about this belief, and that it is ridiculous to twist and corrupt a few passages in the other books to extract a truth that is not proclaimed in the book of the law.

Having written four volumes to demonstrate that Jewish law proposed neither punishments nor rewards after death, the bishop has never been able to give his opponents a very satisfactory answer. They told him: "Either Moses knew this doctrine, and then he deceived the Jews by not revealing it; or he did not know it, and in that case he did not know enough to found a good religion. Indeed, if the religion had been good, why would it have been abolished? A true religion must be for all times and all places; it must be like sunlight, illuminating all peoples and all generations."

Enlightened as this prelate is, he has had great difficulty escaping all these problems. But what system is free of them?

Second question.

Another scholar, a much greater philosopher and one of the most profound metaphysicians of our day, gives powerful reasons to prove that polytheism was humanity's first religion, and that people began by believing in several gods before reason was sufficiently enlightened to acknowledge only one supreme Being.

I venture to believe, on the contrary, that people began by acknowledging a single God, and human weakness afterward adopted several. Here is how I conceive it.

There were undoubtedly villages before large cities were built, and all people were divided into little republics before they were united in great empires. It is quite natural that a village terrified by thunder, afflicted by the loss of its harvests, mistreated by a neighboring village, feeling its weakness every day and sensing an invisible power everywhere, should soon have said: "There is some being above us who does us good and evil."

It seems impossible to me that it should have said: "There are two powers"—for why more than one? In every field we begin with the simple; the compound comes next; and often, in the end, superior understanding brings us back to the simple. Such is the course of the human mind.

What being would people first have invoked? The sun? The moon? I do not think so. Let us examine what happens in children; they are much like ignorant adults. They are struck neither by the beauty nor by the usefulness of the star

that animates nature, nor by the help the moon gives us, nor by the regular changes in its course. They do not think about these things; they are too accustomed to them. People fear, invoke, and worship only what they dread. All children look at the sky with indifference; but let thunder rumble, and they tremble and go into hiding. The first human beings doubtless did the same. Only some sort of philosophers could have observed the course of the stars, taught others to admire them, and brought them to worship them; simple, unenlightened farmers did not know enough to embrace so noble an error.

A village would therefore have confined itself to saying: "There is a power that thunders, that hails upon us, that kills our children. Let us appease it. But how? We see that we have calmed angry people with little presents; let us therefore make little presents to this power." It must also be given a name. The first that suggests itself is *chief, master, lord*; this power is therefore called My Lord. That is probably why the first Egyptians called their god Kneph, the Syrians Adoni, neighboring peoples Baal, or Bel, or Melch, or Moloch, and the Scythians Papaeus: all words meaning *lord, master*.

This is how almost all America was found, divided into a multitude of small peoples, each with its own protecting god. Even the Mexicans and Peruvians, who were great nations, had only one god. One worshiped Manco Capac, the other the god of war. The Mexicans gave their war god the name Huitzilopochtli, just as the Hebrews had called their lord Sabaoth.

It was not through superior, cultivated reason that all peoples thus began to acknowledge a single divinity. Had they been philosophers, they would have worshiped the God of all nature, not the god of a village; they would have examined those infinite relations among all beings that prove a creating and preserving Being. But they examined nothing: they felt. Such is the progress of our feeble understanding. Each village felt its weakness and its need for a strong protector. It imagined this tutelary and terrible being dwelling in the neighboring forest, on the mountain, or in a cloud. It imagined only one, because the village had only one war chief. It imagined him bodily, because it was impossible to picture him otherwise. It could not believe that the neighboring village

did not also have its god. That is why Jephthah says to the inhabitants of Moab: *"You lawfully possess what your god Chemosh has made you conquer; you must let us enjoy what our God has given us through his victories."*

This speech, made by one foreigner to other foreigners, is very remarkable. The Jews and Moabites had dispossessed the natives of the country; neither had any right but that of force, and one says to the other: "Your god protected you in your usurpation; allow my God to protect me in mine."

Jeremiah and Amos both ask: *"What reason did the god Milcom have for seizing the country of Gad?"* These passages make it seem evident that antiquity assigned a protecting god to every country. Traces of this theology can still be found in Homer.

It is quite natural that, as people's imaginations grew heated and their minds acquired confused knowledge, they soon multiplied their gods and assigned protectors to the elements, seas, forests, springs, and fields. The more they examined the stars, the more they must have been struck with admiration. How could they not worship the sun when they worshiped the divinity of a brook? Once the first step is taken, the earth is soon covered with gods, and at last people descend from the stars to cats and onions.

Yet reason must surely improve. Time eventually produces philosophers who see that neither onions, nor cats, nor even the stars have arranged the order of nature. All these philosophers—Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, Scythians, Greeks, and Romans—admit a supreme God who rewards and avenges.

