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BLAISE PASCAL

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THOUGHTS ON RELIGION

AND
PHILOSOPHY
BY
BLAISE PASCAL

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY
ISAAC TAYLOR

AUTHOR OF "A NATURAL HISTORY OF ENTHUSIASM"



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A GENERAL VIEW OF MAN

1. The first thing presented to the self-observation of Man, is his body, that is to say, a certain portion of matter peculiar to himself. But to comprehend what this is, he must compare it with every thing above and below him, that thus he may ascertain his just limits.

Let him, then, not confine his attention to the objects that are close around him : let him contemplate all Nature in its awful and finished magnificence ; let him observe that splendid luminary, set forth as an eternal lamp to enlighten the universe ; let him view the Earth as a mere speck within the vast circuit de-

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scribed by that luminary; let him think with amazement, that this vast circuit itself is only a minute point, compared with that formed by the revolutions of the stars. And though sight stops here, let imagination pass onwards. Even this faculty will fail in conceiving sooner than Nature in furnishing materials for its exercise. All that we see of the creation, is but an almost imperceptible streak in the vast expanse of the universe. No idea of ours can approximate to its immense extent. However we may amplify our conceptions, they will still be mere atoms in comparison with the reality of things. This is an infinite sphere, the centre of which is everywhere, but its circumference nowhere. In short, it is one of the greatest sensible evidences of the almightiness of God, that our imagination is overwhelmed by these reflections. *no! just the greatness of nature of the Cosmos. Surely natural!!*

of you - 1790
Palmer S.
X
Let man reverting to himself, consider what he is, compared with all that exists. Let him behold himself a wanderer in this secluded province of nature, and by what he can see from the little dungeon in which he finds himself lodged, (I mean the visible universe), let

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him learn to make a right estimate of the earth, its kingdoms, its cities and himself.

Man, then, existing here in the midst of infinity, who can tell what to make of him ? But to show him another prodigy equally astonishing, let him examine the most minute objects he is acquainted with. A mite, for example, will exhibit, in its diminutive body, parts incomparably less : limbs with their joints, veins in these limbs, blood in these veins, humours in this blood ; drops in these humours, vapours in these drops ; and analysing the last-mentioned objects, let him stretch his powers of conception to the utmost, and the most minute particle he can descry shall be our topic. Perhaps he may suppose that this must be the extreme of littleness in Nature. But even this contains a new abyss for him to behold. I will represent to him, not only the visible universe, but all he can conceive as existing in infinite space, comprised in this imperceptible atom. Here let him behold an infinity of systems, each with its firmament, its planets, its earth, in the same proportion as the visible universe : in this earth, he will

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*is only
not creative
universe*

find animals and even mites, consisting of a similar variety of parts as the former, and these again capable of sub-division without cessation and without end. Let him lose himself in these wonders, as astonishing for their littleness as the others for their magnitude. For who can help being amazed, that a human body, scarcely discernible in our system, and that again, lost in the immensity of Nature, should, nevertheless, be a colossus, a system of worlds, or rather a universe, compared with that extreme littleness, which our perception can never reach? Whoever takes such a view will be alarmed to behold himself, as it were, suspended, in the material vehicle assigned him by Nature, between the two abysses of infinity and nonentity, from each of which he is equally distant... He will tremble at the sight of these wonders; and I believe that his curiosity changing into admiration, he will be more disposed to contemplate them in silence, than to explore them with presumption.

☆ For, finally, what is the rank man occupies in Nature? A nonentity, as contrasted with

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There is only a middle thing in universe

infinity ; a universe, contrasted with nonentity ;
a middle something between every thing and
nothing. He is infinitely remote from these
two extremes : his existence is not less distant
from the nonentity out of which he is taken,
than from the infinity in which he is ingulfed. ✓
His intellect holds the same rank, in the order
of intelligences, as his body in the material
universe, and all it can attain is, to catch
some glimpses of objects that occupy the
middle, in eternal despair of knowing either
extreme.—All things have sprung from nothing ✓
and are borne forward to infinity. Who can
follow out such an astonishing career? The
Author of these wonders, and He alone, can
comprehend them.

This condition, the middle, namely, between
two extremes, is a characteristic of all our
faculties. Our senses perceive nothing in the
extreme. A very loud sound deafens us ; a
very intense light blinds us ; a very great or
a very short distance disables our vision ;
excessive length or excessive brevity obscures
discourse ; too much pleasure cloy, and un-
varied harmony offends us. Extreme heat, or

*men is
a middle
universe*

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extreme cold, destroys sensation. Any qualities in excess are hurtful to us, and pass beyond the range of our senses. We cannot be said to feel them, but to endure them. Extreme youth and extreme old age alike enfeeble the mind; too much, or too little food, disturbs its operation; too much, or too little instruction, represses its vigour. Extremes are to us as though they did not exist, and we are nothing in reference to them. They elude us, or we elude them.

23
Such is our real state; our acquirements are confined within limits which we cannot pass, alike incapable of attaining universal knowledge or of remaining in total ignorance. We are in the middle of a vast expanse, always unfixed, fluctuating between ignorance and knowledge; if we think of advancing further, our object shifts its position and eludes our grasp; it steals away and takes an eternal flight that nothing can arrest. This is our natural condition, altogether contrary, however, to our inclinations. We are inflamed with a desire of exploring every thing, and of building a tower that shall rise into infinity,

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but our edifice is shattered to pieces, and the ground beneath it discloses a profound abyss.

2. I can easily conceive a man existing without hands or feet, and I could conceive him too without a head, did I not know from experience that this is the part in which he exercises thought. It is thought, then, that constitutes the essence of man, and without which we can form no conception of him. What is that by which we are sensible of pleasure? Is it the hand? is it the arm? is it the flesh? is it the blood? We perceive that it must be something immaterial.

3. Man is so great, that his greatness appears even in knowing himself to be miserable. A tree has no sense of misery. It is true, that to know we are miserable is to be miserable; but to know we are miserable is also to be great. Thus all the miseries of man prove his grandeur; they are the miseries of a dignified personage, the miseries of a dethroned monarch.

4. Who ever felt unhappy in not being a

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king, except a deposed sovereign? Was Paulus Emilius unhappy in being no longer Consul? On the contrary, every one might see he was happy in ceasing to hold that office, because to resign it after a limited period, was a condition of its assumption. But Perseus, who had expected to be always a king, was so wretched when no longer on the throne, that it seemed strange that he could endure to live. Is any person unhappy because he has only one mouth? but who would not be unhappy in having only one eye? It is never any man's fancy to lament he has not three eyes, but it is felt to be very distressing to have but one.

5. We have so exalted a conception of the human soul that we cannot endure its contempt, or bear the want of its approbation: in short, all the felicity of men consists in possessing this approbation. While in one view the false glory which men pursue is a striking mark of their misery and degradation, it is also a proof of the dignity of their nature. For whatever may be a man's possessions in

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the world, whatever of health or other important good he may enjoy, yet is he dissatisfied if he has not the esteem of his fellow-men. Such is the value he sets on the approbation of mankind, that however elevated his condition in life may be, he deems himself unfortunate if he does not occupy an analogous elevation in the general regard. This is accounted the most delightful situation in the world; and to desire it is the most unconquerable propensity of the human heart. Even those who most despise mankind, and would put them on a level with the brutes, still covet admiration; and thus their own feelings contradict the contempt they assume. Nature, more powerful than all their reason, convinces them more forcibly of the grandeur of man, than reason can convince them of his degradation.

Man is never satisfied

6. Man is the feeblest reed in existence, but he is a thinking reed. There is no need that the universe be armed for his destruction; a noxious vapour, a drop of water is enough to cause his death. But though the universe

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were to destroy him, man would be more noble than his destroyer, for he would know that he was dying, while the universe would know nothing of its own achievement. Thus all our dignity consists in the thinking principle. This, and not space and duration, is what elevates us.—Let us labour then to think aright; here is the foundation of morals.

7. It is dangerous to show man in how many respects he resembles the inferior animals, without pointing out his grandeur. It is also dangerous to direct his attention to his grandeur without keeping him aware of his degradation. It is still more dangerous to leave him ignorant of both; but to exhibit both to him will be most beneficial.

8. Let man then estimate himself justly. Let him love himself, for he has a nature capable of good; but let him not, on this account, love the vileness that adheres to it. Let him despise himself because this capacity for good has been left vacant, but let him not despise the capacity itself. Let him hate him-

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self; let him love himself. He is capable of knowing truth and of being happy: but he has not the constant or satisfactory possession of truth. I wish, then, that he might be excited to desire truth, and so freed from his passions as to pursue the right course for finding it; and aware how much his knowledge is obscured by his passions, I wish him to hate those corrupt desires which would conform him to themselves, that they may neither blind him while making his choice nor frustrate that choice, when he has made it.

✓ 9. I blame equally those who make it their sole business to extol man, and those who take on them to blame him, and those also who attempt to amuse him. I can approve none but those who examine his nature with sorrow and compassion.

The Stoics said, Retire into yourselves, there you will find repose: but this was not true;—others said, Go out of yourselves and seek for happiness in amusement: and this, too, was wrong. There are diseases ready to destroy these delusions: happiness can be found

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X neither in ourselves nor in external things,
but in God and in ourselves as united to
Him.

✓ 10. There are two ways of taking account
of the nature of man: That in which we
consider him in relation to the final objects
of his being;—and in this view he is grand
and incomprehensible: and that in which we
allow our judgment of him to be formed by
the mere habitual sight of his actions, exclud-
ing his spiritual essence (*animum arcendi*) from
our consideration, as our judgment of horses
and dogs is formed from being accustomed
to see them run—man regarded in this light
only, is abject and worthless. These are the
two modes of judging of human nature which
have produced so many disputes among phil-
osophers; one party denies what the other
assumes. One says, Man was not born for
such an end, for all his actions are in con-
tradiction to it; the other says, Man renounces
his true end in acting so vilely. Two things
↓ may acquaint man with the whole constitution
of his nature, Instinct and Experience.

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11. I perceive it is possible I might not have existed, for my essence consists in the thinking principle ; therefore I, this thinking being, should never have existed, had my mother been killed before I was animated :— then I am not a necessary being. Nor am I eternal or infinite, but I see plainly, that there is in nature, a necessary, eternal, and infinite Being.

THE VANITY OF MAN, AND THE EFFECTS OF SELF-LOVE

1. We are not content with the life we have in ourselves, and in our individual being; we wish to live an imaginary life in the thoughts of others, and for this purpose, strive to make a figure in the world. We labour incessantly to cherish and adorn this imaginary being, and neglect the real one; and if we possess tranquillity, or generosity, or fidelity, we are eager to make it known, that such virtues may be transferred to this creature of the imagination; in order to effect their union with it, we are willing to detach them from ourselves, and would be content to be cowards, if we could only gain the repute of being valiant. What a proof of the nothingness of our real being, that it will not satisfy us without the other, for which, indeed, we often relinquish it!

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A man who would not part with his life to preserve his honour would be esteemed infamous. Glory is so very delightful, that with whatever it is combined, even with death itself, we still love it.

2. Pride is a counterpoise to all our miseries, for either it conceals them, or, if it discovers them, flatters us for being so wise as to know them. Amidst all our errors and miseries, it clings to us so tenaciously that we make a surrender of our lives with joy, provided men will talk about it.

3. Vanity is so rooted in the human heart, that a foot-boy, or a porter will contrive to have a little knot of admirers about him; and philosophers do just the same. Those who write against glory, covet the glory of having written well, and those who read them wish for the glory of having read. I who am writing this remark, have, perhaps, a similar desire, and so, perhaps, will those have who read it.

4. In spite of the sense of all the miseries

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which fasten upon us, and threaten our very existence, we have a tendency to elevation which cannot be repressed.

5. We are so arrogant, that we wish to be known all over the world, and even by persons who will not come into existence till we are no more; yet we are so vain, that the respect of five or six persons about us, amuses, and for a time satisfies us.

6. Curiosity is nothing but vanity. Men in general wish for knowledge merely that they may talk about it. They would never take a voyage, if they were only to enjoy their adventures, without the prospect of conversing with some one respecting them.

7. Persons are not concerned about their reputation in towns which they only pass through; but if they stop anywhere a little time, it becomes a matter of importance. And how long must this stay be? A time proportioned to our vain and petty existence.

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men is borned
8. The essence of self-love, is to love only one's-self; to be interested for nothing but one's-self. But what is gained by this? A man cannot prevent this object of his love from being full of defects and miseries: he wishes to be great, and sees himself to be little; he wishes to be happy, and feels himself miserable; he wishes to be perfect, and sees himself full of imperfections; he wishes to be an object of the esteem and love of his fellow-men, and sees that his faults deserve their aversion and contempt. This embarrassment produces the most unjust and criminal passion imaginable; for he conceives a mortal hatred against that truth which forces him to behold and condemn his faults; he wishes it were annihilated, and unable to destroy it in its essence, he endeavours to destroy it to his own apprehension, and that of others; that is, he employs his utmost efforts to conceal his defects, both from himself and others, and cannot bear that men should point them out to him, or even see them. Certainly, to be full of defects is an evil; but it is a much greater evil, if we are full of them, to be unwilling

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one add. to life
to know the fact, since this is adding a voluntary illusion to their number. We are not willing that others should impose on us; we deem it unjust that they should wish for more of our esteem than they deserve, but by the same rule it is wrong to deceive them, or to wish that they should esteem us more than we deserve.

the
When others, therefore, discover the imperfections and vices that really belong to us, it is evident they do us no wrong, since they are not the cause of them: in fact, they render us a service, by helping to rid us of at least one evil—ignorance of our imperfections. We ought not to be irritated that men know our faults, it being quite right both that they should know us to be what we are, and that they should despise us, if we are despicable. Such are the sentiments which would rise in a heart imbued with equity and justice. What then shall be said of our hearts, which betray quite a contrary disposition? For is it not undeniable that we hate the truth, and those who speak it? that we love they should be deceived in our favour, and that we wish to

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be esteemed by them as different from what we really are?

There is one proof of this which affects me with horror. The Catholic religion does not enjoin the confession of sins indiscriminately to all the world; it allows them to remain concealed from all persons excepting one, to whom it requires the heart to be exposed without reserve, that he may judge of its true condition. There is but one man in the world whom it commands us to undeceive, and he is bound to an inviolable secrecy: so that the knowledge entrusted to him, is as if nothing were known. Can any thing be imagined more charitable and more lenient?

Nevertheless, such is the corruption of human nature, that this regulation has been complained of as severe, and was one of the chief reasons which prompted a great part of Europe to revolt from the Church.

How perverse and unreasonable is the human heart, to be offended at an obligation; to do that to one man, which, in some sense, is due to all: for is it right that we should deceive them?

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✓ There are different degrees of this aversion to the truth, but we may affirm that, in some measure, it exists in all men, for it is inseparable from self-love. It is this false delicacy that compels those who have occasion to reprove others, to employ such address and nicety in the selection of opportunities. In order to avoid giving offence, they must extenuate our faults, and affect to excuse them, and mingle with their censures, compliments and expressions of affection and esteem. And with all these mixtures, the medicine is still bitter to self-love; it takes as little of the preparation as possible—always with disgust, and often with secret resentment against those who administer it.

p. 30 ✓ Hence it comes to pass, that if any persons are solicitous to gain our kind regard, they avoid a service which they know would be disagreeable to us; they treat us as we wish to be treated:—we hate the truth, they withhold it; we like to be flattered, they flatter us; we like to be deceived, they deceive us.

✓ This is the cause, that every advance of good fortune, which raises us in the world, removes

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us so much farther from the truth, because there is a greater fear of offending those whose favour is very valuable, and whose aversion is very dangerous.

A prince may be the scorn of all Europe, and be the only person who does not know it. I do not wonder at this. To speak the truth might be useful to him who should hear it, but would be disadvantageous to those who should tell it, for they would incur his hatred. And courtiers love their own interests better than that of their prince, and therefore are not disposed to promote his advantage at the cost of injuring themselves.

This misfortune is doubtless most incident, and that in its worst degree, to the higher orders of society; but men of the lowest rank are not exempt from it, because in all stations there is something which makes it desirable to have men's good-will. And thus human life is nothing but a perpetual illusion, an interchange of flattery and deception. None speak of us in our presence as they do in our absence. The union maintained among men is founded on this reciprocal deceit; and most friendships would be at an end if every one knew what

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~~his friend says of him when he is out of hearing, though what is then said be spoken sincerely and dispassionately.~~

X Man, therefore, is nothing but disguise, falsehood, and hypocrisy, both towards himself and others. He does not wish the truth to be spoken to him, he avoids speaking it to others; and all these dispositions, so alien from justice and reason, are the natural growth of his heart.

this is not the complete picture.

THE WEAKNESS OF MAN ; THE UNCERTAINTY OF NATURAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Nothing astonishes me so much, as to see that mankind are not astonished at their own weakness. Every man goes through the business of life, and follows his profession, not under the notion that it is best so to do, in deference to the sentiments and habits of the community, but as if he knew with certainty the precise line of reason and justice.  Men are perpetually deceived, and by a ridiculous humility suppose it is their own fault, and not that of the art which they always pride themselves on possessing. It is well, however, that there are so many persons of this sort in the world, for it shows that no opinions are too extravagant for mankind to adopt; if they are capable of believing, that, so far from being naturally and unavoidably

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liable to err, they naturally possess wisdom fully adequate to the conduct of life.

2. The weakness of human reason is much more apparent in those who are not sensible of it, than in those who know it. When very young, our judgment is feeble, and so it is in extreme old age. If we do not think enough, or if we think too intensely, we become fanciful and unable to discover truth. If we examine our work as soon as it is finished, we are too much prepossessed in its favour; if we defer examining it too long, we cannot enter into its spirit. There is a certain indivisible point which is the proper focus for viewing a picture; every other is too near or too distant, too high or too low. Perspective assigns this point in the art of painting, but in truth and morals who shall assign it?

P. 24. 3. That mistress of Error, called Fancy and Opinion, deceives us more effectually, because she does not always deceive us; for she would be an infallible rule of truth, if she were an infallible rule of falsehood. As she is not

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constantly, though most frequently false, she gives no distinctive mark of her agency, but impresses the same character on truth and falsehood.

This haughty power, the enemy of that reason which (in order to show the universality of her sway,) she is delighted to control and overrule, has infused into man a second nature. She reckons among her votaries, the happy, and the unhappy; the healthy, and the sick; the rich, and the poor; the wise, and the unwise; and nothing affects us with deeper regret, than to observe, that the satisfaction she imparts to them, is much more abundant and unmingled, than that communicated by reason. Men of lively parts who indulge in flights of the imagination, can please themselves to a degree far beyond the reach of those thoughtful persons, who seek for gratification in the sober exercises of reflection. The latter dispute with fear and diffidence, the former with boldness and assurance; they look down upon others with an air of command; and their easy unembarrassed mien often gives them the advantage in the opinion of bystanders: such

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is the estimation in which these sages of the imagination are held by judges equally profound ! Opinion cannot make fools wise, but she makes them content, to the disparagement of reason, who makes her friends miserable. The partisans of the one are covered with glory, those of the other with shame.

Who, in fact, is the dispenser of reputation ? By whom, are respect and veneration awarded, to persons even of the highest rank, and to all the works of men, unless it be by Opinion ? How unsatisfactory are all the riches of the world without her approbation !

Every thing is regulated by Opinion ; she is the criterion of beauty, justice, and happiness, the three things which make up the world. I should very much like to see an Italian book, of which I know only the title ; but that alone is worth volumes : “Della Opinione regina del mondo.” “Of Opinion the queen of the world.” I subscribe to its truth, without having read it, of course excepting the objectionable parts, if there be any such, of which, however, the title gives no indication.

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4. The most important step in life is the choice of a profession, yet chance determines the point. It is custom which makes masons, soldiers and tilers. "Such a one," say some persons, "is an excellent tiler": or if the conversation turns on military affairs, some will say, "What arrant fools are soldiers!" while others exclaim, "Nothing is so glorious as war! the rest of mankind are simpletons." But so it is; we hear, from our childhood, certain professions applauded, and others depreciated, and make our choice accordingly; for men naturally love excellence, and hate its opposite. The words affect us, but we err in their application; and so great is the force of custom, that whole districts are full of masons, and others of soldiers. Certainly, nature is not so uniform. It is therefore the effect of custom, which forces nature along with it; but sometimes, nature prevails, and keeps man faithful to his instinct, in spite of all custom, good or bad. ✓p.28

5. We never confine ourselves to time present. We anticipate the future, as too

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slow, and as if we could hasten it; we recall the past, to stop it, as if it were too quick. We are so foolish, as to wander into time which is not our own, and never think of the only portion that belongs to us; and we are so fanciful, that we dwell on that which is not, and suffer the existing time to escape without reflection; for it is generally the present that gives us pain; we put it out of sight, because it distresses us, but if it be agreeable, we regret to see it escape; we endeavour to hold it fast, by means of the future, and think of adjusting what is not within our power, for a period which we have no assurance will ever arrive.

Let any one examine his thoughts, he will find them always occupied with the past and the future. We scarcely think of the present, or if we allow it to enter our thoughts, it is only to borrow light from it, for the regulation of the future. The present is never our aim. The past, and the present, are looked upon as means: the future is our main object; we are never living, but hoping to live; and whilst we are always preparing to be happy, it is certain, we never shall be so, if we aspire to no other

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happiness than what can be enjoyed in this life.

6. Our imagination so powerfully magnifies time, by continual reflections upon it, and so diminishes eternity to our apprehension for want of reflection, that we make a nothing of eternity, and an eternity of nothing; and so vigorous and deeply rooted is this propensity, that the utmost efforts of our reason cannot extirpate it.

✓ 7. Cromwell was on the point of overturning all Christendom; the royal family would have been ruined, and his own permanently established, if a small piece of gravel had not lodged in his ureter. Rome herself, was ready to tremble before him, but this small grain, of no consequence elsewhere, stopping in this particular part, he dies, his family are reduced, and the king is restored.

8. We see scarcely any thing that goes by the name of justice or injustice, which does not change its quality, by a change of climate.

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Three or four degrees of latitude reverse the whole system of jurisprudence; a meridian decides truth; and a few years determine possession. Fundamental laws change; right has its epochs. What exquisite justice, defined by a river or a mountain! Truth on one side of the Pyrenees is error on the other side!

9. Robbery, incest, the murder of children and parents, have all been ranked among virtuous actions. Can anything be more ridiculous, than that a man has a right to kill me, because he lives on the other side of the water, and because his prince has a quarrel with mine, though I have none with him?

No doubt, there are natural laws; but our beautiful reason, itself corrupted, has corrupted everything else, *Nihil amplius nostri est; quod nostrum dicimus, artis est; ex senatus consultis et plebiscitis crimina exercentur; ut olim vitiis, sic nunc legibus laboramus*—"There is nothing we can now call our own, for what we call so is the effect of art; crimes are made by the decrees of the senate, or by the votes of the people; and as heretofore we were

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burdened by vices, so now are we oppressed by laws.”

In consequence of this confusion, one man says that the essence of justice is the authority of the lawgiver ; another affirms that it consists in the advantage of the sovereign ; a third asserts that present custom is the surest rule ; that following the guidance of reason alone, nothing is just in itself, every thing changes with the times : custom determines equity for the sole reason that it is so received—this is the mysterious basis of its authority. Whoever traces it to its principles, annihilates it ; nothing is so defective as the very laws which correct defects : he who obeys them, because they are just, obeys an imaginary justice, but not the essential principle of law : it is complete in itself, it is law and nothing more ; whoever sets himself to examine its main spring, will find it to be so feeble and slight, that if he has not been accustomed to observe the eccentricities of the human imagination, he will wonder that a single age could obtain for it such homage and veneration.

The art of overturning states, consists in

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shaking established customs, by examining their foundation, and thus pointing out their want of authority and justice. We must revert, men say, to the primitive and fundamental laws of the state, which illegal usages have kept in abeyance: this is a dangerous game, which will end in universal confusion; nothing can be accurately weighed in such a balance:—meanwhile the people readily lend their ears to such assertions, and as soon as they receive them, their yoke falls off: while the higher ranks make use of this language to their ruin, and to that of the curious examiners into received customs. But, by an opposite error, men sometimes believe that they have a right to do every thing which is not without example. For this reason, the wisest of legislators has said, that men must sometimes be imposed upon for their good; and another able politician—“*Cum veritatem qua liberetur ignoret, expedit quod fallatur*”—“When men know not the truth by which they should be freed, it is of use to deceive them.” They must not perceive the reality of the usurpation, it must be regarded as of unquestionable and

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eternal authority, and its beginning must be concealed, if we do not wish very soon to see its end.

10. The greatest philosopher in the world, passing over a precipice, upon a plank a little broader than would be absolutely necessary for walking, though convinced by reason of his safety, would be overpowered by his imagination. Many a one could not even think of being in such a situation, without sweating, and turning pale. I need not mention all the effects. Every one knows the sight of a cat or a rat, or the crushing of a cinder, will put some persons out of their wits.

11. You are ready to say that this magistrate, whose venerable age commands universal respect, must needs govern himself by a pure and exalted reason, and will judge of things by their real nature, without being affected by those trivial circumstances which strike the imagination of feeble minds. Well, observe him as he enters a court of justice, and prepares to hear the causes with all the gravity

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befitting his high office. At this instant, let an advocate make his appearance, on whom nature has unfortunately bestowed a harsh voice, and an odd set of features; or suppose he is badly shaved, or by some accident has been splashed with dirt; I will wager that the magistrate loses his gravity.

12. The mind of the greatest man in the world is not so independent of circumstances as to prevent his being disturbed by the most insignificant noise. The report of a cannon is not requisite to break the chain of his thoughts; the creaking of a weather-cock, or of a pulley, will suffice. Why should you be surprised that he cannot reason well just now? How, let me ask, is he to put his thoughts together, as long as that fly is buzzing about his ears? If you wish him to find out the truth, pray drive away the insect that holds his reason in check, and disturbs that powerful understanding which governs cities and kingdoms.

13. The will is one of the principal instruments of belief; not that it directly produces

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belief; but things appear true or false, according to the view we take of them. Now, the will, pleased with one view rather than another, diverts the understanding from dwelling on the qualities of a disagreeable object; and the consequence is, that the understanding, going along with the will, fixes its attention on the aspect preferred by the latter, and, judging by what it sees, its belief is insensibly determined by the inclination of the will.

14. Diseases are another source of error; they impair the judgment. And while violent disorders produce sensible changes, I cannot hesitate to believe that slighter ailments proportionably affect us. ✓

Self-interest is also a wonderful instrument for putting out our eyes without pain. Justice varies according to our sympathies or antipathies. Only pay a handsome sum to your counsel, when he takes the brief; and how much more forcibly will he be struck with the justice of your cause! And yet I have known some, who, by another perversion of the mind, in order to avoid being affected by motives of ✓

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self-interest, have acted the most unjust part, from a contrary bias. A sure method of losing a cause, with such persons, would be to get it recommended to them by their nearest relations. ✓

15. Justice and truth are two points so extremely delicate, that our blunt instrument cannot touch them ; or, if they do, they cover the point, and rest more upon what is false, than upon what is true. ✓

16. The imagination often magnifies the smallest objects by a fanciful mode of estimation, till they fill our whole souls ; and, by a rash hardihood, contracts the greatest objects to our own dimensions.

17. Not merely old impressions are capable of amusing us : the charms of novelty have the same power. And these are the two sources of all disputes ; for men upbraid one another, either with following the false impressions of infancy, or with inconsiderately running after novelties. ✓

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Who can preserve the first medium? Let him come forward, and prove it. There is no principle, however natural, and though it has existed from infancy, which men will not assert to be a false impression, either of education or the senses. Because, say some, you have believed from your cradle that a vessel is empty when you see nothing in it, you hold the possibility of a vacuum: it is a mere illusion of your senses strengthened by habit, which science must dispel. Others, on the contrary, say you have been taught in the schools that there is no such thing as a vacuum; and thus your common sense has been perverted, or it would have clearly comprehended the truth: you must correct this erroneous impression, by returning to the primary dictates of nature. Which, we are ready to ask, has deceived us—our senses, or education? ✓

18. All the pursuits of men have one object—the acquisition of property: and the title by which they possess it is, in its origin, nothing but the fancy of those who make the laws. They have no power to insure its possession;

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a thousand accidents may snatch it from them. It is the same with science ; disease deprives us of it.

19. What, then, are our natural principles, but principles founded on habit ? In children, they are what have been received from their parents, as dogs are trained to the chase. A different habit, as experience proves, will give other natural principles ; and if there are principles that cannot be effaced by habit, there are also habits not to be effaced by nature. This depends on the disposition.

Parents are afraid lest the natural affection of their children should be lost : what, then, is this nature which is so liable to be effaced ? Habit is a second nature which destroys the first. Why is not habit natural ? I strongly suspect that this nature itself is but a primary habit, as habit is a second nature.

20. If we should dream every night the same thing, it would, perhaps, affect us as much as the objects we see every day : and if a mechanic were invariably to dream for twelve hours,

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every night, that he was a king, I believe he would be almost as happy as a king who should dream twelve hours, every night, that he was a mechanic. Were we to dream every night that we were pursued by enemies, or haunted by frightful spectres ; or that we passed all our time in various occupations—in travelling for instance ; we should suffer almost as much as if the whole were true ; and we should dread going to sleep as much as we should dread to awake, if we apprehended meeting with such misfortunes in actual life. In fact, such dreams would produce almost the same evils as the reality. But because our dreams are all different, and varied, what we see in them affects us much less than what we see when awake, owing to the continuity of the latter, though that is not so constant and equable as never to change : but it does so less abruptly, except in some remarkable cases, as when travelling, and then we say, “Methinks I am dreaming” ; for life is a dream, a little more regular than other dreams.

21. We suppose that all men conceive and

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feel alike respecting objects ; but this is a very gratuitous supposition, for we have no proof of it. I observe, indeed, that men use the same words, on similar occasions ; that, for example, whenever two men see snow, they both express its appearance by the same word, and call it white ; and from the conformity in the application of terms, a strong presumption arises of a conformity in ideas ; this, however, is not absolutely demonstrative, though the probability is much in favour of the affirmative.

22. When we see an effect happen always in the same manner, we infer that it takes place by a natural necessity ; as, for instance, that the sun will rise to-morrow ; but nature often deceives us, and will not submit to its own rules.

23. Many things really certain, are contradicted ; many falsehoods pass without contradiction ; contradiction is not a mark of falsehood, nor the absence of it a mark of truth.

24. Reflective men will perceive, that as

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nature bears the impress of its Maker engraven on all things, they partake of a twofold infinity. And thus we see that our investigations in all the sciences may be carried on to an unlimited extent. Who can doubt that Geometry, for example, contains an infinite number of propositions not yet discovered? And these propositions must be as unlimited in the multitude and refinement of their principles; for evidently those which have been laid down as ultimate do not depend on themselves, but are supported by others, and these again by others in endless succession.

We see, at the first glance, that Arithmetic alone furnishes principles without number: and so does every other science.

But if an infinity in littleness is far less an object of sense, philosophers have made still greater pretensions of having apprehended it: this is the rock on which they have all split. It serves to explain the origin of those titles now so much in vogue, such as "Principles of Things," or "Principles of Philosophy," and others of the same sort; as arrogant in fact, though not in appearance, as that the absurdity

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of which every one instantly feels, "De omni scibili."

Let us not, then, expect to meet with assurance and certainty. Our reason is always deceived by the fluctuating appearances of things; nothing can fix the finite between the two infinities, which enclose, but never touch it. If this fact were clearly understood, I think we should keep ourselves at rest, each in the place where nature places him. Since the middle, which is always distant from the extremes, is our lot, of what avail is it, that man can gain a scantling of additional knowledge? He rises perhaps a little higher; but he will be always infinitely far from the extremes. And is not the duration of the longest life infinitely short of eternity?

Compared with these infinities, all finites are equal, and I do not see why the imagination should fix upon one rather than another. The very comparison of ourselves with what is infinite, gives us pain.

25. The sciences have two extremes which touch one another; the first is that simple

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native ignorance in which all men are found at their birth ; the other is that to which great minds attain, who having traversed every part of human knowledge, discover that they know nothing, and find themselves placed in that very ignorance from which they set out. But this is a wise ignorance which knows itself. Persons between these two classes who have escaped from their native ignorance, but have not yet reached the other, possess some tincture of satisfactory knowledge, and form the class of men of talent. They disturb the world, and judge worse of everything than others. The common people, and men of talent, compose, in general, the busy actors of the scene ; the rest despise the world, and are despised by it.

26. We fancy ourselves naturally better able to reach the centre of things, than to embrace their circumference. The visible extent of the universe is evidently beyond our grasp, but as we far exceed little things, we fancy that they are more easily acquired. And yet it does not require less capacity to descend to nothing,

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than to comprehend all things ; there must be an infinity in both : and it seems to me, that he who could comprehend the minutest principles of things, might also attain the knowledge of infinity. One depends on the other, and the one leads to the other. The extremes touch and reunite in consequence of stretching out so far, and meet in God, and in God alone.

If man would begin with the study of himself, he would see how impossible it is to find any objects totally unconnected with himself. How can a part, and such he is, comprehend the whole ? Perhaps he aspires to know only those parts of nature to which he bears some proportion. But the parts of the universe are so related and linked together, that, I am persuaded, it is impossible to know one, without knowing another, and in short, without knowing all. Man, for example, is related to everything he knows. He requires space to contain him, time to exist in, motion in order to live, the elements to compose his frame, heat and food to nourish him, and air for respiration. He sees the light, he feels bodies ;

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in fact, everything is, in some way or other, connected with him.

Therefore, to know man, we must know why air is necessary to his existence, and to know what air is, we must know why it bears a relation to the life of man.

Flame cannot exist without air; therefore, to know the one we must know the other. Thus, all things being naturally effects and causes, ends and instruments, directly or indirectly, and held together by a natural though imperceptible tie, which unites objects the most dissimilar and most distant, I consider it to be as impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole, as to know the whole without knowing the parts in detail.

And what perhaps renders us totally incapable of knowing all things is, that while other objects are essentially simple, we are composed of two heterogeneous natures, soul and body; for it is impossible that the part of us which reasons should be anything but spiritual: and to presume that we are simply corporeal would only exclude us more completely from the knowledge of things, since nothing is so incon-

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ceivable as the assertion, that matter can know itself.

It is this combination of body and spirit which has occasioned a confusion of ideas among almost all philosophers: they have attributed to body what belongs only to spirit, and to spirit what is true only of body; for they boldly assert that bodies tend downward—that they seek a centre—that they avoid destruction—that they abhor a vacuum—that they have their inclinations, their sympathies, their antipathies, which are all things that are peculiar to spirit. And, in speaking of Spirit, they consider it as occupying space, and have attributed to it motion from one place to another, which are things that belong only to body.

Instead of imbibing the ideas of things as they are, we tinge with the qualities of our compound being all the simple objects we contemplate.

Who would not believe, from observing that we compound every thing of body and spirit, that such a union was perfectly comprehensible? And yet there is nothing we

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comprehend so little. Man is to himself the most marvellous object in nature, for he cannot conceive what body is, still less what spirit is, and least of all how body can be united with spirit.


This is the very summit of his difficulties, and yet this is his own being—*Modus quo corporibus adhaeret spiritus comprehendi ab hominibus non potest, et hoc tamen homo est.*

27. Man, therefore, is a subject full of errors which are incorrigible without grace. Nothing shows him the truth; every thing deludes him. Reason and the senses, the two principles of truth, besides that they are not always sincere in their search, reciprocally delude each other. The senses delude the reason by false appearances; and the trickery they practise is passed on themselves in return. Reason takes its revenge. The passions of the soul disturb the senses and make them receive false impressions. By turns they deceive and are deceived.

V. 122
1320-1325

ON THE UNHAPPINESS OF MAN

NOTHING is better adapted to give us an insight into the misery of mankind, than to consider the true cause of the incessant agitation in which they pass their lives.



The soul is sent into the body to make there a short sojourn. It knows that this is but the introduction to an endless journey, and that the only period allowed for preparation, is the brief duration of the present life, of which the greater part is yielded to the demands of our natural wants, leaving a very small portion at its own disposal. And then this little remnant so grievously encumbers and perplexes it, that its chief study is to devise expedients for getting rid of that also.

To live with itself, and to think of itself, is insupportably painful. Therefore all its care is to forget itself, and to cause this time, so short

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and so precious, to glide away without exciting reflection, by attending to things which keep its own condition out of sight.

This is the origin of all the busy pursuits of mankind, and of every thing called diversion or pastime, in which men's real aim is, so to beguile time away, as not to be reminded of it, or rather of themselves ; and by this oblivion of life, to escape the bitterness of soul, the internal disgust, which it would inevitably cost them, to employ that time in self-consideration. The soul finds nothing within to give it content ; it sees nothing there which it can think of without pain. Thus it is forced to go out of itself, seeking by an attention to external objects, to lose the recollection of its real state. Its satisfaction depends on this forgetfulness, and to render it miserable, there needs no more than to compel it to see itself, and to be alone with itself.

Men are trained from infancy to be anxious about their honour and their property, and even about the property and honour of their relations and friends. We impose upon them the study of languages, of the sciences, of manual

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exercises, and of the arts. We intrust them with various concerns, and assure them that they can never expect to be happy, if they do not manage by care and industry, to establish their fortune and honour, and even the fortune and honour of their friends; and that if they fail in any one of these objects, they must be miserable. Thus, we force them into tasks and engagements, which harass them from morning till night. A strange expedient all this, say you, for making people happy! What could be better devised to make them unhappy? Do you ask what? Why, just this; relieve them of all these cares: for then they would see themselves, they would think of themselves, and this would be an intolerable grievance. It is seen, accordingly, that if they have any relaxation from their toils, the same spirit prompts them to consume the time in some diversion that will engross their attention and save them from themselves.

For this reason, when I have set myself to consider the various things that agitate mankind, the dangers and vexations to which they expose themselves at courts or in camps, in

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prosecution of their ambitious projects, which are the origin of so many quarrels, such violent passions, and perilous and fatal enterprises, I have often said, that all the miseries of men arise from not knowing how to be at ease in their closets. A man who has enough to live upon, could he endure his own thoughts, would never spend his life in travel or military adventures ; and certainly if a livelihood were his object, such hazardous undertakings would be far from being requisite.

On examining the subject closely, I can trace this aversion in men, to repose and self-converse, to a very adequate cause: it is no other than the natural unhappiness of our frail and mortal condition, which is so wretched, that nothing can console us, when we are not prevented from thinking upon it, and from seeing ourselves.

Let it be remembered, however, that I have been describing the state of those persons only, who look into their own hearts, without having felt the power of religion. For amongst other astonishing facts of the Christian religion, this is one, that it reconciles man to himself in

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reconciling him to God ; it renders the sight of himself supportable ; and, under its influence, many find more pleasure in solitude and repose, than in all the various scenes and employments of active life. And it is not by confining man within himself, that all these wonderful effects are produced ; they are brought about, by leading him to God, and supporting him under the sense of his miseries, by the hope of another life in which he will be entirely delivered from them. As for those who are actuated by no higher motives than may be found in themselves, and in human nature, it is impossible that they should be placed in a state of external repose, favourable to self-consideration and self-inspection, without being instantly attacked by chagrin and melancholy. The man who loves only himself, dislikes nothing so much as solitude. He pursues no object but for his own gratification, and shuns nothing on earth so carefully as himself ; for on looking within, he sees that he is not what he would fain be ; he discovers a crowd of incurable miseries, and a vacancy of real and substantial good which he cannot fill up.