They do not tell the people at first; for anyone who spoke ill of onions and cats before old women and priests would have been stoned. Anyone who reproached certain Egyptians for eating their gods would himself have been eaten—as indeed Juvenal relates that an Egyptian was killed and eaten raw in a theological dispute.

But what was done? Orpheus and others established mysteries which initiates swore, under dreadful oaths, not to reveal; and the chief of these mysteries is the worship of a single God. This great truth penetrates half the earth; the number of initiates becomes immense. It is true that the old religion still survives; but since it is not contrary to the doctrine of God's unity, it is allowed to

survive. And why abolish it? The Romans acknowledge the *Deus optimus maximus*; the Greeks have their *Zeus*, their supreme God. All the other divinities are only intermediate beings. Heroes and emperors are placed in the ranks of the gods—that is, of the blessed. But it is certain that Claudius, Octavian, Tiberius, and Caligula are not regarded as creators of heaven and earth.

In short, it seems proved that in the time of Augustus everyone who had a religion acknowledged a superior, eternal God and several orders of secondary gods, whose worship was afterward called idolatry.

The Jews had never been idolaters; for although they admitted Malachim, angels, celestial beings of a lower order, their law did not command that these secondary divinities should receive worship among them. They did worship angels, it is true—that is, they prostrated themselves when they saw them; but since that did not happen often, there was neither a ceremonial nor a legally established worship for them. The cherubim of the ark received no homage. It is certain that the Jews openly worshiped a single God, just as the countless multitude of initiates worshiped him secretly in their mysteries.

Third question.

It was in those times, when worship of a supreme God was universally established among all the wise in Asia, Europe, and Africa, that the Christian religion arose.

Platonism greatly helped the understanding of its doctrines. The *Logos*, which in Plato meant the wisdom, the reason of the supreme Being, became among us the Word and a second person of God. A profound metaphysics beyond human understanding was an inaccessible sanctuary in which religion was enveloped.

We will not repeat here how Mary was afterward declared the mother of God; how the consubstantiality of the Father and the Word was established, and the procession of the *Pneuma*, divine organ of the divine *Logos*; two natures and two wills resulting from the hypostasis; and finally the higher eating, the soul nourished like the body on the limbs and blood of the God-man, worshiped and eaten in the form of bread, present to the eyes, perceptible to the taste, and yet annihilated. All the mysteries have been sublime.

As early as the second century, people began casting out demons in the name of Jesus. Before that they cast them out in the name of Jehovah, or Yhaho; for St. Matthew relates that when Jesus's enemies said he cast out demons in the name of the prince of demons, he answered: "*If I cast out demons through Beelzebub, through whom do your children cast them out?*"

We do not know when the Jews acknowledged Beelzebub, who was a foreign god, as prince of demons; but we know—and Josephus tells us—that there were exorcists in Jerusalem appointed to cast demons out of the bodies of the possessed: that is, people afflicted with strange diseases then attributed, throughout a large part of the earth, to evil spirits.

These demons were therefore cast out with the true pronunciation of Jehovah, now lost, and other ceremonies now forgotten.

This exorcism by Jehovah or the other names of God was still practiced in the Church's first centuries. In his dispute with Celsus, Origen tells him, no. 262: "If, when invoking God or swearing by him, we call him the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we will accomplish certain things through these names, whose nature and force are such that demons submit to those who pronounce them. But if we call him by another name, such as God of the roaring sea, supplanter, these names will have no power. The name Israel translated into Greek will accomplish nothing; but pronounce it in Hebrew, with the other required words, and you will perform the conjuration."

The same Origen, at number 19, says these remarkable words: "There are names that naturally possess power, such as those used by the wise among the Egyptians, the Magi in Persia, the Brahmins in India. What is called magic is not an empty, chimerical art, as the Stoics and Epicureans maintain. Neither the name Sabaoth nor the name Adonai was made for created beings; they belong to a mysterious theology relating to the Creator. From this comes the power of these names when they are arranged and pronounced according to the rules, etc."

In speaking thus, Origen does not give his private opinion; he merely reports the universal opinion. All religions then known admitted a kind of magic, distinguishing celestial from infernal magic, necromancy from theurgy; everything

was prodigy, divination, oracle. The Persians did not deny the Egyptians' miracles, nor the Egyptians those of the Persians. God allowed the first Christians to believe in the oracles attributed to the Sibyls, and still left them a few unimportant errors that did not corrupt the substance of religion.

Another very remarkable thing is that the Christians of the first two centuries abhorred temples, altars, and images. Origen admits this at no. 374. Everything changed afterward, along with discipline, when the Church received a settled form.

Fourth question.