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Imagine any situation whatever, containing all the good things and means of pleasure, which may be supposed capable of satisfying the heart of man ; but let an individual be placed there, without occupation or amusement, and left to reflect upon himself ; his spirits will droop under this languid felicity, he will inevitably fall into dismal forebodings, and if his attention is not turned to something out of himself, he will necessarily be unhappy.

But has not the possessor of royalty, grandeur, sufficient to make him happy, without carrying his views beyond himself ? Must he, too, be diverted by other objects, like an ordinary mortal ? One is aware that in common cases, the way to render a man happy, is to engage him with an object that will make him forget his private troubles ; the ambition, for instance, of being a first-rate dancer. But will it be just the same with a king ? will he be rendered more happy by these frivolous amusements, than by the contemplation of his own grandeur ? Can any object more gratifying be presented to his mind ? And will it not mar his pleasure if his thoughts are turned to regulating his

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steps by the cadences of a tune, or to watch the movements of a billiard ball, instead of enjoying at his ease the enchanting spectacle of the glory that surrounds him? Only let the experiment be tried—let a king be left alone, without any object of sensual gratification, or of mental solicitude, without company, at full liberty for solitary reflection, and we shall perceive that a king who sees himself is a man full of miseries, affected by them as sensibly as any other human being.

All this, therefore, is carefully provided against; there are never wanting a number of people, about the persons of princes, who take care that diversion shall succeed to business, and who are on the watch, to furnish pleasures and amusements for every leisure moment, that a void may never be felt: in other words, princes are surrounded by persons who take infinite pains that a king shall never be alone, and in a state for self-reflection, aware that notwithstanding his kingship, if he thinks of that, and of nothing else, he must be miserable.

Thus the chief thing that sustains men in

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elevated stations, which, on other accounts, are so painful, is, that they are continually diverted from thinking upon them. Only consider; to be a chief justice, or prime minister, what is it, but to be harassed on all sides with applications that leave no interval for self-reflection? And when a discarded favourite retires to his country seat, though still in possession of an ample fortune, and with domestics ready to obey every call, he is never happy, because no longer prevented from thinking on himself.

✓ We may account, in the same way, for the pleasure so many persons take in gaming, hunting, and other diversions, to the exclusion of a thought about any thing else. They do not engage in these pursuits, for the sake of being just so much the happier by what they may gain, or because they imagine their real well being depends on the money they win, or the game taken in the chase, which they would think scarce worth accepting as a present. No; the tranquil and undisturbed use of things, which would leave time to reflect on their unhappy state, is not what they seek,

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but the constant agitation that would render reflection impossible. Hence it is that men are so fond of the noise and tumult of the world, that imprisonment is so dreadful a punishment, and that so very few are able to endure solitude.

This is the utmost that men have been able to discover, to make themselves happy. As for those who amuse themselves with exposing the vanity and meanness of the common diversions of mankind, they have indeed detected one source of human misery; and a great one it is—the disposition to take pleasure in objects so mean and despicable; but they cannot know the root of the evil from which these miseries necessarily spring, as long as they are not cured of that internal and native perversion, which consists in being unable to endure the sight of themselves. To purchase a hare at market will not secure them from this spectacle, but the chase of the poor animal answers the purpose admirably. So that when plainly told, that what they pursue so ardently cannot satisfy them; that, in short, nothing is more mean and silly, they would allow what we say

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to be true, if they saw things in the proper light ; but, at the same time, would allege that they merely seek for some violent and tumultuary occupation to avert the sight of themselves, and that it is with this design they keep in view an object sufficiently attractive to occupy their entire regard. But their self-ignorance will not permit them to make even this apology. —A man of rank sincerely believes that there is something great and noble in the chase ; he will tell you that it is a royal sport ; we find that men of all classes are under a similar illusion. They imagine that there is something really and substantially good in the objects they pursue. They feel persuaded, that could they obtain such or such an office, they should then enjoy repose, not being aware, all the while, that their desires are insatiable. They believe that they are sincerely seeking for repose, when, in fact, they are seeking only for agitation.

Mankind have a secret instinct, prompting them to find amusement or occupation in external objects, which springs from a sense of their continual misery. And they have another secret instinct, a vestige of their

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original greatness, which assures them that happiness consists really in repose. From the operation of these two contrary instincts, a confused scheme is formed, and lies hid at the bottom of their hearts, which leads them to seek repose by means of action, and to imagine that the satisfaction they want will be obtained, if by surmounting certain obstacles immediately in view, they can open a passage to their supposed resting place.

And thus life passes away. Men combat with a thousand difficulties for the sake of repose, and as soon as they have overcome them all, repose becomes intolerable. For their thoughts are turned either on existing evils, or on such as are impending. And when secure on all sides from danger, their inherent disquietude, destitute of objects it might justly fix upon, still continues to shoot from the heart, its native soil, and overspreads the soul with its venom.

When Cineas told Pyrrhus, who proposed enjoying himself with his friends as soon as he had conquered great part of the world, that he would consult his own happiness much

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more by taking up with the repose already at his command, without undergoing the hazards and toils of war in order to obtain it, he advised him to a line of conduct not less difficult, and scarcely more reasonable, than the ambitious project of the young warrior. Both proceeded on the false assumption that contentment could arise from a man's self, and from present good, without its being requisite to fill the void of the heart with imaginary hopes. Pyrrhus could not be happy, either before, or after the conquest of the world, and probably the easy life recommended by his prime minister would have given him less satisfaction than even the many wars and expeditions he was planning.

Thus we must be brought to acknowledge that the human mind is so unhappily disposed as to become weary of itself without any foreign cause, by the very peculiarity of its natural condition; and withal it is so vain and volatile, that when full of a thousand real causes of uneasiness, the merest trifle will divert it. To consider the matter seriously, there is much more reason to lament that mankind can be amused with things so contemptible and

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frivolous, than that they suffer so much from real miseries, and their diversions are infinitely less rational than their sorrows.

2. What can be the reason that this man, who not long ago lost his only son, and this morning was engaged almost to distraction in a law-suit, now does not give his troubles a thought? You need not be astonished; he is taken up with watching a stag, which his hounds have been in full chase after, for six hours. However great his distress may have been, in this he finds ample consolation. In short, prevail upon a man to join in any amusement whatever, and as long as that lasts he will be happy; but it will be a false and imaginary happiness, arising not from the possession of real and solid good, but from a levity of spirit, that obliterates the recollection of his real miseries, and fixes his thoughts upon mean and ridiculous objects, unworthy of his attention, and still less deserving of his love. The delight he feels is that of a dis-tempered man in a frenzy; the result, not of the healthy vigour of his mind, but of its

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unnatural excitement; it is the laugh of folly and delusion. And it is indeed very striking to observe what it is that pleases men in their sports and diversions. It is true, that by occupying the mind, they deaden the sense of its miseries: so far all is real. But they occupy it only by creating a phantom of the imagination, as an object of devoted attachment.

What object, think you, have those persons in view, who are playing at tennis with such intense ardour and activity? Why, that they may boast to-morrow among their friends of having played better than any one else; this is the mainspring of their eagerness. And so others toil in their closets, to gain the applause of men of science, for resolving an algebraical problem hitherto undetermined. And many, not a jot wiser in my opinion, run the hazard of their lives, that they may boast of having stormed a town. And lastly, others shorten their lives, in noting all these follies, not for the purpose of becoming better men, but to show that they know the vanity of them: and these are the greatest

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fools of all, for they are so knowingly : whilst we may suppose, respecting the others, that they would not act as they do, were they better informed.

3. A man will pass his time, without feeling it tedious, by playing each day for a small stake, whom you would make unhappy by giving him every morning, on condition of his not gaming, the money he would otherwise win during the day. Perhaps it will be said that his object is amusement and not gain. But let him play for nothing, and he would feel, not merely no interest, but actual disgust. Amusement, therefore, is not his only object ; a calm and dispassionate amusement would be irksome. He must be animated and put upon his mettle, by imagining that he should be happy in winning what he would refuse to receive, on condition of not playing ; and an object of passion must be created, that will excite his desire, his anger, his fears, and his hopes.

We see, then, that the diversions in which mankind place their happiness are not only

lives are unhappy deep
inside his self

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contemptible; they are false and deceitful: in other words, they present phantoms and illusions which could never occupy the mind of man, if it had not lost the perception of real good, and a taste for it; and if it were not filled with meanness, vanity, levity and pride, and an infinite number of other vices. Diversions assuage the sense of our miseries, only by causing more real and substantial misery, for more than any thing else, they prevent self-reflection, and cause our time to elapse unnoticed. Were it not for them, we should be weary of ourselves, and this weariness would lead us to seek for some more effectual method of relief. But diversion deceives and amuses us, and brings us to the grave by imperceptible advances.

4. Mankind, unable to escape death, trouble and ignorance, in order to make themselves happy, have hit upon the plan of never thinking about these things; the utmost efforts of their ingenuity can suggest no better consolation for such prodigious evils. But it is most miserable consolation, since it goes not to

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cure the evil, but merely to conceal it a little while; and by concealing it, prevents men from attempting to obtain a thorough cure.

Thus, by a strange inversion in human nature, that disquietude which is its greatest sensible evil, proves to be its greatest good, since nothing can influence it more powerfully to seek a radical cure; and that diversion which it looks upon as its greatest good is, in fact, its greatest evil, because nothing tends more to draw it off from seeking a remedy for its miseries: while both are striking proofs of the unhappiness and corruption of man, and of his grandeur too; for he would not be disgusted with every thing, nor engage in such a multiplicity of pursuits, if he had not an indistinct conception of the happiness he has lost; but unable to find it in himself, he seeks for it ineffectually in external things, without ever being satisfied, because it cannot be obtained from ourselves nor from any created beings, but is in God alone.

5. Since nature makes us unhappy in every condition, our desires imagine a happy state,

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combining with the state we are in, the pleasures of a state in which we are not: but when we are in possession of these pleasures, we are not happy, because we have new desires conformed to our notions of another state.

6. Imagine a number of prisoners all under sentence of death; if some of them were executed every day in sight of the others, the remainder would behold their own fate in that of their companions, and look at one another with anguish and despair, expecting their own turn to come. This represents the condition of mankind.

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ON THE NECESSITY OF STUDYING RELIGION

THE least that may justly be required of those who are inclined to hostility against Religion is, that they should first take care to understand what its pretensions really are. Were it so extravagant as to boast that it gives an entirely clear and unclouded manifestation of the Deity, a conclusive argument might be brought against it, from the incontrovertible fact that there is actually no such manifestation in the world. But when, on the contrary, it declares that men are in darkness and estrangement from God ; that He is concealed from their knowledge, and that even one of the titles given Him in Scripture is, a "God that hideth Himself," and when, in fine, it affirms and insists equally upon these two things, namely, that God has fixed competent

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marks in His Church, that He may be discovered by those who sincerely seek Him, and that, nevertheless, these marks are so far concealed, that they can be perceived only by those who seek Him with all their hearts : when the case is so, I would ask those persons who do not so much as pretend to exert any serious diligence, in order to ascertain the truth respecting religion, how they can think they are bringing an argument against religion, in protesting they do not find it true, when the very fact of their perceiving no evidence serves to establish one of the two points above mentioned, and does not affect the other ; and thus, instead of subverting, confirms the doctrine of the church.

To give any validity to their opposition, they must be able to declare, that they have spared no efforts to discover the truth ; that they have listened to everything the Church itself offers for their information, and still without obtaining satisfaction. When they can assert all this, they may, with good reason, dispute one of its pretensions. I hope, however, to show, that no person of sound understanding

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can make such an assertion, and even venture to say, that no one has ever made it. We know very well how people of this turn proceed. They will have it, that they have made extraordinary efforts to inform themselves, when they have spent a few hours over the Bible, and propounded some questions to an ecclesiastic on the articles of faith. They then assure us, with infinite satisfaction, as if they had actually demonstrated the falsehood of religion; that they have sought, both among books and men, for the evidences of its truth, but cannot find them. Really, I must tell them what I have often said, that this light-hearted presumption is insufferable. The question they so easily dispose of, is not a trifle relating to some person with whom they have no concern: it is a question that affects themselves, and their all. The immortality of the soul concerns us so profoundly, that it would argue the want of all right feeling to be indifferent about its truth. The whole course of our thoughts and actions must be so different, according as there is or is not an eternal good to be hoped for, that it is impossible to act on rational prin-

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ciples, without being regulated, every moment, by our belief on this point, and making it our chief concern.

✓ Our main interest and prime duty must be, to be rightly informed respecting a fact on which our whole scheme of life depends. And for this reason, I look upon the difference as immense between those persons who are labouring with all their might to know the truth, and those who, equally destitute of information, will not trouble themselves with a thought about it.

I feel nothing but compassion for those who sincerely lament their state of doubt, look upon it as the worst of evils, and, sparing no pains, make it their principal and most serious business to be freed from it.

But as for those who pass through life without thinking of its final termination, and who merely, because they do not find sufficient evidence in their own breasts to convince them, neglect all inquiry, and refuse to examine whether this doctrine is one of those notions which the credulity of the multitude keeps afloat, or one of those truths which,

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though obscure in their own nature, rest, nevertheless, on the firmest basis : such persons I regard in a totally different light. Their carelessness on a subject which concerns themselves, their eternity, and their all, excites anger, rather than compassion : it astonishes and confounds me ; it is absolutely monstrous. And let them not set this down for the extravagance of an enthusiastic devotee : it is a conclusion, I assert, that might be formed on the principles of self-love and of common prudence ; it is agreeable to the simplest dictates of reason, and lies within the reach of the most moderate capacity.

It requires no extraordinary enlargement of mind ~~to be sensible that there can be no true and solid satisfaction in the present state ; that all our pleasures are but vanity ; that our grievances are innumerable ; and that, finally, death, which threatens us every instant, will consign us, within a few years, or it may be within a few days, to an eternal state of happiness or of misery, or to annihilation. Between us and heaven, hell, or annihilation, there is nothing but life, the frailest of all~~

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things; and as heaven will certainly not be the portion of those who doubt whether their souls are immortal, such persons have nothing to expect but hell or annihilation.

✓ Nothing is more positively a fact, than that this is our situation; and nothing is more terrible. Let us carry ourselves as high as we please, behold here the end of whatever may be deemed the most fortunate worldly life.

It is in vain that men turn their thoughts away from the eternity that awaits them, as if they could annihilate it by not thinking of it. It is a reality, whether they will have it so or not: it is continually approaching, and death, by which they must enter it, will shortly place them under the dire necessity of being either eternally annihilated, or eternally unhappy!

How tremendous are the consequences depending on this state of uncertainty! Surely, to be in such a state is, of itself, a mighty evil; and no duty can be more imperative than to endeavour earnestly to have the question decided. ✓ So that he who doubts, but seeks not to have his doubts resolved, is at once the

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most criminal and most unhappy of mortals. If, together with this, he is tranquil and satisfied, if he is vain of his tranquillity, and makes his state a topic of mirth and self-gratulation, I have not words to describe so insane a creature.

Whence can such sentiments be derived? What matter of joy can there be in looking forward to nothing but remediless woe? What aliment for vanity to find one's self involved in impenetrable darkness; or what consolation in expecting, never, in the whole range of our existence, to meet with a consoler?

Such repose, in such ignorance, is monstrous. To make those who are passing their lives in it, sensible of its extravagance and stupidity, we will exhibit what passes in their own minds, and confound them, if possible, by a view of their folly. We may suppose that men's thoughts take some such course as the following, when they consent to live in ignorance of their situation, and reject the means of obtaining light upon it:—

“I know not who has placed me in this world, nor what the world is, nor myself. I

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am fearfully ignorant of all things. I know not what my body is, nor my senses, nor even my soul: for this part of me, which thinks what I am now saying, which reflects on everything and on itself, knows not itself any better than other things. I behold the universe extending to an awful immensity, and myself fixed in a corner of it, without knowing why I was placed in this spot rather than in any other, or why the little time allotted me to live is fixed in this point of duration, rather than in any other in the eternity past or the eternity to come. I see infinities on all sides, which engulf me as an atom, as a shadow which lasts an instant, and is seen no more. All I know is, that I must soon die; but the very thing that I understand the least, is this inevitable death.

As I know not whence I came, so I know not whither I am going. I only know, that whenever I leave this world, I shall fall either into annihilation, or into the hands of an offended Deity; and that I am ignorant which of these two is my eternal destination.

Such is my state; full of misery, helplessness and darkness. And from the whole, my

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conclusion is, that I may as well go on without a thought of what will be my lot, and just follow my inclinations without reflection or anxiety, though in a course which I am aware will insure my falling into eternal misery, should there really be such a state. Possibly I might find something to clear up my doubts, if I sought for it; but I am not disposed to take the trouble of making one effort of inquiry; and treating with contempt those who give themselves any trouble about the matter, I am resolved to advance without forethought or inquietude, to the great experiment of futurity, and wish to amuse myself along the road to death, uncertain of what will be my condition to all eternity." Truly it is to the honour of religion, to have for its adversaries men so bereft of reason; their opposition, far from being formidable, bears testimony to its most distinguishing truths. For the great object of the Christian religion is to establish the corruption of our nature, and the redemption by Jesus Christ. Now, such men, if they do not evince the truth of redemption by the sanctity of their

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lives, give flagrant evidence of the corruption of human nature, by sentiments so perfectly the reverse of a right condition of the soul.

Nothing is so important to man as his own state—nothing so awful as eternity. Therefore, for men to be indifferent to the loss of their being, or to the hazard of eternal misery, indicates a most perverted disposition. They display no such apathy in any other concern. They keep their apprehensions awake against even the most trifling harms, and are distressed when they happen; and yet the man who, for days and nights together, will be enraged and distracted for the loss of a place, or for some imaginary insult, is the very same man who knows he is going to lose everything at death; and, notwithstanding, feels no emotion of alarm or anxiety. This strange insensibility to concerns the most awful, in a heart—so sensitive to the merest trifles, is a monstrous phenomenon, an incomprehensible fascination, a preternatural lethargy.

A man in prison, who knows not whether the warrant be signed for his execution, and has only an hour for informing himself, but

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that hour probably sufficient to procure a pardon, would act most unnaturally if he employed this short period, not in taking measures to escape his doom, but in jollity and mirth. The persons I have been describing are in a similar situation, with this difference, that the evils which menace them are far other and weightier than the mere loss of life, or a punishment that will soon be over. Yet, having hoodwinked themselves to hide the precipice from their view, they madly run towards it, and laugh at those who warn them of their danger.

Thus, not only the devout earnestness of those who are seeking God, but also the blindness of those who are not seeking Him, and live in awful unconcern, furnishes proof of the truth of religion. Surely some strange catastrophe must have befallen our nature, to make it possible for men to live in such a state; and still more to render them capable of being vain of it. For supposing them quite certain that the worst they had to fear after death was annihilation, would not even that be a cause for desperation rather than for self-

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complacency? Is it not enormous folly, then, that having no assurance even of that, they can glory in an uncertainty, that implies the possibility of something far more dreadful than annihilation.—

Yet it is a fact that the soul of man is so perverted, as to be capable of taking some pleasure in this uncertainty. This irrational composure in the view of the alternative of hell or annihilation appears so fine a thing, that not only do those who have actually surrendered themselves to this miserable scepticism make a boast of it, but even those who have not, will affect to be unbelievers for the sake of reputation. For experience shows that the greater proportion of professed unbelievers are of this latter class, mere counterfeits of the character. They have been made to believe that this riddance of prejudice and superstition is indispensable to the accomplished man of the world. This is what they call shaking off the yoke; and most of them assume the airs of an infidel, merely to be in the fashion.

If, however, they have the least remains of common sense, it will not be difficult to con-

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vince them that they have taken the wrong method to increase their reputation. It is not thus they will gain esteem among even worldly men of sound judgment: these will tell them that the only way to secure a good name is to be upright, faithful, discreet, and ready to serve one's friends; because men naturally love what contributes to their own advantage. But what hope of advantage do we conceive from hearing it said that a man has thrown off the yoke, that he believes there is no God to inspect his actions, that he looks on himself as sole master of his own conduct, and accountable to no other authority? Does he imagine that, by all this, he has made sure of our confiding in him henceforward, so that we shall have recourse to him, in every exigency, for advice, succour and consolation? Does he imagine we shall be delighted by his telling us, that he doubts whether our souls are anything but a little air or vapour; perhaps putting on, at the same time, an air of pleasantry and superior sagacity? If this were true, would it be a thing to speak of with gaiety, and not rather with profound

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regret, as the most melancholy consideration in the world?

If these persons would give the subject a serious thought, they would perceive that their conduct is so ill-judged, so contrary to good sense, so inconsistent with sound principle, and so little in any way expressive of that nobleness of spirit of which they desire the credit, that nothing is more likely to expose them to general aversion and contempt, and to stamp their character with imbecility and absurdity. And, in fact, could we bring them to give an account of their sentiments, and of the reasons of their scepticism, their allegations would be so frivolous and contemptible, as to confirm, rather than weaken our faith. It was after some such exposition of their tenets, that a person once said, shrewdly enough, among a set of freethinkers, "Talk a little longer at this rate, and really you will make me a sound believer." And with very good reason; for who would not revolt from opinions by which he finds he must be linked to such degraded companions?

As for those who are mere hypocrites in un-

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belief, they suffer the wretchedness of a forced repression of their genuine feelings, which only makes them the most absurd of mortals. If they are really distressed at being so much in the dark respecting futurity, let them not disown it. The avowal of the fact would be no disgrace. Nothing is so just a cause for shame, as to be without it where it ought to be felt. Nothing more plainly shows an extreme want of sense, than not to apprehend what a melancholy thing it is for a man to be without God in the world: nothing more unquestionably proves a contemptible shallowness and levity of spirit, than not to wish, at least, that promises of eternal happiness may be true. No courage can be so spurious and besotted, as that which maintains itself against the Almighty. Let persons who are not at heart disciples of infidelity leave these impieties to those who can indulge them without affectation. Let them, at least, be honest men, if they cannot yet be Christians; and let them acknowledge that the matter plainly comes to this, that there are only two classes of men who deserve to be called rational;

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namely, those who are serving God with their whole heart, because they know Him; and those who are seeking Him with their whole heart, because they know Him not.

For persons who are seeking after God, who are sensible of their misery, and long to escape from it, it is right that we should labour to assist them in obtaining that illumination which, as yet, they have not.

But as for those who live without knowing God or seeking Him, so little do they judge themselves worthy of their own care, that they hardly deserve any from others; and it needs all the charity of the religion they despise, not to despise them, and leave them to their infatuation. But since this religion obliges us to consider them, while in this life, as capable of receiving that grace which would enlighten them even so effectually as, in a short time, to render them stronger in faith than ourselves; and that, on the other hand, it is possible for us to fall into a blindness like theirs; it is our duty to act towards them as it would be desirable that they should act towards us, supposing the case reversed: we must conjure them to

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have pity on themselves, and, at least, to make some efforts whether they may not obtain illumination. Let them be persuaded to give to the perusal of this work some of those hours which would be otherwise uselessly spent. It is possible they may meet with something for their advantage; and, at all events, they can be no great losers. As for those who bring with them minds perfectly sincere, and desirous of knowing the truth, I trust they will obtain satisfaction, and be convinced of the truth of our divine religion, by the arguments here brought together to prove it.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A SCEPTIC AND
A BELIEVER

S. On the principles of reason, it appears that if there be a God, he must be totally incomprehensible ; for, having neither parts nor limits, he can bear no relation to finite beings. We are therefore incapable of knowing what he is, or even whether he exists. And this being the case, who can undertake to determine the question? Certainly not ourselves, whose nature, it is evident, has no relation to that of Deity.

B. I shall not, on this occasion, attempt to prove the existence of the Deity, the Trinity, the immortality of the soul, and other truths of the same class, by arguments purely rational : not only because it seems impossible (for myself at least) to deduce proofs from nature

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sufficient to convince hardened Atheists ; but also, because this knowledge, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, is barren and useless. Let a man be persuaded that the proportions of numbers are spiritual, eternal truths, dependent on a primary truth in which they subsist, and which we term God ; yet, after all, he has not made much progress towards his salvation.

S. It is a strange thing, that no canonical author has ever made use of philosophical arguments to prove the existence of the Deity : they all aim at producing the belief of it, yet none of them has anywhere said, There is no vacuum ; therefore, there is a God. They must have been superior to the ablest writers, since their times, who have all made use of such arguments.

B. If it is a mark of weakness to attempt the demonstration of the existence of the Deity, from the nature of things, do not reproach the Scripture, in which, as you allow, nothing of the kind is to be found : if it is a mark of wisdom to be aware of the difficulties attending such a mode of proof, reverence the inspired writers for possessing that mark.

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S. Unity joined to infinity does not augment it, any more than a foot added to an infinite length. The finite is lost in the infinite, and becomes a simple nonentity. Thus the human intellect shrinks into nothing before the divine mind—thus our rectitude vanishes, when compared with the rectitude of God. The disproportion is not so great between unity and infinity, as between our rectitude and that of God.

B. We may know that an infinity exists, and, at the same time, its nature may be incomprehensible. Thus, for example, we know it to be false that numbers are finite, and therefore infer that they are infinite. But that infinity itself we do not comprehend. It cannot be even, it cannot be odd; for if we add unity, its nature will not be changed; yet it is a number, and every number is either even or odd, every finite number at least. We may, then, know assuredly, that there is a God, though we know not what he is: and you ought not to conclude that there is no God, because we cannot perfectly comprehend his nature. To convince you of the divine existence, I will not appeal

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to that faith which renders it impossible for us to doubt it, nor to all those proofs we possess, which your mind, in its present state, is ill-fitted to receive. I would argue on principles admitted by yourself; and shall undertake to show you, by the mode of your reasoning every day on things of far inferior moment, in what manner you ought to reason on this infinitely important question, and which side you ought to take in deciding on the truth or falsehood of the existence of the Deity. You assert, then, that we are incapable of knowing that God exists. Now, it is certain that either there is a God, or there is not; there is no other alternative. But which side shall we take? Reason, again you assert, can do nothing towards deciding the point. A chaos of infinity separates man from God. At this infinite distance the game is played, whether it will turn up cross or pile; which do you wager? By reason, you cannot be certain of either; by reason, you cannot deny either. Do not blame those who have made a choice, for that they have acted unwisely, and made a bad choice, is more than you can tell.

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7 S. I blame them not for choosing either one side or the other, but for making any choice whatever: he who takes cross, and he who takes pile, are both wrong: not to wager at all would be most proper.

8 B. Yes, but you must wager: it is not left to your option to be neutral: not to wager that there is a God, is to wager that there is no God. Which then do you choose? Consider which will be most for your own interest: there are two things you may fail to gain, truth and the supreme good; you have two things to pledge, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness: and your nature has two things to avoid, error and misery. Do not hesitate then to decide in the affirmative. Your reason will not be shocked by choosing one in preference to the other, since a choice must be made: that is a settled point. But your happiness: are you alarmed for that? Weigh the gain and the loss: by taking the affirmative, if you gain, you gain all; if you do not gain, you lose nothing. Oh! then, believe if you can, that there is a God.

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7 S. This is very forcible : I must believe ; and yet I hesitate ; shall I not hazard too much ?

10 B. Consider ; if there were two lives to be gained for one, on an equal chance of gain or loss, you would certainly not hesitate to wager. And if ten lives might be gained, would you not be foolish not to hazard your single life to gain ten, supposing the chances were equal ? But here there are an infinity (so to speak) of infinitely happy lives to be gained, with an equal chance, as you allow, of gaining and losing : the stake, too, is an inconsiderable thing, which cannot be long at your disposal : to be chary therefore about parting with it now would be absurd.

1 Nor is it any real objection to say, that the gain is uncertain, but the hazard certain ; and that the infinite distance which exists between the certainty of what is hazarded, and the uncertainty of what may be gained, equalises the finite good of which the risk is certain, and the infinite good of which the winning is uncertain. This is not a fair statement of the case : every gamester risks a certainty to gain an uncertainty, and yet he risks a finite good,

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to gain another finite good, without acting irrationally. It is not true that there is an infinite distance between the certainty of what he risks, and the uncertainty of what he hopes to gain. There is, indeed, an infinite distance between the certainty of winning, and the certainty of losing. But the uncertainty of gaining is in proportion to the certainty of what is risked, according to the proportion of the chances of gain and loss: and hence, if the chances on both sides are equal, the risks are equal; the certainty of what we risk, in such a case, is equal to the uncertainty of the prize, instead of being infinitely distant from it. And our assertion acquires infinite force, when as in the present case, what is only finite, is hazarded on even chances of gain and loss, for what is infinite. This is demonstration: and if men's minds can admit any truth on rational grounds they must admit this.

// S. I feel the force of your reasoning. But are there no means of being better acquainted with the final issue of the game?

// B. Yes, there are the Scriptures, and all the multifarious proofs of our religion.

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13 S. Those who hope for salvation, you say, are happy; but have they not as a counterpoise, the fear of hell?

14 B. But who has most reason to fear hell? he who doubts of its existence, and is certain of damnation, if it does exist? or he who firmly believing its existence, enjoys also the hope of being saved from it? Supposing a man under sentence of death had only eight days to live according to law, he would surely be totally devoid of understanding not to consider death as something more than a possibility. But if our passions did not delude us, eight days and a hundred years would be the same thing in an estimate of our whole existence.

And what evil will follow your deciding to believe? You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, beneficent, upright and sincere. It is true you must relinquish some hurtful pleasures; you must renounce the splendours and amusements of the world: but do you think that you will gain no others? I assure you that you will be a gainer, even as to this life, and that every step you take in this path will show you, with greater clearness, the

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certainty of the gain and the nothingness of the risk, till at last you will know, without the shadow of a doubt, that you have made the venture for a certain and an infinite good, and surrendered a mere nothing to obtain it.

15 S. Well; but my hands are tied, and my mouth stopped: you would compel me to venture, and I am not at liberty to do it; you give me no rest, and yet, such is the state of my mind, that I cannot believe: what then must I do?

16 B. Be convinced, at least, of your inability to believe, since reason dictates that you should believe, and yet you cannot. Endeavour to attain conviction, not by accumulating evidence of the existence of the Deity, but by diminishing the violence of your passions. You wish to enter into the faith, but you know not the road; you wish to be cured of your unbelief, and you enquire for the remedy: learn, then, of those who were once such as you are, but who are now free from doubt. They know the road you wish to take; they are cured of the disease of which you wish to be cured. Copy the manner in which they set out; imitate

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their external actions, if you cannot as yet enter into their internal dispositions; quit those vain amusements which have so enchanted you. I would soon quit these pleasures, say you, if I had faith. And I, on the other hand, tell you that you would soon have faith, if you quitted these pleasures. But it is for you to begin. If I could, I would give you faith; but I cannot, and, consequently, cannot apply a test to the truth of what you say: but you can very well quit these pleasures, and prove that what I say is true.

✓17S. These sentiments overpower and delight me.

18B. If these sentiments have given you pleasure, and impressed your mind, be assured that they come from a man who, both before and after he uttered them, bowed himself in prayer to that infinite Being to whom he surrenders his whole soul, and implored that he would cause you to make a similar surrender for your own good, and for his glory; that thus his Almightiness might adapt itself to your weakness.

MARKS OF THE TRUE RELIGION

1. The true religion must enforce the duty of love to God. Nothing can be more just than this, and yet no religion but ours has enjoined it. The true religion must recognise the propensity of man to evil, and his inability to attain virtue by his unassisted efforts. It must also furnish the remedies for these maladies, of which prayer will be the principal. All this our religion has done: no other ever instructed men to seek from God the power to love and to imitate Him.

✓ 2. A knowledge of human nature is essential to the true religion; for the nature of man, his highest good, true virtue, and true religion, are so connected, that neither of them can be fully known apart from the rest: it must also be acquainted with the grandeur and the degrada-

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tion of man, and the causes of both. What religion, besides the Christian, can pretend to such comprehensive views ?

3. The systems of paganism were well adapted to the common people, for they consisted wholly of external rites ; but that very circumstance rendered them unfit for the reflective and philosophic.

A religion purely intellectual might suit cultivated minds, but would be entirely useless to the generality. The Christian religion alone is suited to all, being composed of what is external, and of what is internal. It elevates the people to what is internal, while it brings down the loftiest minds to what is external : and to this two-fold applicability it is indebted for its perfection ; for it is befitting that the uneducated should rise from the letter to the spirit, and that the intellectual, by practising external rites, should submit their spirit to the letter.

4. We are hateful : reason may convince us of this. But no religion, besides the Christian,

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has enjoined man to hate himself. No other, therefore, should be received by those who know they deserve to be hated. No religion but the Christian has fully recognised the fact, that, of all beings on the globe, man is the most excellent, and, at the same time, the most miserable. Those systems which have best apprehended the reality of his excellence, have looked upon the natural emotions of shame and guilt as mean and unbecoming; while others, whose abettors have clearly perceived the reality of our degradation, have treated with scorn those lofty sentiments which are equally natural to man. No religion, except ours, has declared that man is born in sin; no sect of philosophers has said so: not one, therefore, has spoken the truth.

5. God is concealed from man: therefore every religion which does not assert this fact is false: and every religion which admits it, but does not explain its cause, is essentially defective. Our religion is free from both these objections. This religion, which consists in believing that man is fallen from a state of

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excellence and communion with his Maker,
to a state of sorrow, remorse, and distance
from God; but that he will at last be restored
by the Messiah, has always existed in the world.
All other things have passed away, but this,
to subserve which they existed, remains. For
God having designed to form for Himself a
holy people, whom He would separate from
all nations, deliver from their enemies, and
bring into a place of safety, declared that He
would do this, and come into the world for
the purpose; and predicted by His prophets
the time and manner of His coming. Mean-
while, to encourage the hopes of His chosen,
through successive ages, He exhibited this event
in types and figures, and never left them with-
out assurance of His power and determination
to save them. Soon after the creation, Adam
was made the witness and depository of the
promise of a Saviour to be born of woman.
And though mankind, in the first ages of the
world, could not have forgotten the creation
and the fall, and the promise of a Redeemer,
yet as, at that early period, men had given way
to all kinds of wickedness, holy men were

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raised up from time to time, such as Enoch, Lamech, and others, who waited patiently for the Messiah promised in the beginning. Noah witnessed the depravity of man at its height, and was saved amidst the universal deluge by a miracle, which distinctly showed the power and intention of God to save the world, and to ensure the birth of the promised seed. That miraculous intervention sufficed to confirm the hopes of the faithful; and while the remembrance of it was fresh in their minds, God renewed His promises to Abraham, living in the midst of idolaters, and revealed to him the mystery of the future Messiah.

In the times of Isaac and Jacob, idolatry was again spread over the earth: but those holy men lived in faith: and Jacob, while blessing his children on his death-bed, exclaimed with devout transport, referring to the Messiah, "I have waited for thy salvation, O God!" Gen. xlix. 18.

The Egyptians, who were infected with idolatry and magic, seduced God's chosen people by their example. But Moses and a few others believed on Him whom they

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saw not, and adored Him, in expectation of those eternal blessings that were in reserve for them.

The Greeks and Romans maintained the worship of false divinities : the poets constructed various mythologies : the philosophers were divided into a thousand different sects : but all the while, there were in Judea chosen individuals, who predicted the coming of that Messiah who was unknown to the rest of mankind.

At last, in the fulness of time, He came : and since His appearance, amidst so many sects and schisms, the overthrow of so many states, and so many total revolutions, that Church, which adores Him whom it has always adored, has subsisted without interruption. And what is surpassingly wonderful and divine, this Church, which has always continued to exist, has always been opposed. A thousand times it has been at the brink of destruction, and as often God has rescued it by extraordinary interpositions of His power ; and, what is equally astonishing, it has maintained itself without bending and submitting to the will of tyrants.

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6. States would be destroyed if they did not often accommodate their laws to circumstances : the Christian Church has never been forced to this expedient, or voluntarily adopted it. But these accommodations to the times must be made, or their use superseded by miracles. It is not strange that human constitutions should be preserved by compliances, though, in that case, they can hardly be said to maintain themselves; yet, after all, they perish sooner or later—not one has lasted five hundred years. That this religion should always have maintained its ground with perfect inflexibility is a striking proof of its divine origin.

7. If the truth had no visible marks, the obscurity would be too great: one admirable mark is, that it has always been preserved in a church, and a visible assembly. If, on the other hand, there were perfect unity of sentiment in the Church, the evidence would be too great; but to ascertain the truth, we have only to find out what it is that has always existed in the Church; for we may be assured that falsehood is changeable and transitory,

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but truth fixed and perpetual. Thus, for example, the Messiah has always been an object of faith. The promise respecting Him, handed down by Adam, was fresh in the times of Noah and Moses. Subsequent prophets, who foretold His coming, prophesied also of other events, the accomplishment of which, from time to time, proved at once the divinity of their mission, and the truth of the promises respecting the Messiah. They all declared, that the dispensation under which they lived, was merely preparatory to that of the Messiah; that it would be preserved till He should come, and then He would establish an everlasting kingdom: so that either their economy, or that of the Messiah, of which it was the earnest, would always subsist. And such has really been the fact. Jesus Christ made His appearance under the circumstances predicted. He Himself wrought miracles, and furnished His apostles with those extraordinary powers which they employed in the conversion of the heathen world; the prophecies were accomplished, and His Messiahship was indubitably demonstrated.

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8. I see many religions in the world, of opposite principles, and consequently all false excepting one. Each challenges belief on its own authority, and denounces punishment on unbelievers. Yet, I cannot, for all this, believe them; for each may use the same language, each may lay claim to inspiration. But, on examining the Christian religion, I find prophecies actually accomplished, miracles without number so well attested, that no one can reasonably doubt their reality: and this is what I find in no other religion.

9. The only religion which is contrary to our nature in its present state, which opposes all our pleasures, and which appears, at first sight, contrary to common sense, is the only one which has always existed.

10. If religion be true, its establishment and glory must be the ultimate object of the whole course of human affairs: the internal sentiments of the human mind must be conformable to its statements respecting our nature; it must be the goal and centre to which all things tend:

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so that a knowledge of its principles will suffice to explain the nature of individual man, and the whole system of the world in general. It is on these grounds that infidels have taken occasion to reproach the Christian religion (but evidently for want of knowing it better); they have imagined that it consists simply in the adoration of God, as an infinite, almighty and eternal Being; though this is pure deism, and differs from Christianity almost as much as atheism, which is diametrically opposed to it. Hence they infer that our religion is not true; for if it were so, they argue, God would manifest Himself to men by proofs so palpable as to render unbelief impossible. But let them draw what conclusions they please against deism, their reasoning is totally inapplicable to the Christian system, which declares, that since the introduction of sin, God has not manifested Himself to mankind with the highest possible evidence, and the essence of which consists in the mystery of a Redeemer, who, uniting in Himself the divine and human natures, rescues man from the bondage of corruption, and, in His divine person, reconciles them to God.