Once a religion is legally established in a state, the courts are wholly occupied with preventing the renewal of most of the things done in that religion before it was publicly accepted. Its founders assembled in secret despite the magistrates; now only public assemblies under the eyes of the law are permitted, and all associations that evade the law are forbidden. The old maxim was that it is better to obey God than human beings; the opposite maxim is accepted now: to follow the laws of the state is to obey God. Formerly one heard of nothing but demonic harassment and possession; the devil was then unleashed on earth; today the devil no longer leaves his dwelling. Prodigies and predictions were necessary then; they are no longer admitted. A man who foretold calamities in public squares would be put in the madhouse. The founders secretly received the faithful's money; a man who collected money to dispose of it without legal authorization would fall into the hands of justice. Thus none of the scaffolding used to construct the building is used any longer.

Fifth question.

After our holy religion, which is undoubtedly the only good one, which would be the least bad?

Would it not be the simplest? Would it not be the one that taught much morality and very few doctrines? The one that tended to make people just without making them absurd? The one that did not command belief in impossible, contradictory things, insulting to the Divinity and harmful to the human race, and did not dare threaten eternal punishment to anyone with common sense? Would it not be the one that did not uphold its belief through executioners or

flood the earth with blood for unintelligible sophistries? The one in which an ambiguity, a play on words, and two or three forged charters would not make a sovereign and a god of a priest often incestuous, murderous, and a poisoner? The one that did not subject kings to this priest? The one that taught only the worship of one God, justice, tolerance, and humanity?

Sixth question.

It has been said that the religion of the Gentiles was absurd in several respects, contradictory, pernicious. But has it not been charged with more harm than it did, and more follies than it preached?

For when I see Jupiter as a bull,
A serpent, swan, or something else,
I find no beauty in it,
Nor wonder if it sometimes sets tongues wagging.

Prologue d'Amphitryon.

Undoubtedly this is very foolish. But show me, in all antiquity, a temple dedicated to Leda sleeping with a swan or a bull. Was a sermon ever preached in Athens or Rome to encourage girls to have children with the swans in their farmyards? Are the fables collected and embellished by Ovid the religion? Do they not resemble our *Golden Legend*, our *Flower of the Saints*? If some Brahmin or dervish came to confront us with the story of St. Mary of Egypt, who, having nothing to pay the sailors who had brought her to Egypt, gave each of them what are called favors in place of money, we would tell the Brahmin: "Reverend Father, you are mistaken; our religion is not the *Golden Legend*."

We reproach the ancients for their oracles and prodigies. If they came back into the world, and we could count the miracles of Our Lady of Loreto and those of Our Lady of Ephesus, in whose favor would the balance stand?

Human sacrifice was established among almost all peoples, but very rarely practiced. Among the Jews we have only Jephthah's daughter and King Agag sacrificed; for Isaac and Jonathan were not. The story of Iphigenia is not well

authenticated among the Greeks. Human sacrifices were very rare among the ancient Romans. In short, pagan religion caused very little bloodshed, and ours has covered the earth with blood. Ours is undoubtedly the only good one, the only true one; but we have done so much harm through it that when we speak of the others we ought to be modest.

Seventh question.

If a man wishes to persuade foreigners or his fellow countrymen to accept his religion, should he not proceed with the most insinuating gentleness and the most engaging moderation? If he begins by saying that what he proclaims is demonstrated, he will find a crowd of unbelievers. If he dares tell them that they reject his teaching only insofar as it condemns their passions, that their hearts have corrupted their minds, that their reason is merely false and proud, he disgusts them, rouses them against him, and himself ruins what he wishes to establish.

If the religion he proclaims is true, will rage and insolence make it truer? Do you become angry when you say that we must be gentle, patient, beneficent, just, and fulfill all the duties of society? No, for everyone agrees with you. Why, then, do you insult your brother when you preach mysterious metaphysics to him? Because his good sense irritates your self-love. You are proud enough to demand that your brother submit his understanding to yours. Humiliated pride produces anger; it has no other source. A man wounded by twenty gunshots in battle does not become angry; but a scholar wounded by a single vote withheld becomes furious and implacable.

R — Résurrection



We are told that the Egyptians built their pyramids only to make tombs of them, and that their bodies, embalmed inside and out, awaited the return of their souls to revive them after a thousand years. But if their bodies were to rise again, why was the perfumers' first operation to pierce their skulls with a hook and draw out the brain? The idea of rising again without brains makes one suspect—if the expression may be used—that the Egyptians had few while alive. But we must consider that most of the ancients believed the soul was in the chest. And why is the soul in the chest rather than elsewhere? Because in all our somewhat violent feelings we do indeed experience an expansion or contraction around the heart, which led people to think that this was the soul's lodging. This soul was something airy, a light figure wandering wherever it could until it found its body again.

Belief in resurrection is far older than historical times. Aethalides, son of Mercury, could die and rise again at will; Aesculapius restored Hippolytus to life, Hercules Alcestitis; Pelops, after being chopped to pieces by his father, was raised again by the gods. Plato relates that Er rose again for only fifteen days. Among the Jews, the Pharisees adopted the doctrine of resurrection only long after Plato.

There is a very singular fact in the Acts of the Apostles, well worth our attention. St. James and several of his companions advise St. Paul, Christian though he was, to go into the temple in Jerusalem and observe all the ceremonies of the

old law, “so that everyone may know,” they say, “that everything said about you is false, and that you continue to keep the law of Moses.”

St. Paul therefore went into the temple for seven days, but on the seventh he was recognized. He was accused of having come there with foreigners and profaned it. Here is how he got out of the difficulty.

*Now Paul, knowing that some of those present were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, cried out in the assembly: “My brothers, I am a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee; it is because of the hope of another life and the resurrection of the dead that they wish to condemn me.”*¹ The resurrection of the dead had not been at issue at all in this entire affair; Paul said it only to turn the Pharisees and Sadducees against each other.

Verse 7. *When Paul had spoken in this way, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.*

Verse 8. *For the Sadducees say there is neither resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; whereas the Pharisees acknowledge both, etc.*

It has been claimed that Job, who is very ancient, knew the doctrine of resurrection. These words are quoted: “*I know that my redeemer lives, and that one day his redemption will rise over me, or that I will rise from the dust; that my skin will return, and that I will see God again in my flesh.*”

But several commentators understand these words to mean that Job hopes soon to recover from his illness and not remain lying on the ground forever, as he was then. What follows sufficiently proves this to be the true explanation; for a moment later he cries out to his false and harsh friends: “*Why, then, do you say, ‘Let us persecute him’*”—or else, “*because you will say, ‘Because we persecuted him.’*” Does this not clearly mean: “You will repent of having offended me when you see me restored to my former health and wealth”? A sick man who says “I will get up” does not say “I will rise from the dead.” Forcing meanings onto clear passages is the sure way never to understand one another.

St. Jerome places the birth of the Pharisees’ sect only a very short time before Jesus Christ. Rabbi Hillel is regarded as the founder of the Pharisaic sect; and this Hillel was a contemporary of Gamaliel, St. Paul’s teacher.

Several of these Pharisees believed that the Jews alone would rise again, and that the rest of humanity was not worth the trouble. Others maintained that people would rise again only in Palestine, and that the bodies of those buried elsewhere would be secretly transported near Jerusalem to rejoin their souls there. But St. Paul, writing to the inhabitants of Thessalonica, tells them “*that the second coming of Jesus Christ is for them and for him; that they will witness it.*”

Verse 16. *For as soon as the signal has been given by the archangel and by the sound of God’s trumpet, the Lord himself will descend from heaven, and those who have died in Jesus Christ will rise first.*

Verse 17. *Then we who are alive and have remained until then will be carried away with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we will live forever with the Lord.*²

Does this important passage not clearly prove that the first Christians expected to see the end of the world, as indeed it is foretold in St. Luke for the very time when St. Luke was living?

St. Augustine believes that children, and even stillborn children, will rise again at the age of maturity. Origen, Jerome, Athanasius, and Basil did not believe that women would rise again with their sex.

In short, people have always disputed what we have been, what we are, and what we will be.

¹ *Acts of the Apostles, chap. 23, v. 6, 7, 8.*

² *1. Epistle to the Thessalonians, chap. 4.*

S — Salomon



Could Solomon have been as rich as we are told?

Chronicles assures us that his father, the Melk David, left him about twenty billion in our money at today's rate, by the most modest calculation. There is not that much ready money in the whole earth, and it is rather difficult to see how David could have amassed this treasure in the little country of Palestine.

According to the third book of Kings, Solomon had forty thousand stables for his chariot horses. Even if each stable held only ten horses, that would have made no more than four hundred thousand, which, added to his twelve thousand saddle horses, would have made four hundred and twelve thousand warhorses. That is a great many for a Jewish Melk who never made war. Such magnificence has few parallels in a country that raises only donkeys, where today there is no other mount. But apparently times have changed. It is true that so wise a prince, who had a thousand women, might well also have had four hundred and twelve thousand horses, if only to go riding with them along the lake of Gennesaret, or toward the lake of Sodom, or along the brook Kidron, one of the most delightful places on earth—although, in truth, this brook is dry nine months of the year, and the ground is a little stony.

But did this wise Solomon write the works attributed to him? Is it plausible, for example, that he is the author of the Jewish eclogue entitled the Song of Songs?

A monarch who had a thousand women may have said to one of them: "*Let her kiss me with a kiss of her mouth, for your breasts are better than wine.*" A king and a shepherd, when it comes to kissing on the mouth, can express themselves in the same way. It is true that it is rather strange to have claimed that it was the girl speaking in this passage and praising her lover's breasts.

Nor will I deny that a gallant king may have made his mistress say: "*My beloved is like a cluster of myrrh; he will remain between my breasts.*" I do not quite understand what a cluster of myrrh is; but when the beloved woman advises her beloved to pass his left hand around her neck and embrace her with his right, I understand that very well.

One might ask the author of the song for a few explanations when he says: "Your navel is like a cup in which there is always something to drink; your belly is like a bushel of wheat; your breasts are like two young roe deer; and your nose is like the tower of Mount Lebanon."