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- Christianity instructs mankind in these two truths : that there is a God whom it is possible for them to resemble and enjoy, and that the corruption of their nature renders them unworthy of Him. It is equally important for man to know each of these truths ; since it is equally dangerous for man to know God, without knowing his fallen state, or to know his fallen state, without knowing that Redeemer who can deliver him from it. The knowledge of these truths apart produces either the pride of philosophers who know God, but not their fallen state ; or the despair of atheists who know their fallen state without knowing a Redeemer. But though the necessities of man require that he should know both these points, it depends entirely on the mercy of God that He should inform us respecting them. This is what Christianity actually performs : this, as we just now said, constitutes its essence. Let any man examine the real state of things in the world, and see if everything does not tend to confirm the truth of these prime articles of our religion.

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11. If a man is not sensible that he is full of pride, ambition, irregular desires, weakness, misery, and unrighteousness, he is totally blind. But if he knows that such is his real state, and yet has no desire to be delivered from it, in what terms can we speak of so unreasonable a being? What emotion but that of reverence can we feel for a religion that is so well acquainted with the disorders of our nature? And how can we help devoutly wishing the truth of a religion that proffers remedies so complete?

12. It is impossible to review the whole assemblage of the proofs of the Christian religion without feeling their force to a degree that no reasonable man can resist.

Consider its establishment. Here is a religion contrary to our nature, which establishes itself in men's minds with so much mildness as to use no external force, and yet, with so much energy, that no tortures could silence its martyrs and confessors; and all this was accomplished, not only without the assistance of a single price, but in defiance

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of earthly potentates who all sought to crush it.

Consider the holiness, the elevation, and the humility of a real Christian. The pagan philosophers sometimes raised themselves above the rest of mankind by a more regular manner of living, and by sentiments in some measure conformable to Christianity. But they never esteemed as a virtue what Christians term humility, indeed it would have been incompatible with other dispositions which they considered as virtuous. The Christian religion is the only one which has known how to combine sentiments that were apparently incongruous, and has taught mankind that so far from humility being inconsistent with the practice of other virtues, all other virtues, if this be wanting, are only blemishes and vices.

Consider the numberless extraordinary facts recorded in holy writ, the superhuman grandeur and sublimity of its contents, the admirable simplicity of the style — without affectation, without any laboured embellishments, and bearing the most unequivocal impress of truth.—

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Consider particularly the character of Jesus Christ. Whatever may be our sentiments in other respects, it is impossible not to acknowledge the astonishing greatness and elevation of His soul : of this, His very childhood gave indications, when He conversed with the doctors in the temple : yet, instead of cultivating His talents by study and the society of men of learning, He passed thirty years of his life in retirement from the world, engaged in a mechanical employment ; and, during the three years of His ministry, chose for His associates, and delegated as His apostles, men without science, learning or reputation, and exposed Himself to the enmity of men who were deemed the wisest and most learned of their time. Strange conduct this in a man who projected the establishment of a new religion.

Consider attentively the apostles of Jesus Christ ; uneducated, unlettered men, yet who, all at once, found themselves possessed of wisdom sufficient to confound the ablest philosophers and endued with courage to resist all the kings and tyrants who opposed the establishment of the religion they promulged.

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Consider the astonishing succession of prophets during a period of two thousand years, who all predicted in various ways the minutest circumstances of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the mission of the apostles, the spread of the Gospel, the conversion of the Gentiles, and many other particulars relating to the establishment of Christianity, and the abolition of the Jewish economy.

Consider the wonderful accomplishment of the prophecies in Jesus Christ, to whom they apply with such exactness, that nothing but wilful blindness can prevent the perception that He is the person they were designed to predict.

Consider the state of the Jewish people, before and after the coming of Jesus Christ; their flourishing state before the coming of the Saviour, and their miserable condition since their rejection of Him: for, to this day, they are without any symbol of their religion, without a temple, without sacrifices, scattered over all lands, a reproach and a byword among all nations.

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Consider the perpetuity of the Christian religion, which has subsisted since the beginning of the world, either among the saints of the Old Testament, who lived in expectation of the coming of Christ, or among those who have received Him and believed on Him in after times: no other religion has possessed that perpetuity, which is so distinguishing a mark of truth.

Lastly, consider the holiness of this religion, the light its doctrines shed upon the contrarieties of our nature, and those illustrious and supernatural marks of its divinity, which strike us wherever we turn our eyes.

After considering all these things, let any man judge if it be possible to doubt whether the Christian religion is the only true one, or if there be any other which can at all enter into competition with its claims.

THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION PROVED BY THE CON- TRARIETIES IN MAN, AND BY ORIGINAL SIN

THE traces of original greatness, and the symptoms of present debasement in our nature, are so apparent, that it is impossible for them to be passed over in the true system of religion, since such a system must be perfectly acquainted with the nature of the beings for whom it is intended: it must know all that is great, and all that is debased in that nature, and the cause of both: we therefore expect it to assert, that there is in man a powerful principle of greatness, and an equally powerful principle of debasement. It must also account for these astonishing contrarieties in our nature. And if there is a Being who is the originator and the final end of all things,

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the true religion must enforce the obligation of loving and adoring Him alone.

Yet, as we find ourselves incapable of adoring a being we do not know, and of loving any but ourselves, it must, while it enforces our obligations, also declare our incapacity to fulfil them, and acquaint us with its proper remedies.

In order to make us happy, the true religion must show us that there is a God whom it is our duty to love : that our true felicity consists in union with Him, and all our misery in being separated from Him ; it must apprise us, that we are enveloped in a darkness which prevents us from knowing and loving Him, and that since our inclination leads us away from God, while our duty is plainly to love Him supremely, we are full of unrighteousness. It must explain the reason of our aversion to God, and to our own real good ; and must bring within our reach the remedies for this malady. Let us examine, with this view, all the religions in the world, and see if any, excepting Christianity, will satisfy our demands.

Will the lessons of the philosophers satisfy

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us, who offer, as the chief good, a good within ourselves? Can this be the true good? Is it here they have found a remedy for our disorders? Will it quell man's presumption to put him on an equality with Deity? or will it cure his irregular propensities to place his chief good in sensual pleasure, and thus to reduce him to a level with the brutes? "Raise thy eyes to the Deity," said some, "behold in Him the Being thou art to resemble, and Who formed thee to adore Him! It depends on thyself to attain His image: Philosophy will lead thee to that elevation, if thou wilt follow her guidance." Others said, "Turn thy eyes downwards, base worm, to the brutes, and see for what creatures thou art the fit companion!"

What then will become of man? Is he to be on a level with the Deity, or with brutes? Between these extremes how frightful a distance! Where and what are we? Is there no religion that shall cure at once our pride and our sensuality? Is there none that shall teach us our true good and our obligations, and furnish us with a remedy for the frailty that

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violates them? Let us listen to the wisdom of God addressing us in the Christian revelation: "In vain, O men! you seek in yourselves for the remedy of your miseries. All that the light of reason can disclose will only convince you, that, in yourselves, you can find neither truth nor happiness: philosophers have promised you satisfaction, but they have never given it. They know not what constitutes your real good, nor what is your real state. How, indeed, could they apply the remedy, when they were ignorant of the disease? ✓ Your chief maladies are pride, which draws you off from God, and the love of sensible objects, which chains you to the earth; and philosophers, in attempting to check the one have only aggravated the other. Have they taught you to aspire after the Deity, and to consider your nature as allied to His? In so doing they have only excited your pride. Those who have seen the vanity of such attempts have led you into an error equally fatal, by telling you that your nature resembled that of brutes, and prompting you to seek for happiness in the indulgence of those sensual

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propensities which are common to both. Be assured, it is not by such means that you will correct the perversities of your nature. Look not to men either for truth or consolation.— I am that Being who formed you, and I alone can teach you what you are. You are not now in the state in which I formed you. I created man holy, innocent, and perfect: I filled his soul with light and intelligence: I manifested My glory to him: I displayed the wonders of My power. The eye of man then gazed upon the majesty of God. No darkness blinded him; neither pain nor mortality oppressed him. But this glorious state was too much for him; it excited his presumption. He wished to make himself his own centre, to be independent of My aid. He withdrew from My control, and as he strove to resemble Me by seeking for happiness in himself, I allowed him to make the trial. I caused the inferior creatures once under his subjection, to revolt, and made them his enemies. And now man is become like the beasts; and so far has he wandered, that scarcely a ray of light reaches him to remind him of the Author of his being:

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all his conceptions of Me have been lost or confounded. The senses, rendered independent of reason, and often its masters, impel him to unlawful gratifications. All creatures are his open foes, or his seducers, and he is their slave, subdued by force, or allured by pleasure, that most terrible and imperious of all dominations."

Such is the actual state of man. A powerful instinctive feeling of the happiness of his primitive nature remains, but he is plunged into a miserable state of blindness and sensuality, which is become a second nature.

2. From the principles I have laid down, you may discover the cause of the contrarieties which have excited the astonishment of mankind, and divided them into so many sects. Observe all those inward promptings after glory, those indistinct conceptions of greatness, which the deepest sense of misery cannot quench or obliterate, and ask yourself whether they are not the indications of a nobler nature?

3. Acknowledge then, proud being, what a

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paradox thou art to thyself. Let thy powerless reason be humbled, let thy feeble nature be silent. Learn that man infinitely surpasses the comprehension of man, and be taught by thy Maker, what thou knowest not—thy true condition.

If man had never become corrupt, he would have enjoyed truth and happiness with certainty; and if man had always been corrupt, he would have had no idea of truth or of happiness. But unhappy mortals as we are (and the more so because there are some remains of greatness in our condition) we have the idea of an happiness which we can never reach; there glimmers before us the image of truth, but we grasp falsehood only; we are incapable alike of absolute ignorance and of complete certainty: these are sufficient indications that we were once in a state of perfection, from which we are unhappily fallen.

What can this incessant craving, and this impotence of attainment mean, unless that there was once a happiness belonging to man, of which only the faint traces remain, in that void which he attempts to fill with every thing

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within his reach? But it is in vain he seeks from absent objects the relief which things present cannot give, and which neither of them can give; because, in a soul that will live for ever, there is an infinite void that nothing can fill, but an infinite unchangeable being.

4. It is very astonishing that the mystery most remote from our knowledge, that, I mean, of the transmission of original sin, should be a thing without which we can possess no real knowledge of ourselves. Certainly nothing confounds our reason more than to say, that the sin of the first man has rendered those persons guilty who are so far removed as to seem incapable of sharing it. This transmission seems to us not only impossible, but most unjust; for can anything be more contrary to the rules of our pitiful justice, than to pass eternal condemnation on an infant incapable of volition, for a sin committed six thousand years before it was born? Certainly nothing shocks us more than this doctrine, and yet without this

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most incomprehensible of all mysteries we are an unintelligible enigma to ourselves. This is the master-key to the intricacies and perplexities of human existence. So that, however inconceivable this mystery may be, man, without it, is still more inconceivable.

Original sin is foolishness in the sight of men: this we allow, but let not the defect of reasonableness, in this doctrine, be objected to it, since it is not pretended that reason can explain it. But this foolishness is wiser than all the wisdom of men. "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men." 1 Cor. i. 25. Without this, what can be said of man? His whole condition depends on this point, which our feeble vision can scarcely descry. But how could it be perceived by reason, since it is a thing above reason? And reason, far from discovering, revolts from it, when it is declared.

5. When these two states of innocence and corruption have been explained, we instantly perceive their reality. Indeed, to obtain the most convincing proofs of their existence, we

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need only watch the movements of our own minds; for we shall detect so many contradictions, as to make us feel it to be impossible that they could ever be found in an uncompounded subject.

This twofold tendency in man is so glaring, that some have thought that we have two souls; for one only has seemed utterly incapable of such great and sudden changes, of falling from unbounded presumption, into the most groveling debasement.

Thus all those contrarieties which appear to place men at the greatest distance from all religion, may be the means of leading them to the knowledge of the truth.

For myself, I am free to declare, that as soon as I discovered in the Christian religion the doctrine that man is fallen and separated from God, I saw on every side indications of its truth; for nature everywhere, both in man and out of man, gives signs of a Deity departed.

Without divine revelation, what could men do but either flatter themselves, by indulging the instinctive feeling that remained of their former greatness, or lie prostrate under a sense

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of their present weakness? For want of seeing the whole truth, they could never attain to perfect virtue.

Some, looking upon our nature as slightly injured, and others deeming it irretrievably ruined, the former have become the victims of pride, and the latter of sloth, the two sources of all vice. Men were forced either to submit to their degradation, or to escape from it by pride. Those who perceived the excellence of human nature, knew not its corruption; so that, though they rose above despondency, they were ruined by presumption. Others who acknowledged the weakness of nature, were ignorant of its dignity, and therefore suppressed the feeling of ambition only by plunging into despair.

Hence arose the various sects of the Stoics and Epicureans, the Dogmatists and the Academy. The Christian religion alone has cured man of these two vices: not by employing one to expel the other, according to the maxims of earthly wisdom, but expelling both by the simplicity of the Gospel; for it warns the pious, when it raises them to be

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partakers of a divine nature, that in that state of elevation, they still carry in their bosoms a principle of corruption, which renders them, during life, liable to error, misery, sin, and death ; and it proclaims to the most impious, that it is possible for them to partake of the grace of the Redeemer. Thus cherishing fear in those whom it justifies, and offering consolation to those whom it condemns, it so mingles hope and fear by means of that capability, common to all men, of grace and condemnation, that it humbles infinitely more than reason, but without producing despair ; and elevates infinitely more than the pride of nature, but without inspiring presumption ; and having evinced itself alone to be free from error and vice, establishes its sole right to instruct and regenerate mankind.

6. We cannot form a conception either of the glorious state of Adam before his fall, or of the nature of his sin, or of the transmission of it to his posterity. These events took place in a state altogether different from our own, and surpass our present capacity ; nor would

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a perfect acquaintance with them be of any service in freeing us from our miseries. All it concerns us to know, is this, that through Adam we are miserable, corrupt, and separated from God, but that we are redeemed by Jesus Christ; and of these facts the world furnishes the most striking proofs.

7. How strange! that Christianity should enjoin man to acknowledge himself worthless, and even abominable, and at the same time, to aim at resembling his Maker. Without the counterpoise which each of these injunctions forms to the other, his elevation would render him superlatively proud, or his abasement would render him dreadfully abject. Misery tends to despair: greatness inspires presumption.

8. The incarnation shows man the greatness of his misery by the greatness of the remedy.

9. In the Christian religion, we find attributed to man, neither a debasement which renders him incapable of excellence, nor

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a holiness exempt from imperfection. No doctrine can be more suitable for man than that which informs him of his twofold capability of receiving and losing grace, on account of the two extremes into which he is always in danger of falling—despair and pride.

10. Philosophers never inculcated sentiments adapted to both these states. They attempted to inspire sentiments purely of an elevated order, but these were not suited to our condition. Or they endeavoured to instil base and grovelling notions, and these were as little adapted to human nature as the former. There must be indeed emotions tending to humble, but consisting in sorrow for the actual state of our nature, not in unworthy notions of its capability. There must also be elevated emotions, but of an elevation attained by grace, and not by merit, and not indulged till emotions of the other kind have been felt.

11. No one is so happy as the true Christian : no one so rational, so virtuous, so lovely. With how little pride may a Christian believe

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himself united to God! with how little abasement may he put himself on a level with the very worms!

Who can refuse to believe and reverence these celestial communications? Is it not clear as noonday that we perceive in ourselves indestructible marks of excellence? And is it not equally true, that the experience of every hour tells us, how deplorable is our present condition? And does not this chaos and unnatural confusion proclaim to us, with a voice too powerful to be resisted, the reality of the twofold state of man?

12. That which prevents men from believing that they are capable of being united to God, is nothing but a sense of their degradation. But if they are really sincere, let them meditate on it as much as I have done, and they will perceive, that this degradation is so entire, that we cannot of ourselves determine whether the divine mercy will restore us or not. For I would ask, whence does a creature who acknowledges himself to be so vile, acquire the right to measure the mercy of

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God, and to limit it according to his fancy? Man, so far from knowing what God is, does not even understand his own nature, and yet, perplexed with his own condition, he ventures to affirm that God cannot restore him to communion with Himself! But let me ask, whether God demands any thing excepting to love and know Him? and since man is naturally capable of love and knowledge, why should he not believe that God can make Himself known and beloved? For man has no doubt of his own existence, and that he loves some objects. If, then, even in the darkness that surrounds him, he can discern various objects, and find some to excite his love, why, if God imparts some rays of His glory, should he not be capable of knowing and loving Him, according as He shall be pleased to reveal Himself? The reasonings, therefore, that go to deny the possibility of this, must be excessively presumptuous, although founded on an apparent humility: but our humility is neither sincere nor rational if it does not induce us to confess, that unable of ourselves to know our nature, or our destiny, God alone can inform us.

THE SUBMISSION AND THE USE OF REASON

1. The highest attainment of reason is to know that there are an infinite number of things beyond its reach. And it must be extremely feeble if it does not go so far. A man ought to know when to doubt, when to be certain, and when to submit. He who cannot do this does not understand the real strength of reason. Men violate these three principles either by being certain of every thing as demonstrative, for want of being acquainted with the nature of demonstration, or by doubting of every thing for want of knowing when to submit; or by submitting in every thing, for want of knowing when they ought to judge.

2. If we submit everything to reason, our religion will have nothing mysterious or super-

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natural. If we violate the principles of reason, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous.

Reason, Saint Augustine remarks, would never submit to revelation, if it were not convinced that submission, on some occasions is its duty. It is proper, therefore, that it should submit, when according to its own decision it ought to submit; and that it should not submit when it decides on proper grounds that it ought not to submit; but it must take great care not to deceive itself.

3. Piety is quite distinct from superstition: as soon as piety passes into superstition it is destroyed. Heretics reproach us with this superstitious submission. And we deserve the reproach if we require submission in things which are not fit subjects for submission.

Nothing is so consonant with reason, as a disavowal of its authority in things which belong to faith. And, on the other hand, nothing is so opposed to reason, as to reject an appeal to it, on things which are not the object of faith. A total rejection of reason, or

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an exclusive deference to it, are two extremes equally dangerous.

✓ 4. Faith says many things on which the senses are silent ; but nothing which they deny. It is superior to them, but never contrary.

5. If I saw a miracle, say some persons, I should be converted. They would not talk in this manner did they know what it is to be converted. They imagine that for this purpose it is only necessary to acknowledge that there is a God, and to offer addresses to Him, not very different from what the pagans make to their idols. But true conversion consists in annihilating one's self before that Eternal Sovereign whom we have so often provoked, and Who might justly destroy us at any time ; in acknowledging that we can do nothing without Him, and deserve nothing from Him, but His displeasure ; and finally, in being convinced, that there is an inveterate opposition between God and ourselves, and that without a Mediator communion with Him is impossible.

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6. Do not be surprised at seeing plain unlettered men believe without reasoning. God inspires them with a love of holiness, and a hatred of themselves. He inclines their hearts to believe. And unless God incline the heart, no man will ever believe with real and efficient faith; but, when inclined by Him, no man will disbelieve. David well knew this when he said, "Incline my heart, O Lord, to thy testimonies." Psalm cxix. 36.

7. The faith of those who believe without having examined the evidences of religion, is owing to a holy disposition of their hearts, to which what they hear of our religion is conformable. They perceive that they are the creatures of God; they wish to love none but Him, and to hate none but themselves. But they feel that they want power; that they cannot draw near to God, and that unless He draws nigh to them, they can hold no communion with Him. They hear it asserted in our religion, that we should love God alone, and hate none but ourselves, and that because we are wholly depraved and separated from

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God, God has become man to unite Himself to us. There needs nothing more to induce men to believe, with such a disposition of heart, and with such a knowledge of their duty and their inability.