I admit that Virgil's eclogues are in another style; but everyone has his own, and a Jew is not obliged to write like Virgil.

Apparently it is another fine turn of Eastern eloquence to say: "*Our sister is still little; she has no breasts. What will we do with our sister? If she is a wall, let us build on it; if she is a door, let us close it.*"

Very well: let Solomon, the wisest of men, have talked like this in his merry moments. We are told it was his wedding song for his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. But is it natural for Pharaoh's son-in-law to leave his beloved at night to go into his walnut garden; for the queen to run after him all alone and bare-foot; for the city guards to beat her and take her dress?

Could a king's daughter have said: "*I am dark, but I am beautiful, like Solomon's furs*"? Such expressions might be forgiven in a shepherd, although, after all, there is not much connection between a girl's beauty and furs. Still, Solomon's fur coats may have been admired in their time; and a Jew from the dregs of the people, making verses for his mistress, might very well tell her in his Jewish language that no Jewish king had ever had fur-lined robes as beautiful as she was. But King Solomon would have had to be thoroughly enraptured with

his furs to compare them to his mistress. A king today who composed a fine wedding song for his marriage to the daughter of a neighboring king would certainly not be regarded as the best poet in his kingdom.

Several rabbis maintained not only that this little voluptuous eclogue was not by King Solomon, but that it was not authentic. Theodore of Mopsuestia held this opinion, and the celebrated Grotius calls the Song of Songs a *licentious work, flagitiosus*. Yet it is consecrated, and regarded as a sustained allegory of the marriage of Jesus Christ to his Church. We must admit that the allegory is a little strong, and we cannot see what the Church could understand when the author says that his little sister has no breasts, and that if she is a wall, we must build on it.

The Book of Wisdom is in a more serious vein; but it is no more Solomon's than the Song of Songs is. It is commonly attributed to Jesus, son of Sirach, by others to Philo of Byblos. But whoever the author was, it seems that people did not yet have the Pentateuch in his time; for he says in chap. 10 that Abraham wished to sacrifice Isaac at the time of the Flood, and elsewhere he speaks of the patriarch Joseph as a king of Egypt.

Proverbs has been attributed to Isaiah, to Elzia, to Shebna, to Eliakim, to Jakeh, and to several others. But whoever compiled this collection of Eastern sayings, there is little likelihood that a king took the trouble. Would he have said that "*the terror of the king is like the roaring of the lion*"? That is how a subject or a slave speaks, trembling at his master's anger. Would Solomon have said so much about the immodest woman? Would he have said: "*Do not look at wine when it appears clear and its color shines in the glass*"?

I very much doubt that there were drinking glasses in Solomon's time. They are a very recent invention; all antiquity drank from wooden or metal cups. This passage alone indicates that the work was written by a Jew of Alexandria long after Alexander.

There remains Ecclesiastes, which Grotius maintains was written under Zerubbabel. The freedom with which the author of Ecclesiastes expresses himself is well known. We know he says that "*human beings have nothing more*

than beasts; that it is better not to have been born than to exist; that there is no other life; that nothing is good but to rejoice in one's works with the woman one loves."

Solomon might have spoken in this way to a few of his women. It is claimed that these are objections he puts to himself; but these maxims, with their somewhat freethinking air, do not look like objections at all. To understand in an author the opposite of what he says is to make fools of the world.

Besides, several Fathers maintained that Solomon had done penance; so he may be forgiven.

But what does it matter to us whether these books were written by a Jew? Our Christian religion is founded on the Jewish religion, but not on all the books the Jews wrote. Why should the Song of Songs be more sacred to us than the fables of the Talmud? Because, we are told, we have included it in the Hebrew canon. And what is this canon? It is a collection of authentic works! Well, is a work divine because it is authentic? Is a history of the kings of Judah and Shechem, for example, anything other than a history? Here is a strange prejudice. We hold the Jews in horror, and we want everything they wrote and we collected to bear the stamp of divinity. There has never been so palpable a contradiction.

S — Sensation



Oysters, we are told, have two senses, moles four, other animals, like human beings, five. Some people admit a sixth; but it is evident that the voluptuous sensation they mean comes down to the sense of touch, and that five senses are our lot. We cannot imagine or desire any beyond them.

On other globes there may be senses of which we have no idea; the number of senses may increase from globe to globe, and the being that has innumerable, perfect senses may be the ultimate limit of all beings.

But we, with our five organs—what power have we? We always feel despite ourselves, never because we wish to. When an object strikes us, it is impossible not to have the sensation our nature assigns us. Feeling is within us, but it cannot depend on us. We receive it; and how do we receive it? It is well known that there is no relation between the vibrating air and words sung to me, and the impression these words make in my brain.

We marvel at thought; but feeling is just as wonderful. A divine power shines in the sensation of the lowest insect as in Newton's brain. Yet let a thousand animals die before your eyes: you are not anxious about what will become of their faculty of feeling, although this faculty is the work of the Being of beings. You regard them as machines of nature, born to perish and make room for others.

Why and how would their sensation survive when they no longer exist? What need would the author of all that is have to preserve properties whose subject has been destroyed? One might as well say that the power of the plant called the

sensitive plant to draw its leaves back toward its branches survives when the plant is no more. You will doubtless ask how, if animals' sensation perishes with them, human thought will not perish. I cannot answer that question; I do not know enough to resolve it. The eternal author of sensation and thought alone knows how he gives and preserves it.

All antiquity maintained that nothing is in our understanding that has not been in our senses. Descartes claimed in his romances that we had metaphysical ideas before knowing our nurse's breast. A faculty of theology condemned this doctrine, not because it was an error, but because it was a novelty; it then adopted the error because it had been demolished by Locke, an English philosopher, and an Englishman simply had to be wrong. Finally, after changing its mind so often, it again condemned that ancient truth that the senses are the doors of the understanding. It behaved like debt-ridden governments, which sometimes give currency to certain notes and sometimes discredit them. But for a long time no one has wanted this faculty's notes.

All the faculties in the world will never prevent philosophers from seeing that we begin by feeling, and that our memory is merely sensation continued. A man born deprived of his five senses would be deprived of every idea, if he could live. Metaphysical notions come only through the senses; for how can we measure a circle or a triangle if we have not seen or touched a circle and a triangle? How can we form an imperfect idea of infinity except by pushing back boundaries? And how can we remove boundaries without having seen or felt them?

"Sensation encompasses all our faculties," says a great philosopher (page 128, volume 2, *Treatise on Sensations*).

What conclusion can be drawn from all this? You who read and think: draw it.

S — Songes



*The dreams that mock our minds with flitting shadows—
No shrines of gods, no powers from heaven send them;
Each makes his own.*

But how, when all the senses are dead in sleep, is there an inward one still alive? How, when your eyes no longer see and your ears hear nothing, do you nevertheless see and hear in your dreams? A dog hunts in its sleep: it barks, pursues its prey, feeds on the kill. A poet makes verses while sleeping. A mathematician sees figures; a metaphysician reasons well or badly. We have striking examples. Are only the machine's organs acting? Is it the pure soul, withdrawn from the rule of the senses, freely enjoying its rights?

If the organs alone produce the dreams of night, why would they not alone produce the ideas of day? If the pure soul, tranquil while the senses rest and acting by itself, is the sole cause, the sole subject of all the ideas you have while sleeping, why are all these ideas almost always irregular, unreasonable, incoherent? What! It is when this soul is least disturbed that all its imaginings are most disturbed! It is free, and it is mad! If it were born with metaphysical ideas, as so many writers dreaming with their eyes open have said, its pure and luminous ideas of being, infinity, and all first principles should awaken in it with the greatest force when its body is asleep. We would be good philosophers only in dreams.

Whatever system you embrace, whatever vain efforts you make to prove to yourself that memory stirs your brain and your brain stirs your soul, you must admit that all your ideas come to you in sleep without your aid and against your will: your will has no part in them. It is therefore certain that you can think for seven or eight hours at a stretch without the slightest wish to think, and without even being sure that you are thinking. Weigh that, and try to guess what an animal is composed of.

Dreams have always been a great object of superstition; nothing was more natural. A man deeply affected by his mistress's illness dreams that he sees her dying. She dies the next day; therefore the gods foretold her death to him.

An army general dreams that he wins a battle. He does indeed win it: the gods warned him that he would be victorious.

Only dreams that have been fulfilled are taken into account; the others are forgotten. Dreams, like oracles, make up a great part of ancient history.

The Vulgate translates the end of verse 26 of chap. 19 of Leviticus thus: "*You will not observe dreams.*" But the word *dream* is not in the Hebrew; and it would be rather strange for the observation of dreams to be condemned in the very book that says Joseph became the benefactor of Egypt and his family for having explained three dreams.

The interpretation of dreams was so common a thing that people did not stop at understanding them; sometimes they also had to guess what another man had dreamed. Nebuchadnezzar, having forgotten a dream he had dreamed, ordered his Magi to guess it and threatened them with death if they failed. But the Jew Daniel, who belonged to the school of the Magi, saved their lives by guessing the king's dream and interpreting it. This story and many others might serve to prove that Jewish law did not forbid oneiromancy—that is, the science of dreams.

S — Superstition



A chapter drawn from Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch.

Almost everything that goes beyond worship of a supreme Being and the heart's submission to his eternal commands is superstition. A very dangerous superstition is the forgiveness of crimes attached to certain ceremonies.