8. Those who are Christians, without the knowledge of the prophecies and other evidences of religion, can judge of its truth as correctly as those who possess that knowledge, but by a different medium. They judge by the heart, as others judge by the understanding. It is God Himself who inclines them to believe, and therefore they are most efficaciously persuaded.

I readily allow that one of these Christians who believe without logical proof, might be unable to convince a clever infidel. But those who are acquainted with the evidences of religion will prove, without difficulty, that the faith of such a man is really inspired by God, though he himself could not prove it to be so.

THE DESIGN OF GOD IN CONCEALING HIMSELF FROM SOME, AND DIS- COVERING HIMSELF TO OTHERS

1 It is the design of God to redeem mankind, and to bestow salvation on those who sincerely seek it. But such is the demerit of our race, that He may most justly refuse to some, on account of their hardness of heart, what He grants to others by that mercy which they cannot claim. Had He been disposed to overcome the obstinacy of the most hardened, He might have effected it by such a manifestation of Himself, as would have rendered it impossible to doubt of His existence. It is thus He will appear at the consummation of all things, when, amidst thunders and lightnings, and the general convulsion of nature, He will force the blindest to behold Him.

But it is not in this manner that He has

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been pleased to appear in His advent of Mercy. Numbers of mankind had rendered themselves so unworthy of His clemency, that He resolved to leave them in destitution of a boon they made light of. Justice did not require that He should appear with such palpable marks of Divinity as would convince all men; and, on the other hand, it would have been unjust to come so disguised as not to be recognised by those who sincerely sought Him. To these, accordingly, He renders Himself easily discernible, and, in short, as it is His intention to be visible to those who seek Him with all their hearts, and concealed from those who are equally disposed to shun Him, He so regulates His communications with mankind, that the signs of them are plain to those who seek Him, and obscure to those who do not seek Him.

2. There is light enough for those who are disposed to see, and darkness enough for those who are disinclined. There is illumination sufficient to inform the elect, and obscurity sufficient to humble them. There is obscurity sufficient to prevent the reprobate

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from seeing, and illumination sufficient to condemn them, and to render them inexcusable.

If the world existed simply for the purpose of impressing mankind with the existence of the Deity, His divinity would beam forth, from all parts of it, with unshaded splendour; but, as it subsists by Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ, to instruct men in the two great facts of the fall and the redemption, these are the truths of which the proofs are everywhere apparent. Whatever we behold, marks neither the total absence nor the unveiled manifestation of Deity, but the presence of a God who hideth Himself: all things bear this impress.

Were there no appearances of Deity, such a universal blank would be equivocal, and might be supposed to indicate as much the total absence of Deity, as the unworthiness of men to receive His manifestations. But the occasional glimpses and obscure intimations of His presence take away the ambiguity. A single manifestation proves His existence, and that He always exists; and we infer from it, that there is a God, and that men are unworthy of communion with Him.

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3. The design of God is rather to rectify the will, than to satisfy the understanding. If there were no obscurity in religion, the understanding might be benefited, but the will would be injured. In the absence of obscurity, man would not be sensible of his fallen state; and were he left in total darkness, he would despair of a remedy: so that it is not only just, but advantageous for us, that the Deity should be partially manifested; since it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own corruption, and to know his corruption without knowing God.

4. We may learn from every quarter something respecting our condition; but let us guard against mistakes: for it is not true that God is wholly manifest, nor is He totally concealed. But it is invariably true, that He conceals Himself from those who tempt Him, and manifests Himself to those who seek Him; for mankind are, at the same time, unworthy of God, and capable of being restored to His favour: unworthy by their depravity, but capable by the constitution of their nature.

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5. Every thing in the world shows either the unhappy condition of man, or the mercy of God ; either the weakness of man without God, or the power of man assisted by God. The whole universe bears witness to the corruption or the redemption of man. Every thing betokens his grandeur or his degradation. The withdrawment of God is seen among the Pagans ; the protection of God is seen among the Jews.

6. Every thing tends to the good of the elect, even the obscurities of Scripture ; for they reverence them on account of the divine illumination of other parts of the sacred volume : and every thing is perverted to a bad purpose by the impious—even the most luminous parts of Scripture ; for they blaspheme them on account of the remaining obscurities, which are above their comprehension.

7. If Jesus Christ had come only for the purpose of Redemption, the whole of Scripture, and all things else, would have co-operated to that end ; and nothing would have been easier

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than to convince infidels: as, however, He came for a stone of stumbling and rock of offence, we cannot overcome their obduracy. But this is no argument against the truth of our sentiments; since we maintain, that it is agreeable to the whole course of the divine dispensations that no conviction shall be produced in the minds of the self-willed, and those who are not sincere seekers of truth.

Jesus Christ came that those who saw not might see, and that those that saw might become blind: He came to cure the sick, and to leave the whole to perish; to call sinners to repentance, and justify them; and to leave in their sins those who thought themselves righteous; to satisfy the needy, and send the rich empty away.

What do the prophets predict respecting Jesus Christ? That He would appear evidently as God? No. But that He would be indeed a God that hideth Himself; that He would not be known nor received by the Jewish nation at large as the Messiah; that He would be a stone of stumbling, on which many would fall. That the Messiah might be recognised by the pious,

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but be indiscernible to the ungodly, the Almighty so ordered it, that the prophecies should be of a mixed character, neither perfectly plain, nor totally obscure. Had the manner of the Messiah's appearance been clearly predicted, there would have been no obscurity even to the wicked. If the time had been obscurely predicted, there would have been obscurity even to the pious ; for the rectitude of their hearts could never have informed them that, for instance, a Mem □, signifies six hundred years. The time, therefore, has been predicted clearly, but the manner in figures.

By this means, the wicked taking the blessings promised to mean temporal good, have egregiously erred, although the time has been clearly predicted ; and the pious have not erred, because the right apprehension of the nature of the promises depends on the state of the heart : for men call that good which they love. But the determination of the precise time does not depend on the heart : thus the prediction of the time being clear, but the nature of the blessings being obscure, the wicked only could be misled.

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8. How are these two characteristics of the Messiah to be reconciled ; that in His person the sceptre should remain for ever in Judah, and yet that, at His advent, the sceptre should be taken away from Judah ? Nothing could be better adapted than this to verify the saying of the prophet, that seeing, they should not see, and understanding, they should not understand.

Instead of complaining that God is so concealed, it is the duty of men to bless Him, that He has so far revealed Himself, and also, that He has not discovered Himself to the worldly wise, or to the proud, who are unworthy to know so holy a God.

9. The genealogy of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament is so mixed with a number of unimportant matters as scarcely to be distinguishable. If Moses had registered only the ancestors of Jesus Christ, the line of descent would have been too palpable ; yet, as it now stands, it may be discovered, on close inspection, and traced through Tamar, Ruth, etc.

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Let no one, then, reproach our religion with its defect of clearness, since we profess this to be its character. But let the truth of religion be acknowledged even in its obscurity, in the little knowledge we have of it, and in the indifference we feel about knowing it.

If there had been no false religions, or if there had been martyrs only in ours, God would have been too manifest.

Jesus Christ, to leave the impious in their blindness, never said that He was not of Nazareth, nor that He was not the Son of Joseph.

10. As Jesus Christ remained unknown among men, so truth remains unknown among vulgar opinions, without any external difference: thus the Eucharist among common bread.

If the mercy of God is so great that even when He conceals Himself, He gives us the knowledge of salvation, how great will be our illumination when He discovers Himself!

We can understand none of the works of God unless we assume, as a first principle, that He blinds some and enlightens others.

MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS ON RELIGION

1. Pyrrhonism has been of service to the cause of religion; for, after all, men, before the coming of Jesus Christ, knew not their condition, nor whether their nature was great or insignificant. Those who asserted either one or the other, had no certain knowledge, and merely divined without reason and at hazard.

2. Who will blame Christians for not being able to render a reason for their belief, when they profess a religion for which they cannot render a reason, but on the contrary, declare, in announcing it to mankind, that it is foolishness? and can you complain that their religion being such, they do not prove it? If they proved it, they would falsify their own assertion;

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it is this very want of proof that renders what they say intelligible. But while this excuses them for presenting it as they do, and for announcing it without proof, it does not excuse those, who, after hearing the exposition of their doctrine, refuse to believe it.

3. Do you think it impossible that God should be infinite without parts? Yes. Let me show you then a thing that is at once infinite and indivisible : it is a point moving with infinite swiftness.

Let this natural phenomenon, which beforehand might seem impossible, lead you to suspect that there may be many other truths which you do not yet know. Do not, while only in your novitiate, draw the inference, that nothing remains for you to learn ; but rather infer, that there remains an infinity of things for you to learn.

4. The conduct of God, which is always marked with benignity, is to implant religion in the understanding by arguments, and in the heart by grace. But to aim at introducing it

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into the heart and the understanding, by force and threatenings, is not the way to sanctify, but to terrify. Begin by commiserating unbelievers: they are already sufficiently unhappy. We must not use them harshly, excepting for their benefit; but, in fact, this will always do them harm.

The doctrines of religion are comprised in Jesus Christ and in Adam; and its morals in our native corruption and in grace.

5. The heart has its arguments, which reason knows not: this is felt in a thousand ways. It loves universal being naturally, and itself naturally, when it feels disposed; and it hardens itself against both at its pleasure. You have renounced the one and kept the other. Is this agreeable to reason?

6. The world subsists to display the mercy and the justice of God: men are not treated as they would be were they the same as when they issued from the hands of their Maker; but as His enemies, God in mercy bestows upon them light sufficient to return to Him, if they

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are disposed to seek and to follow Him ; and sufficient to condemn them, if they refuse to seek and follow Him.

7. Let men say what they will, I must avow there is something astonishing in the Christian Religion. “You are prejudiced in its favour, because you were born in it,” say some. No, far from that, I look upon it with greater caution, lest prejudice should lead me astray ; but although I was born in it, I cannot help finding that it is as I assert.

8. There are two modes of inducing men to believe the truths of our religion ; the one by the force of argument, the other by the authority of the speaker. Many people make use not of the last, but of the first. They do not say, You must believe this, for divine Revelation asserts it ; but you must believe for such and such a reason.—A feeble mode of arguing, since reason may be turned various ways.

Those who appear most opposed to religion, may not be wholly useless in reference to

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others. We take as our first proof of it, that there is something preternatural in their conduct ; for a blindness of this sort cannot be natural : and if their folly makes them act so much at variance with their true interest, it may serve at least to preserve others, by exciting horror at an example so deplorable, and a folly so pitiable.

9. Without Jesus Christ, the world could not continue to exist ; for necessarily it would be destroyed, or become a hell.

Shall the only being who knows his own nature, know it only to be miserable ? Shall the only being who knows his own nature, be the only unhappy being ?

It is not necessary that man should see nothing at all ; nor that he should see enough to believe that he possesses truth ; but he should see enough to know that he has lost it : and to know what we have lost, we must, at the same time see and not see ; and this is precisely the condition of our nature.

The true religion must instruct man in his grandeur and his misery ; it must lead him to

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esteem and to despise himself— to love and to hate himself.

I see that the Christian Religion is founded on a preceding one, and this is one evidence of its truth.

I do not speak at present of the miracles of Moses, of Jesus Christ, and His apostles, because they may not appear at first sight convincing; but I propose to bring forward those fundamental proofs of the Christian Religion, which no person whatsoever can call in question.

10. Religion is an object of such grandeur, that those who will not take the trouble to examine if it is obscure, deserve to be deprived of it. Why should men complain, if it is an object which to be found, only requires to be sought for ?

Pride counterbalances and supports us against all our miseries. What a strange prodigy is man ! How plainly is he a wanderer ! Behold him fallen from his high estate and restless to regain it !

Mankind being in a state of corruption, it is

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right that all should know it ; both those who are contented with it, and those who are not. But it is not a matter of justice, that all should be acquainted with redemption.

When you say that Jesus Christ did not die for all, you favour the fallacy of the men who immediately make themselves the exception ; the sentiment tends to despair, instead of preserving them from it, by cherishing hope.

11. The ungodly, who blindly abandon themselves to their passion, without knowing God, and without giving themselves the trouble to seek Him, verify, in their own persons, the fundamental principle of the religion they oppose, namely, that human nature is in a state of corruption. And the Jews, who so pertinaciously oppose the Christian Religion, verify another fundamental principle of the faith they endeavour to destroy ; namely, that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, who came to redeem men, and to rescue them from their corruption and misery : they verify this as much by their present condition, which was foretold by their own prophets, as by the

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prophecies in their possession, which they have preserved inviolate, and contain the marks by which to distinguish the Messiah. Thus proofs of the corruption of human nature, and of the Redemption by Jesus Christ, the two great verities in the Christian System, are drawn from the profane, who live in a state of indifference to religion, and from the Jews who are its irreconcilable enemies.

12. In the state of innocence, the dignity of man consisted in his ruling over inferior creatures, and using them ; but now it consists in separating himself from them.

13. The errors of many persons are more dangerous from being founded on some truth. The fault does not lie in pursuing falsehood ; but in pursuing one truth to the exclusion of another.

There are a great number of truths, both in religion and morals, that appear repugnant and contradictory, and which nevertheless subsist in admirable harmony.

The source of all heresies is the exclusion of

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some of these truths ; and the source of all the objections of heretics is ignorance of some of the truths we hold.

And in general it happens, that not being able to perceive the relation of two opposite truths, and believing that the reception of the one involves the exclusion of the other, they attach themselves to one and reject the other. The Nestorians held that there were two persons in Jesus Christ, because there were two natures ; and the Eutychians, on the contrary, held that there was only one nature, because there was only one person. The Catholics are orthodox, because they combine the two truths of two natures and one person.

We believe that the substance of the bread being changed into that of our Lord Jesus Christ, He is really present in the holy Sacrament. This is one truth. Another is, that this Sacrament is also a symbol of the cross and of glory, and a commemoration of both. Here we have the Catholic faith, which comprehends these two apparently opposite truths.

The heretics of the present day, not con-

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ceiving that this Sacrament contains both the presence of Jesus Christ and His Symbol—that it is, at the same time, a sacrifice, and the commemoration of a sacrifice, believe that one of these truths cannot be admitted without excluding the other.

For this reason they attach themselves exclusively to one point; that the Sacrament is figurative, and in this they are not heretical. They suppose that we deny this truth; and hence they object to us so many passages of the fathers in which it is asserted; but they deny the real presence, and in this they are heretical.

On this account, the shortest method of preventing heresies, is to inculcate all truths; and the surest method of refuting them is to announce all truths.

Grace will always exist in the world, and so will nature. There will always be Pelagians, and always Catholics; because the first birth produces the former, and the second birth produces the latter.

This is the Church which merits with Jesus Christ, who is inseparable from it, the con-

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version of all those who are not yet of the true religion ; and these are the persons, who, when converted, aid the mother who has brought them forth.

The body is not any more alive without the head, than the head without the body. Whoever separates himself from either, no longer belongs to the body, or to Jesus Christ. All virtues, martyrdom, austerities, and good works, out of the pale of the Church, and of communion with the head of the Church, the Pope, are useless.

It will be one of the horrors of the damned, that they will be condemned by their own reason ; that reason by which they pretended to condemn the Christian Religion.

14. The ordinary life of men, and that of saints, have one thing in common ; namely, that they both aspire after happiness, but they differ as to the object in which they place it. Both term those things enemies which prevent the attainment of their main object.

We must judge of good and evil by the will of God, which can never be unjust or erroneous,

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and not by our own will, which is always full of unrighteousness and error.

15. Jesus Christ has given in His Gospel this mark to distinguish true believers. That they shall speak a new language ; and, in fact, the renovation of the thoughts and desires naturally causes a renovation of the language. For these divine novelties, which render it impossible to displease God, as it was impossible for the old man to please Him, differ from the novelties of earth in this respect, that the things of the world, however new they may be, lose their freshness and beauty the longer they continue, while the renovated spirit is renewed more and more as long as it exists. “The outward man perisheth,” saith St Paul, “but the inward man is renewed day by day ” (2 Cor. iv. 16), but it will be perfectly renewed only in eternity, where it will sing for ever that new song of which David speaks in the Psalms (Ps. xxxii. 3), the song which is inspired by the new spirit of charity.

16. When St Peter and the other apostles deliberated on the abolition of circumcision,

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and whether it was contrary to the law of God, they did not determine the question by the prophecies, but by the fact of the collation of the Holy Spirit to the uncircumcised. They decided that it was more certain that God approved those whom He filled with His Spirit, than that the ceremonial law was to be observed: they knew that the Holy Spirit was the end of the law, and that since ^{He} it could be received without circumcision, this rite was not indispensable.

17. Two laws are sufficient to regulate the whole Christian community, far better than all political laws; namely, the love of God and the love of our neighbour. The Christian Religion is adapted to minds of every order. The generality of mankind content themselves with observing its present condition and establishment; and such is our religion, that its establishment alone is sufficient to convince them of its truth: other persons trace it to the apostolic age. The more enlightened trace it to the beginning of the world. Angels have a still more comprehensive view of it, for they see it in God.

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Those to whom God imparts religion, by the feelings of the heart, are very happy and perfectly persuaded. As for those who have it not, we cannot bring it within their reach, except by argument, trusting that God Himself will impress it on their hearts, without which faith is inefficient for salvation.

God, in order to reserve to Himself the sole right of instructing us, and to render the mystery of our condition inexplicable, has placed what forms its essence so high, or rather so deep, that we are incapable of reaching it; so that it is not by the toilsome investigations of reason, but by its unreserved submission, that we are able truly to know ourselves.

18. The rejecters of Revelation who profess to make reason their guide, ought to be well furnished with arguments. What, then, do they say? — “Do we not see the inferior animals live and die like men, and Turks like Christians? The Turks have their ceremonies, their prophets, their doctors, their saints, their devotees, as we have.” But is this contrary to

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Scripture ? does it not foretell all this ? If you feel no anxiety to know the truth, what you allege may pass as a pretext to continue undisturbed. But if you desire with all your heart to know it, this will not be sufficient ; you must enter into details. Your objection, perhaps, might be sufficient, if it related to a vain speculation in philosophy, but the matter in hand is your all. And yet, after uttering some such shallow objections, men will turn to their amusements again !

It is awful to feel that every thing we possess is hastening away, and to persist in our attachment, without being anxious to examine if there is no object attainable that will be permanent.

The tenor of our lives ought to be very different, according to these very different suppositions, That we shall be here always, or that it is certain we shall not be here long, and uncertain whether we shall be here a single hour.—This last supposition is the true one.

19. Even on the ground of probability, you

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ought to be at the pains of searching for truth. For if you die, without serving the true God, you will be lost. But say you, if it had been His will that I should serve Him, He would have given indications of it. He has done so, but you neglect them. At least search for them; this must be right.

Atheists ought to have the clearest reasons for their sentiments. But that man must be destitute of all sound sense, who will assert that it is perfectly clear that the soul is not immortal. I will not find fault with any one for not sifting to the bottom the opinions of Copernicus; but it is of infinite importance to know whether the soul be mortal or immortal.

20. The prophecies, miracles, and other evidences of our religion, are not of such a nature, that we can say they are geometrically convincing. But for the present, I am satisfied, if you will grant that to believe them is not an offence against reason. They possess both clearness and obscurity, to enlighten some and to perplex others. But their clear-

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ness is such, that it surpasses, or at least equals, whatever clearness there may be on the opposite side; so that reason cannot decide not to receive them; and indeed it is more probable that their rejection will be owing to the corrupt propensities of the heart. Thus there is clearness sufficient to condemn those who refuse to believe, but not sufficient to compel them, in order to show that in those that follow the light, it is grace and not reason that induces them to follow it, and that in those who shun the light, it is owing to depravity, and not to reason that they shun it.

Who can help admiring and embracing a religion, which contains the fullest explication of truths of which we discern the reality, just in proportion as our illumination increases.

A man who discovers the evidences of the Christian Religion, is like an heir who finds the title deeds of his estate. Will he say that they are false, or neglect to examine them?

21. Two sorts of persons know that there is a God; those whose hearts are humble, and who love abasement and neglect, whatever degree

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of intellect they possess, whether high or low ; or those who have sufficient intellect to discern the truth, whatever may be the repugnance of their hearts to it.

The Philosophers among the Pagans, who maintained that there was a God, were persecuted, the Jews have been hated, the Christians still more so.

22. I do not see that there is greater difficulty in believing the resurrection of the body, and the miraculous conception, than in believing the creation. Is it more difficult to reproduce man, than to bring him into being? And if we had not been acquainted with the usual mode of generation, would it have appeared more wonderful that a child should be born of a virgin, rather than be the offspring of two persons of different sexes.

23. There is a great difference between repose and security of conscience. Nothing ought to give repose but the sincere search of truth ; and nothing can give assurance but the possession of truth.

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There are two verities of our religion that are equally unchangeable : one is, that man in the state of creation or of grace is at the head of all the creatures on the earth, bears the likeness of God, and is partaker of a divine nature ; the other is, that in a state of corruption and sinfulness he is fallen and become like the beasts. These two propositions are equally firm and certain. The Scriptures announce them most distinctly in the following passages :—" My delights were with the sons of men, Prov. viii. 31.—I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, Joel ii. 28.—I said ye are Gods, Psalm lxxxi. 6." And in other passages, such as, " All flesh is grass, Isaiah xlix. 12.—Man is like the beasts that perish, Psalm xviii. 13.—I said in my heart, concerning the estates of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts," Eccles. iii. 18.

24. The example of generous deaths among the Lacedemonians, and other heathen nations, can hardly affect us ; for what is all this to us ? But the examples of the Martyrs affect us ;

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they are members of the same body. We have a bond of union and sympathy with them—their resolution may confirm our own. There is no benefit of this sort from Pagan examples—we have no connection with them. Thus the riches of a stranger are not ours, though those of a father or a husband are so most truly.

25. We can never separate ourselves without pain from an object to which we are attached ; we do not feel the tie, as long as we voluntarily follow that which draws us on, as St Augustine says, but when we attempt to resist and to move in an opposite direction, our sorrow begins ; the tie is strained and suffers violence : such a tie is our body, which will not be dissolved till death. Our Lord declared that from the time of John the Baptist, that is, from the time of His entering the heart of each believer, “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent taketh it by storm,” Matt. xi. 12. Before the soul is touched by grace, it is acted upon only by that weight of concupiscence which keeps it down to the earth. But when God draws it toward heaven, these two contrary

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forces produce that conflict which God alone can terminate. We can do all things, however, says St Leo, by the aid of Him without whom we can do nothing. We must then resolve to endure this warfare all through life, for here there can be no peace. "Jesus Christ came not to bring peace, but a sword," Matt. x. 34. Nevertheless it must be acknowledged, that as the wisdom of men is only folly before God (1 Cor. iii. 19), so we may say, that this warfare which wears so direful an aspect, is peace with God, that peace which Jesus Christ also brought. Yet it will not be perfected till the body be destroyed, and this makes death desirable : meanwhile we cheerfully endure to live for the love of Him who endured for us both life and death, and "who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think," Eph. iii. 20.

26. We must endeavour not to afflict ourselves with the events of life, and to take everything which happens for the best. I believe that this is a duty, and that we sin in not performing it. For, in short, the reason

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why our sins are sins, is only because they are contrary to the will of God; and since the essence of sin consists in having a will opposed to what we know is God's will, it is plain to me that when His will is discovered to us by events, it must be a sin not to conform ourselves to it.

27. When truth is abandoned and persecuted, it seems to be a season in which its defence is a service peculiarly agreeable to God. He allows us to judge of grace by nature, and thus we may infer, that as a prince, forced from his kingdom by his subjects, feels an extraordinary regard for those who remain faithful to him amidst the general revolt; so God looks with peculiar good-will on those who defend the purity of religion when it is violently assailed.

But there is this difference between the kings of the earth and the King of kings, that princes do not make their subjects faithful, but find them so; while God always finds men faithless without His grace, and makes them faithful when they become such. So that

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while kings generally acknowledge themselves under obligations to those who remain in their duty and allegiance, on the other hand, those who continue in the service of God are infinitely indebted to Him for preserving them from defection.

28. Neither bodily austerities, nor mere intellectual efforts, are praiseworthy; but right emotions of the heart, which enable us to endure the pains both of body and mind. For two things contribute to our sanctification—pains and pleasure. St Paul has declared, that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God, Acts xiv. 21. This should console those who suffer tribulation, since having been apprised that the way to heaven is full of it, they ought to rejoice in possessing this mark of being in the right way. But the difficulties they meet with are not without pleasures, and cannot be overcome without pleasure. For as those who forsake God to return to the world, do so only because they find more delight in its pleasures, than in communion with God, and are enthralled by

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its charms, which cause them to repent of their first choice, and make them (as Tertullian terms it) the Devil's penitents; so the pious would never quit the pleasures of the world to take up the cross of Jesus Christ, if they did not find more delight in poverty, in the scorn, rejection, and reproach of men, than in the pleasures of sin. Therefore, as Tertullian again remarks, we must not believe that the life of Christians is a life of sadness. They would not quit the pleasures of the world excepting for greater pleasures. "Pray without ceasing," says St Paul,—“in every thing give thanks,”—“rejoice evermore,” 1 Thess. v. 16, 17, 18. It is the joy of having found God which is the source of sorrow for having offended Him, and of a total change of life. The man who found treasure hid in a field was so rejoiced, that he parted with all he had in order to purchase the field (Matt. xiii. 44). Men of the world have their sorrows, but as Jesus Christ Himself affirmed, they have not that “joy which the world can neither give nor take away,” John xiv. 27 and 16. The blessed in heaven have this joy without any sorrow;

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and Christians have this joy mingled with sorrow,—sorrow for having pursued other pleasures, and for fear of losing it by the attraction of those pleasures that still incessantly allure them. Thus we ought to labour continually to cherish that fear which protects while it attempers our joy; and whenever we feel ourselves too much inclined to the one, we should bend our minds to the other, in order to preserve the balance. “Think of prosperity in the day of affliction, and think of affliction in the day of joy,” Eccles. xi. 27, until the promise of Jesus Christ, that our joy shall be full, is accomplished. Let us not allow ourselves to sink into dejection, nor believe that piety consists in disconsolate anguish. True piety, though found perfect only in heaven, is so replete with satisfaction, that it fills the soul with it in its commencement, progress, and consummation. It is a light so resplendent, that it sheds lustre on everything connected with it. If there is some sorrow mingled with it, especially at its commencement, this springs from ourselves, and not from virtue; it is not the effect of the piety that is beginning to exist

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in our minds, but of the impiety which still remains. Take away the impiety, and there will be joy unmingled. Let us not attribute sorrow, then, to devotion, ~~but~~ to ourselves; and seek to assuage it only by the correction of our own spirits.

29. The past ought not to trouble us; we have only to lament our own faults; and still less ought the future to affect us, since, with respect to us, it is non-existent, and perhaps we shall never reach it. The present is the only time which is truly ours, and which we must employ agreeably to the will of God.

It is on this portion of existence that our thoughts ought to be chiefly occupied. Yet such is the restless disposition of mankind, that they scarcely ever bestow a thought on the present moment, the time in which they are actually living, but fix their attention on the future in which they expect to live. They are always about to live, and are never living. But our Lord has enjoined us to be content with making provision for the day that is passing over us. This is the limit which He has pre-

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scribed for our salvation and for our tranquillity.

30. We may often more effectually improve our characters, by observing what is wrong in others, than by noticing examples of good ; and it is well to accustom one's self to gain advantage from evil, since that is so common, while goodness is so rare.

31. The thirteenth chapter of St Mark contains the sublime discourse of Jesus Christ to His apostles on His second coming : and as everything that happens to the Church, happens also to each individual Christian, we may assume that this chapter predicts the state of every person, who, at conversion, destroys the old man within, as well as the state of the whole world, which will be destroyed preparatory to the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, 2 Pet. iii. 13. The prophecy it contains, of the destruction of the rejected Jewish temple, which prefigures the ruin of the man of sin within each of us ; of which temple it is said, “ that not one stone shall be left on

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another," indicates that we ought not to spare any affection of the old man; and by the dreadful civil wars and domestic feuds predicted, the internal conflicts of those who devote themselves to God, are so perfectly represented, that nothing can exceed the accuracy of the delineation.

32. The Holy Spirit dwells invisibly in the relics of those who die in the Lord, and will manifest Himself in them at the Resurrection : this circumstance renders the relics of saints so worthy of veneration. For God never abandons His own people, not even in the tomb, where their bodies though dead to the eyes of men, are more alive than before in the sight of God ; because sin, which always resides in them during life (at least the principle of it), is there no longer : the root of bitterness inseparable from them during life, prevents us from honouring them till death, since before that event, they are rather deserving of hatred. Death is necessary to destroy entirely this root of bitterness, and is on that account so desirable.

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33. In the description of the last judgment, the elect are represented as unconscious of their virtues, and the reprobate of their crimes. "Lord," say both, "when saw we Thee hungry?" Matt. xxv. 37-44.

Jesus Christ would not suffer evil spirits, or persons whom He had not called to be His disciples, to bear witness of Him; but chose the testimony of God and of John the Baptist.

34. Montaigne's blemishes are very great. His writings are full of impure and loose expressions. This is bad enough, but this is not all. His sentiments on suicide and death are horrible. He would inspire an utter carelessness about salvation, without fear or remorse. His book not being formally on the subject of religion, he was not obliged to introduce it; but every one is under an obligation not to prejudice men against it. Whatever may be said to excuse his lax notions on many subjects, no excuse can be made for his utterly pagan sentiments on death: for all sense of religion must be lost, if a man do not wish at least to die a Christian; but throughout his

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writings, his only wish seems to be, to die without pain or anxiety.

35. One cause of deception, in comparing former ages of the Church with the present, is, that we are apt to look upon St Athanasius, St Theresa and others, as crowned with glory. They may indeed appear so to us, since time has placed their characters in a proper light. But when this great saint was persecuted, he was simply a man who went by the name of Athanasius, and St Theresa was a pious woman like the rest of her sisterhood. Elias was a man of like passions with ourselves, says St James (James v. 17), in order to correct the false notion prevalent among Christians, which would lead them to neglect the example of the saints, as unadapted to our times. They were saints, we are apt to say, and not common mortals like ourselves.

36. The proper method of treating persons who feel a repugnance to religion, is to begin with showing them that it is not contrary to reason ; then to prove that it is venerable, in

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order to gain their respect; after that, to display its excellence that they may wish to find it true. We must produce indisputable arguments for its truth; we must show its antiquity and holiness, by its grandeur and elevation, and evince its excellence by its promises of the only true good.

A single expression of David or Moses, like this, "God will circumcise your heart," Deut. xxx. 6, is decisive of their spirit. Supposing all they ever wrote beside were ambiguous, and that it was even doubtful whether they were philosophers or Christians, such a phrase as this determines the point; whatever ambiguity might exist before, is entirely removed.

If we are deceived in believing the Christian Religion to be true, the consequences are trifling. But if it be true, how woful to deceive one's self in believing it to be false!

37. The conditions of life most easy to live in, according to the opinion of the world, are most difficult to live in, according to the judgment of God. On the other hand, nothing is so difficult to worldly men as a religious life—

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nothing so easy in the judgment of God. According to the world, nothing is so easy as to live in splendour and opulence; in the judgment of God, nothing is so difficult as to live in such a condition, without making it our supreme happiness and our all.

38. The Old Testament contains the symbols of future joy, the New Testament the means of obtaining it. The symbols are joyful, the means are self-denying; and yet the Pascal Lamb was eaten with bitter herbs (cum amaritudinibus, Exod. xii. 18) to signify that we can attain joy only through sorrow.

Our

lamb's

39. The word Galilee, uttered accidentally among the crowd of Jews, when Jesus Christ was accused before Pilate, Luke xxiii. 5, occasioned Pilate's sending Him to Herod, by which the mystery was accomplished, that He was to be judged by both Jews and Gentiles. An accident, apparently, was the cause of the accomplishment of the mystery.

40. A man told me the other day that he felt

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great joy and confidence in coming from confession: another person told me, he felt great alarm. It struck me that if the feelings of both had been blended, they would have formed the right temper of mind, and that each was defective in not possessing the feelings of the other.

41. There is pleasure in being on board a vessel in a storm, when we feel perfectly assured of our safety. So may Christians feel during the persecutions of the Church.

The History of the Church may properly be termed the History of Truth.

42. As the two sources of sin are pride and sloth, God has displayed two attributes to destroy them—His mercy and His justice. The office of justice is to abase our pride; the office of mercy is to dissipate our sloth by exciting us to good works, according to that passage, “The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance,” Rom. ii. 4. And that expression of the Ninevites, “Let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that

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is in their hands. Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" Jonah iii. 8, 9. Thus so far from the mercy of God encouraging inactivity, nothing, on the contrary, more effectually combats it; for instead of saying, because God will show no mercy we must make every effort to fulfil His commands, we should on the contrary, say, because God will show mercy, we must do all in our power to obey His will.

43. "All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16. Libido sentiendi, libido sciendi, libido dominandi. Alas! for the accursed soil that these three streams of fire burn up instead of fertilizing! Happy those, who, though on these streams, are not plunged into them or carried away by them, but remain immovable; not standing with impatience or alarm, but resting on a secure, though lowly seat, from which they rise not, till day appear, and then, having reposed in peace, they stretch forth their hands to Him who will raise them

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on high, and cause them to stand as pillars within the gates of the holy Jerusalem, where they shall never more fear the assaults of pride : and if they now feel sorrowful, it is not at beholding all perishable things passing away, but at the recollection of their beloved country, the heavenly Jerusalem, after which they cease not to sigh during the long days of their exile.

44. A miracle, say some, would settle our belief. They say so, because they have never seen one. Reasons, which, when seen at a distance, appear to terminate our view, terminate it no longer on approaching nearer. We then see something still beyond. Nothing can check the giddiness of our minds. There is no rule, it is said, without an exception ; no truth so general, as not to fail in some particular instance. It is enough that it is not absolutely universal, to give us a pretext for applying the exception to the point in hand, and for saying, such or such a thing is not always true, therefore it is not true in the present case. Nothing more is wanted than to show that this is the exception ; and we must be blunderers in-

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deed, not to find something that will serve our turn.

45. Charity is not a figurative precept. To say that Jesus Christ, who came to take away figures to introduce charity, did in fact only substitute the figure of charity and take away the reality, is horrible.

46. How many stars has the telescope discovered to us, which had no existence to the philosophers of former days? They did not hesitate to call the authority of the Scriptures in question, for so often mentioning the countless multitude of stars. There are only one thousand and twenty-two, said they—we are perfectly sure of that.

47. Man is so constituted, that by dint of telling him that he is a fool, he will believe it; and even by dint of telling himself the same thing, he will make himself believe it; for man carries on in his bosom a converse with himself, which it greatly behoves him to regulate. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.”

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Corrumpunt mores bonos colloquia mala, 1 Cor. xv. 33. We must maintain silence as much as possible, and converse respecting God alone; thus we shall convince ourselves of His presence.

48. What difference is there between a soldier and a Carthusian as to obedience? they are equally obedient and dependent, and their duties are equally laborious. Why, the difference is this; the soldier always hopes to become a commander, though he never attains his wish (for generals, and even princes, are always slaves and dependants), however, he always hopes for independence, and strives continually to acquire it: while a Carthusian has vowed never to become independent. They do not differ in the perpetuity of their servitude, for that is the same to both, but in the hope of its termination, which the one has and the other has not.

49. Our self-will is never satisfied, even when it has obtained all it desires; but we are satisfied the instant we renounce it: with it,

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we cannot help being discontented ; without it, we cannot help being content. Man's true and only virtue is to hate himself ; for his concupiscence renders him hateful : and to seek a being truly worthy of love, in order to love him. But as we cannot love that which is out of ourselves, we must love a being who can be within us, and who yet is distinct from ourselves. Now this can be none but an Infinite Being. "The kingdom of God is within us," Luke xvii. 21. The Infinite good is within us and is not ourselves.

It is not right that persons should attach themselves to us, although they do it with pleasure and voluntarily. We shall deceive those in whom we excite the desire : for we are not the end of any rational being, nor have we wherewith to satisfy such a one. Are we not always liable to death ? and thus the object of their attachment must sooner or later perish. As we should be criminal to induce the belief of a falsehood, although we might persuade men with ease, and they might believe it with pleasure, and in doing so might give us pleasure ; so we are criminal if we allure others

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to love us and dote upon us. It is our duty to warn those who are ready to assent to a falsehood, not to believe it, whatever advantage might accrue to ourselves : in like manner, we must warn men not to give their affections to us, for they ought to spend their lives either in pleasing God or in seeking Him.

50. To put our trust in formalities and ceremonies is superstition ; but not to be willing to submit to them is pride.

51. All the religions and sects in the world have had natural reason for their guide : Christians alone are bound to take their rules out of themselves, and to acquaint themselves with those which Jesus Christ left with the ancients to be transmitted to us. Some people are impatient of this restraint : they wish to have, like the rest of the world, the liberty of following their own imaginations. In vain we charge them as the prophets did the Jews : “Go into the midst of the Church, inform yourselves of the laws handed down from the ancients, and follow in their paths,”—they

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answer like the Jews, "We will not go there—we will follow the devices of our own hearts and be like others." Jer. vi. 16, Ezek. xx. 32.

52. There are three ways of believing—Reason, Custom and Divine Influence. The Christian Religion, which alone has reason on its side, does not admit for its true disciples those who believe without divine influence. Not by any means that it excludes reason and custom ; on the contrary, it opens the mind to arguments by reason, and confirms it in them by custom ; but it always would have the soul submit itself to those heavenly inspirations, which alone can produce a true and saving effect ; "lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect," 1 Cor. i. 17.

53. Men never commit injustice so readily, and with so little concern, as when they act upon a false principle of conscience.

54. The Jews, who were called to subdue nations and kings, were the slaves of sin ; and

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Christians, whose calling has been to obey and be in submission, are the sons of freedom.

55. Can it be courage in a dying man, amidst weakness and agony, to defy an almighty and eternal Deity ?

56. I willingly believe narratives, the witnesses of which are ready to lay down their lives for their testimony.

57. Right fear proceeds from faith ; false fear from doubt : right fear leads to hope, because it springs from faith, and men hope in God when they believe Him ; vicious fear leads to despair, because men fear a God in whom they have no confidence. The former class fear to lose God, and the latter to find Him.

58. Solomon and Job were best acquainted with the misery of man, and have spoken best upon it ; the one the most happy of men, the other the most unhappy ; the one knew by experience the vanity of pleasure, the other, the reality of affliction.

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59. The Pagans spoke evil of Israel, and so did the prophet Ezekiel; but so far from the Israelites having a right to say, You speak like the Pagans, he enforces his declarations by this circumstance, that the Pagans spoke as he did.

60. God does not intend that we should submit our belief to Him without reason, nor does He exact a blind obedience like a tyrant. But neither does He profess to give us a reason for every thing; and to unite these two opposite views, He means to show us clearly those divine marks which will convince us what is His real character, and to establish His authority, by miracles and proofs that we cannot gainsay: after this we are to believe, without hesitation, whatever He declares, when we find no other reason for withholding our assent except that we are unable, by our own powers, to determine whether it be true or not.

61. There are three sorts of persons: Those who have God and serve Him—those who are busy in seeking Him, but have not found Him

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—and those, who not having found Him, live without seeking Him. The first are rational and happy; the last are foolish and unhappy; the other class are unhappy but rational.