*And slaughter black sheep, and to the divine shades
Send offerings.*

*Too credulous, you who think the grim crimes of murder
Can be washed away with river water!*

You think God will forget your homicide if you bathe in a river, sacrifice a black ewe, and have words pronounced over you. A second homicide will therefore be forgiven at the same price, and then a third; a hundred murders will cost you only a hundred black ewes and a hundred washings! Do better, miserable human beings: no murder, and no black ewes.

What a vile idea, to imagine that a priest of Isis and Cybele, playing cymbals and castanets, will reconcile you with the Divinity! And what is this priest of Cybele, this wandering eunuch who lives on your weaknesses, that he should set himself up as mediator between heaven and you? What credentials has he received from God? He receives money from you to mumble words, and you think the Being of beings ratifies this charlatan's words?

There are innocent superstitions: you dance on feast days in honor of Diana or Pomona, or one of those secondary gods who fill your calendar. Very well. Dancing is very pleasant; it benefits the body and delights the soul; it harms no one. But do not imagine that Pomona and Vertumnus are very grateful for your leaping in their honor, or punish you for failing to do so. There is no Pomona or Vertumnus but the gardener's spade and hoe. Do not be foolish enough to believe that hail will ravage your garden if you have failed to dance the pyrrhic dance or the cordax.

There may be one pardonable superstition, which even encourages virtue: placing among the gods the great men who have been humanity's benefactors. It would undoubtedly be better to confine ourselves to regarding them simply as venerable men, and above all to try to imitate them. Venerate a Solon, a Thales, a Pythagoras without worship; but do not adore a Hercules for cleaning the stables of Augeas and sleeping with fifty girls in one night.

Above all, take care not to establish a cult for scoundrels whose only merit was ignorance, fanaticism, and filth; who made idleness and beggary a duty and a glory. Do those who were at least useless during their lives deserve apotheosis after death?

Observe that the most superstitious times have always been those of the most horrible crimes.

T — Tirannie



A sovereign is called a tyrant when he knows no laws but his whim, takes his subjects' property, and then enlists them to go and take his neighbors'. There are no tyrants of this kind in Europe.

We distinguish the tyranny of one from that of several. This tyranny of several would be that of a body that encroached on the rights of other bodies and exercised despotism under cover of laws it had corrupted. Nor are there tyrants of this kind in Europe.

Under which tyranny would you prefer to live? Under none; but if I had to choose, I would detest the tyranny of one less than that of several. A despot always has a few good moments; an assembly of despots never has any. If a tyrant wrongs me, I can disarm him through his mistress, his confessor, or his page; but a company of solemn tyrants is impervious to every enticement. When it is not unjust, it is at least harsh, and it never bestows favors.

If I have only one despot, I need merely step against a wall when I see him pass, or prostrate myself, or strike the ground with my forehead according to the country's custom. But if there is a company of a hundred despots, I may have to repeat this ceremony a hundred times a day, which becomes very tedious in the long run when one's knees are not supple. If I have a farm near one of our lords, I am crushed; if I go to law against a relative of a relative of one of our lords, I am ruined. What is to be done? I fear that in this world we are reduced to being anvil or hammer. Happy the man who escapes that alternative!

T — Tolérance



What is tolerance? It is humanity's inheritance. We are all steeped in weakness and error; let us forgive one another our follies: that is nature's first law.

Let the Gueber, the Banian, the Jew, the Muslim, the Chinese worshiper of God, the Brahmin, the Greek Christian, the Roman Christian, the Protestant Christian, the Quaker Christian trade together at the exchanges of Amsterdam, London, Surat, or Basra: they will not raise their daggers against each other to win souls for their religion. Why, then, have we slaughtered one another almost without interruption since the first Council of Nicaea?

Constantine began by issuing an edict permitting all religions; he ended by persecuting. Before him, people rose against the Christians only because they were beginning to form a party within the state. The Romans permitted all forms of worship, even those of the Jews and the Egyptians, for whom they had such contempt. Why did Rome tolerate these forms of worship? Because neither the Egyptians nor even the Jews sought to exterminate the empire's ancient religion, or ranged over land and sea to make converts; they thought only of making money. But it is incontestable that the Christians wanted their religion to rule. The Jews did not want Jupiter's statue in Jerusalem; but the Christians did not want it on the Capitol. St. Thomas has the honesty to admit that if the Christians did not dethrone the emperors, it was because they could not. Their opinion was that the whole earth must be Christian. They were therefore necessarily enemies of the whole earth until it had been converted.

They were enemies of one another on every point of their controversy. First, must Jesus Christ be regarded as God? Those who deny it are anathematized under the name of Ebionites, who anathematize the worshipers of Jesus.

Do some of them want all property held in common, as it is claimed to have been in the Apostles' time? Their opponents call them Nicolaitans and accuse them of the most infamous crimes. Do others lay claim to a mystical devotion? They are called Gnostics and furiously attacked. Does Marcion dispute the Trinity? He is treated as an idolater.

Tertullian, Praxeas, Origen, Novatus, Novatian, Sabellius, and Donatus are all persecuted by their brothers before Constantine. And Constantine has scarcely made Christianity reign before the Athanasians and Eusebians tear one another apart; from that time to our own day the Christian Church has been flooded with blood.

The Jewish people were, I admit, a very barbarous people. They mercilessly slaughtered all the inhabitants of a wretched little country to which they had no more right than they have to Paris and London. Yet when Naaman is cured of leprosy by plunging seven times into the Jordan, and, to show his gratitude to Elisha, who taught him this secret, tells him that he will worship the God of the Jews out of thankfulness, he reserves the freedom to worship his king's god as well. He asks Elisha's permission, and the prophet does not hesitate to give it. The Jews worshiped their God, but they were never surprised that every people had its own. They were content for Chemosh to have given a certain district to the Moabites, provided their God gave them one too. Jacob did not hesitate to marry the daughters of an idolater. Laban had his god, just as Jacob had his. Here are examples of tolerance among the most intolerant and cruel people in all antiquity. We have imitated their absurd fury, not their indulgence.

It is clear that any private individual who persecutes a man, his brother, because he does not share his opinion, is a monster. There is no difficulty about that. But the government! The magistrates! The princes! How will they treat those whose worship differs from theirs? If they are powerful foreigners, a prince will certainly ally himself with them. The Most Christian Francis I will unite with Muslims against the Most Christian Charles V. Francis I will give money to the

Lutherans of Germany to support their revolt against the emperor; but he will begin, according to custom, by having Lutherans burned at home. He pays them in Saxony for reasons of policy; he burns them in Paris for reasons of policy. But what will happen? Persecutions make converts. Soon France will be full of new Protestants. At first they will let themselves be hanged; then they will hang others in their turn. There will be civil wars. Then St. Bartholomew's Day will come, and this corner of the world will be worse than anything ancients or moderns have ever said of hell.

Madmen, who have never been able to offer pure worship to the God who made you! Wretches, whom the example of the Noahides, the Chinese scholars, the Parsis, and all the wise have never been able to guide! Monsters, who need superstitions as ravens' gizzards need carrion! You have already been told, and there is nothing else to tell you: if you have two religions in your country, they will cut each other's throats; if you have thirty, they will live in peace. Look at the Grand Turk: he governs Guebers, Banians, Greek Christians, Nestorians, Roman Christians. The first who tries to stir up a disturbance is impaled, and everyone is quiet.

V — Vertu



What is virtue? Doing good to one's neighbor. Can I call anything virtue except what does me good? I am needy; you are generous. I am in danger; you come to my aid. I am deceived; you tell me the truth. I am neglected; you comfort me. I am ignorant; you teach me. I will have no difficulty calling you virtuous. But what will become of the cardinal and theological virtues? Some will remain in the schools.

What does it matter to me that you are temperate? You are observing a rule of health; you will be better for it, and I congratulate you. You have faith and hope; I congratulate you still more: they will bring you eternal life. Your theological virtues are gifts from heaven; your cardinal virtues are excellent qualities that help you guide yourself. But they are not virtues in relation to your neighbor. The prudent man does himself good; the virtuous man does good to others. St. Paul was right to tell you that charity is greater than faith and hope.

But what—will no virtues be admitted except those useful to one's neighbor? How can I admit any others? We live in society; therefore nothing is truly good for us except what benefits society. A solitary man may be sober and pious; he may wear a hair shirt. Very well: he will be holy, but I will call him virtuous only when he has performed some act of virtue from which other people have benefited. As long as he is alone, he does neither good nor harm; he is nothing to us. If St. Bruno brought peace to families or relieved poverty, he was virtuous; if he fasted and prayed in solitude, he was a saint. Virtue among human beings is an

exchange of benefits; whoever has no part in this exchange must not be counted. If this saint were in the world, he would doubtless do good there; but until he is there, the world will be right not to give him the name of virtuous. He will be good for himself, not for us.

“But,” you tell me, “if a solitary man is gluttonous, drunken, given to secret debauchery with himself, he is vicious; therefore he is virtuous if he has the opposite qualities.” That I cannot admit. He is a very filthy man if he has the faults you mention; but he is not vicious, wicked, or punishable in relation to society, which his infamies do not harm. We may presume that if he returns to society he will do harm there, that he will be very criminal there; indeed, it is much more probable that he will be a wicked man than it is certain that the other, temperate and chaste solitary will be a good man. For in society faults increase and good qualities diminish.

A much stronger objection is made: Nero, Pope Alexander VI, and other monsters of that sort bestowed benefits. I answer boldly that they were virtuous that day.

Some theologians say that the divine emperor Antoninus was not virtuous; that he was an obstinate Stoic who, not content to command human beings, also wished to be esteemed by them; that he made the good he did the human race serve his own ends; that throughout his life he was just, hardworking, and beneficent out of vanity, and only deceived people with his virtues. Then I cry out: “My God, give us such scoundrels often!”