62. Men often mistake the imagination for the heart, and believe they are converted, because they think about being converted.

Reason acts slowly, and it needs to keep continually before it so many views and different principles, that, unable to see them all at once, its conceptions are often indistinct and erroneous. It is not so with feeling; that acts instantaneously, and is always ready to act. Therefore, having acquired a knowledge of truth by reason, we should endeavour to feel it, and to support our belief by the sentiments of the heart; otherwise it will always be uncertain and wavering.

The heart has its arguments, of which Reason knows nothing; we feel it in a thousand ways. It is the heart which feels God, and not reason. This indeed is perfect faith, God sensible to the heart.

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63. It is the essential to the nature of God that His justice should be as infinite as His mercy : nevertheless His justice and severity towards the reprobate, is less astonishing than His mercy towards the elect.

✓ 64. Man is evidently made for thinking. In this all his dignity and all his merit consist. His whole duty is comprised in thinking justly ; and the proper order of his thinking is to commence with himself, his author, and his end. But what does man think of ? never of these things ; but of diversion, of riches, of fame, perhaps of being a king, without reflecting what it is to be a king, or even to be a man.

The faculty of thinking, is, in itself, most worthy of admiration. It must have strange defects to be contemptible. But its defects are so great, that, in fact, nothing is more ridiculous. How elevated by its nature ! How mean by its defects !

65. If there be a God, we must love Him alone, and not creatures. The reasoning of

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the profane, in the book of Wisdom, is founded altogether on the persuasion that there is no God. Let this be assumed, say they, and we may indulge fearlessly in earthly gratification. But if they knew that there is a God, they must draw the directly opposite conclusion. And such is the conclusion of the wise. There is a God, then let us not indulge in earthly gratifications. Therefore, all that excites us to fix our affections to created good is evil, since it prevents either from serving God, if we know Him, or from seeking Him if we know Him not. But we are full of concupiscence; then we are full of evil, and we ought to hate ourselves and every thing which would fix our affections on something else than the Creator.

66. When we wish to think of God, how many things are we sensible of, which divert our thoughts from Him, and fix them on other objects. Every thing of this sort is evil, and born with us.

67. It is not true that we are worthy of the regard of our fellow-men: it is unjust that we

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should desire it. If we were born capable of exercising reason, and with some knowledge of ourselves and others, we should not feel this desire. But we have this desire at our birth : we are therefore born unjust ; for every man is addicted to self. This is contrary to all order ; order tends to the general good, and this addiction to self is the germ of all disorders, of all contentions, in states and in families.

If the members of natural and civil communities seek the good of each general body, these communities also should seek the good of a more general body.

Whoever does not hate in himself this selfishness and instinctive love of pre-eminence is wretchedly blind ; for nothing can be more opposite to truth and justice. It is not true that we deserve such distinction ; and it is as impossible as it is unjust, that we should obtain it ; since it is an object which all men are pursuing. We therefore evidently come into the world with a propensity to injustice, of which we cannot divest ourselves, and yet of which we ought to be divested.

Nevertheless, the Christian religion alone

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has marked this disposition as criminal, and declared that we are born with it, and that we are under obligation to resist it; nor has any other religion furnished us with the means of eradicating it.

68. There is an internal war in man, between reason and the passions. He might enjoy some peace, had he reason without the passions, or the passions without reason. But having both, he is never exempt from war; he is never able to be at peace with the one, without being at war with the other. So that he is in a state of perpetual opposition and contradiction to himself.

69. It is certain, that the soul is either mortal or immortal. And it makes the utmost difference as to the conduct of life, which of these suppositions is the true one. Yet philosophers have formed their moral systems independently of this fact. What strange blindness!

The last act is always bloody, however

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entertaining the rest of the play may be. We then cover the corse, and all is over.

70. God having made the heavens and the earth, things unconscious of happiness, resolved to create intelligent beings, who might form a body composed of intelligent members. All men are members of this body; and, in order to be happy, they must conform their individual will to the universal will, which governs the general body. Yet it often happens, that a member believes that it forms a whole of itself; and, regardless of the body on which it depends, considers itself independent, and would fain be its own centre. But in this state it will find itself as helpless as a limb separated from the human body: having no principle of life in itself, it will only be confused and astonished at the uncertainties of its existence. Afterwards, when it begins to know itself, and is brought back to its senses, it perceives that it is not the body; that it is only a member of a universal body: that to be a member, is to have being, life, and motion, only by the spirit which animates the

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body, and for the body; that a member separated from the body to which it belongs, is a dying and perishing thing; that it ought not therefore to love itself, excepting for the body; or rather, it ought to love that alone, since in doing so, it loves itself, existing only in it, by it, and for it.

To regulate the love we owe to ourselves, let us imagine a body composed of thinking members (for we are members of the universe), and see how each member ought to love itself. The body loves the hand; and the hand, supposing it to have a will, ought to love itself in the same degree as the body loves it: all beyond this is unjust.

If the feet and the hands had a will of their own, they would never be in their place, except in submitting it to the will of the body: apart from this, they would be disordered and unhappy; but by aiming simply at the well-being of the body, they promote their own well-being.

The members of our body do not perceive the happy result of their union,—the wonderful skill they display,—the care nature has

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shown in influencing the spirits, for their growth and preservation. If they were capable of knowing it, and should make use of this knowledge, to retain in themselves the nourishment they receive, without allowing it to pass into the other members, they would not only be unjust, but miserable ; and would hate, rather than love themselves. Their happiness, as well as their duty, consists in submitting to the guidance of the soul, which belongs to them as a whole, and which loves them better than they love themselves. “He who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit,” 1 Cor. vi. 17. A Christian loves himself, because he is a member of Jesus Christ ; he loves Jesus Christ, because He is the head of the body of which he is a member: the whole is one ; one is in the other.

Concupiscence and force are the sources of all actions purely human : concupiscence produces those that are voluntary ; force, such as are involuntary.

71. The Platonists, and even Epictetus and his followers, believed that God alone was worthy of being loved and admired ; and yet

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desired to be themselves loved and admired by men. They knew not their own corruption. If they had felt themselves impelled to love and adore their Maker, and had placed their delight in His service, they might have thought well of themselves, with good reason. But if they felt a repugnance to the Divinity, if they felt that their hearts were set upon gaining the esteem of men, and that, in cultivating their minds, they only acted in such a manner that, without employing force, men might place their happiness in loving them; such perfection, I say, was detestable. And so, then, it was possible for them to know God, and not to wish that all men might love Him! They could be well pleased that men should stop short of the Supreme Being, and pay homage to them! They could desire to be the source of happiness to men, as far as that depended on being themselves the objects of their admiration!

72. It is true, that pain does attend the exercises of piety. But this pain is not caused by the piety which is commencing within us,

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but by the impiety which still remains. If our love of sensible objects did not obstruct our repentance, and our corruption oppose itself to the purity of God, there would be nothing painful to us in the duties of religion. We suffer pain, in proportion as our natural depravity resists supernatural grace. Our heart is torn by these two opposite forces. But it would be very unjust to impute this violence to God, who draws us to Himself, instead of attributing it to the world, which strives to retain us. Our situation resembles that of an infant, whom its mother snatches from the hands of robbers, and who, in the pain it suffers, must love the affectionate and rightful violence which gives it liberty, and shrinks only from the brutal and lawless violence of those who would unjustly retain it. The most dreadful war God can wage against men in this life, is to leave them without that war which He came to bring. "I came to bring war," said He; and to prepare us for this war, He adds, "I am come to bring fire and sword," Matt. x. 34; Luke xii. 49. Before His coming, the world lived in a false peace.

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73. God regards only the heart ; the Church judges only by the exterior : God absolves as soon as He discerns penitence in the heart ; the Church, when she sees it in the actions of the life. God has formed a Church internally pure, which confounds, by its internal and spiritual sanctity, the visible impiety of proud sages and Pharisees ; and the Church forms an assembly of men, whose external manners are so pure, that they put to shame the manners of the Pagans. If there are hypocrites so well disguised that their hollowness cannot be detected, she suffers them to remain ; for, though they are rejected by God, whom they cannot deceive, they are received by men, whom they can deceive. Thus the Church is not dishonoured by their conduct, which has, at least, the appearance of sanctity.

74. The law does not destroy nature, but corrects and informs it ; grace does not destroy the law, but gives the power to obey it. We may make an idol of Truth itself ; for Truth, without charity, is not God ; it is His image, and an idol which we must neither love nor

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adore ; still less must we love and adore its opposite, Falsehood.

75. All public amusements are dangerous to the Christian life ; but among all that have ever been invented, none is more to be feared than the theatre. The representations it gives of the passions are so natural and delicate, that they excite and foster them in our own hearts ; and more than all the rest, the passion of love, especially when presented under its purest and most honourable forms. For the more innocent it appears to innocent minds, the more liable are they to be affected by it. Its energy gratifies our self-conceit, which very soon indulges the wish to produce the effects it has seen so admirably represented ; at the same time, a conviction of the propriety of the sentiments extinguishes all alarm in pure minds, who flatter themselves that it cannot injure their purity to indulge so graceful an affection. Thus, when they leave the theatre, their hearts are so enamoured with all the charms and felicities of love, their minds are so persuaded of its innocence, that they are

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fully prepared to receive its impressions, or rather to seek an opportunity of producing them in another's heart, that they may receive the same pleasures and the same sacrifices of which they have witnessed so fascinating an exhibition.

76. Lax sentiments are so in unison with the natural dispositions of mankind, that it is a wonder they should ever displease. This happens, however, when they exceed all bounds. Besides, there are many persons who see the truth, but who cannot reach it in their practice. But there are very few who do not know that religion is opposed to all such notions, and that it is ridiculous to say, that eternal happiness is the reward of licentious conduct.

77. I feared that I had written amiss, when I found myself condemned ; but the example of so many pious writers have persuaded me of the contrary. It is not permitted to write well.

The whole Inquisition is corrupt or ignorant.

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It is better to obey God than men. I fear nothing; I hope for nothing. The Port Royalists fear, and it will be bad policy if they cease to fear; for when they no longer fear, they will have most reason to fear.

To silence men, is the severest kind of persecution. The saints never commit suicide. It is true, there must be a call; but it is not from orders of Councils, that they learn whether they are called; it is from the necessity of speaking. If my letters are condemned at Rome, that which I have condemned is condemned in heaven.

The Inquisition and the Society (the Jesuits) are the two flails of truth.

78. I was asked, first of all, whether I did not repent of having written the Provincial Letters. I replied that, far from repenting, if I had to write them over again, I would make them still more severe.

I was asked, secondly, why I mentioned the names of the authors from whom I took the detestable propositions I had quoted. I replied, if I were in a city where there were twelve

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fountains, and knew for certain, that one of them was poisoned, I should feel obliged to warn every one I met with, not to draw water from it ; and, as my warning might be supposed to be a mere fiction of the imagination, it would be also my duty to point out the poisoned fountain, rather than expose a whole city to the chance of being poisoned.

In the third place, I was asked, why I employed a style so lively, and tingured so strongly with raillery and humour. I replied, that had I employed the grave style of dissertation, none but men of learning would have read the work ; to whom it would have been of little service, since they knew at least as much of the subject as myself. I wished, therefore, to write in such a manner, that my letters might be read by females, and men of business, that they might be apprised of the dangerous tendency of the maxims and propositions then so current, which otherwise they might have been beguiled to receive. .

Lastly, I was asked whether I had read all the authors I cited. I replied, certainly not ; for had I read them, I should have spent the

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greater part of my life in reading very bad books. However, I had read Escobar through twice ; and as to the rest, I employed some of my friends to read them : but I had not quoted a single passage, without having read it myself in the author from whom it was taken ; nor without having examined the subject in discussing which it was introduced, and read the context both before and after it, that I might not make the blunder of citing an objection instead of a reply, which would have been equally disgraceful and unjust.

79. The arithmetical machine produces effects approaching more nearly to thought, than any actions of the inferior animals ; but it performs nothing that will allow us to say it has a will like that of animals.

80. Some authors. when talking of their works, say, my book, my commentary, my history, etc. They observe their neighbours have a house of their own, and always “my house” at their tongue’s end. I recommend them to say, our book, our commentary, etc.,

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because in general they contain much more of what belongs to other people than to themselves.

81. Christian piety annihilates self; worldly politeness disguises and suppresses it.

82. If my heart were as poor as my understanding, I should be happy: for I am firmly persuaded, that poverty is a great instrument for salvation.

83. I have remarked one thing; that, however poor persons may be, they always leave something behind at death.

84. I love poverty, because Jesus Christ loved it. I value wealth, because it affords the means of assisting the unfortunate. I keep my word to every one. I return not evil for evil; but wish my enemies a condition like my own, in which they would receive little good or evil from their fellow-men. I aim at being always true, sincere, and faithful, to all men. I have a peculiar tenderness for those

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to whom God has united me most intimately. Whether I am alone, or in the presence of my fellow-men, in all my actions I have regard to that God who will judge them, and to whom I consecrate them all. These are my principles, and I will bless my Redeemer all my life, who has implanted them in my soul, and who, of a man full of weakness, unhappiness, concupiscence, pride, and ambition, has made a man exempt from all these evils, by the power of His grace, when there was nothing in myself but misery and horror.

85. Sickness is a state natural to Christians ; for then they are, as they ought always to be, in a state of suffering, of privation of all sensual good and pleasure, free from those passions which molest them in society, without ambition, without avarice, and in the continual expectation of death. Is it not in this state that Christians ought to go through life ? And is it not a great blessing to find ourselves, by necessity, in a state, such as we ought always to be in, and in which our only duty is humble and peaceable submission ? For this reason,

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the only favour I ask of God is, that He would place me in such a state. ✓

86. It is a strange thing, that men long to comprehend the first principles of all things, and to know every thing! It would be impossible, doubtless, to form such a project, without a presumption, or a capacity, unlimited as nature itself.

87. Nature has its perfections, to show that it is the image of God; and its defects, to show that it is only His image.

88. Men are so necessarily foolish, that it would only be a new freak of folly to pretend to be free from folly.

89. Take away probability, and you can no longer please the world: only let there be probability, and you cannot displease it.

90. The zeal of the pious to seek and practise excellence, would be useless, if probability was exchanged for certainty.

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91. For a man to become a saint, grace is absolutely necessary: he who doubts this, knows not what it is, to be either a man or a saint.

92. People like certainty: they are pleased that the Pope should be infallible in matters of faith, and that the grave Divines should be unerring in their practice, in order to feel confidence in them.

93. We are not to judge of the Pope by some expressions of the Fathers, as the Greeks said in council; (a most important rule certainly!) but by the actions of the Church, and the Fathers, and by the Canons.

94. The Pope is chief. What other individual is known by all? What other is recognised by all, having powers to influence the whole body, because he commands the main vessel which keeps up the general circulation.

95. It is heretical to explain the word all,

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omnes, as meaning universal constantly; and it is equally heretical, not to give it that meaning sometimes. “Bibite ex hoc omnes. Drink ye all of it:” the Huguenots are heretical, in explaining it in the universal sense. “In quo omnes peccaverunt. In whom all have sinned:” the Huguenots are heretical, in excepting the children of believers. We must, then, follow the fathers and tradition, since there is danger of heresy on either side.

96. The least motion affects all nature; the whole ocean is altered by a pebble. Thus in grace, the least action in its consequences, affects every other. Every thing, therefore, is important.

97. All men naturally hate themselves. We take advantage, as we can, of concupiscence, to promote the public good. But it is only a pretence, and a false image of charity: in reality, it is nothing but hatred. The wickedness of man’s heart (*figmentum malum*) is only covered; it is not taken away.

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98. If any one is disposed to assert that man is too insignificant a being to be worthy of divine communications, how great must such a person's capacity be, to be able to decide the point !

99. It is unworthy of God to unite Himself to man in his misery : but it is not unworthy of God to extricate him from his misery.

100. How incomprehensible ! what absurdities ! Sinners purified, without repentance ; the righteous sanctified, without the grace of Jesus Christ ; God, without power over the human will ; predestination, without mystery ; a Redeemer, without certainty !

101. Unity, multitude. Considering the Church as unity, the Pope is the chief of it, as a whole. Considering it as a multitude, the Pope is only one part of it. A multitude which is not reduced to unity, is confusion. Unity, in which the multitude have no influence, is tyranny.

102. God employs no miracles in the ordinary

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administration of His Church. This would be strange, if infallibility resided in an individual ; but as it is in a multitude, this is natural : thus the divine operation is concealed under the course of nature, as in all His works.

103. That the Christian religion is unique, is no argument against its truth. On the contrary, this is one evidence that it is true.

104. In a republic (Venice, for example) it would be a great enormity to attempt to introduce a king, and to oppress liberty among a people to whom God has given it ; but in a state where monarchy is established, the regard due to the regal authority cannot be violated, without a species of sacrilege, since the power God has attached to it, is not simply an image of His own, but a portion of it ; so that it cannot be opposed without resisting the ordinance of God. Moreover, civil war, which is a consequence of such opposition, being one of the most flagrant violations of the law of love to our neighbour, it is scarcely possible to express too strongly the heinousness of such a crime.

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The first Christians have left us a lesson not to revolt, but to endure with patience, when princes violate their duties.

I have as great an aversion to this crime as to assassination and highway robbery ; there is nothing more contrary to my natural disposition, and to which I feel less temptation.

15 J 105. Eloquence is the art of speaking things in such a manner, first, that those to whom they are spoken may understand them without difficulty, and with pleasure : secondly, that they may feel themselves interested, so that their self-love shall induce them more readily to reflect on the subject. It consists in a correspondence which the speaker attempts to establish between the hearts and minds of his hearers, on the one hand, and his own thoughts and expressions, on the other : this supposes that he has well studied the human heart, to understand all its springs of action, and then to find out those trains of thought, and turns of expression, that will suit it. He must put himself in the place of his hearers, and try, on his own heart, the edge of his discourse,

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to see if they are suited to each other, and whether he may feel assured, that his hearers will be, as it were, forced to surrender themselves. He must confine himself, as much as possible, within the bounds of simplicity and nature, and not attempt to make what is little, great, or what is great, little. It is not enough that a thing is beautiful ; it must be appropriate to the subject, so that there shall be nothing redundant, nothing deficient.

Eloquence is a picture of thought ; and those who, having drawn the thought, endeavour to add something, make a piece, instead of a portrait.

106. Divine Revelation is a science, not of the understanding, but of the heart. It is intelligible only to those who have a right heart. The veil which was over the Scriptures for the Jews, is also there for Christians ; Charity is not only the object of divine revelation ; it is also the entrance to it.

107. If certainty were the only rational ground of action, men could never embrace

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religion ; for it is not certain. But how many actions are performed on an uncertainty, such as travels, battles, etc. etc. If certainty alone will satisfy us, we shall do nothing, for nothing is certain ; and, after all, there is more certainty of the truth of religion, than that we shall live till to-morrow : for that is not certain ; but it is certainly possible that we shall not live so long. Can a similar assertion be made respecting religion ? It is not certain that it is true ; but who shall dare affirm that it is certainly possible that it is not true ? Yet when we labour for the morrow, and at an uncertainty, we act rationally.

108. Scientific inventions advance from age to age. The virtue and the vice in the world generally remain the same.

109. A wise man will have some thoughts on the back-ground, by which to judge of every thing ; but in society, he will use the current mode of talking.

110. Force is the queen of the world, and

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not opinion ; but opinion is that which makes use of force.

111. Thoughts come by chance, and are lost by chance ; there is no art either of preserving or acquiring them.

112. According to you, the Church is not to judge of what is internal, because that belongs to God, nor of what is external, because God penetrates into the internal ; thus, by not allowing it to judge of character, you retain in the Church the most abandoned men, even those who are so notoriously bad, that Jewish synagogues, and the schools of Pagan philosophers would have abhorred and excommunicated them.

113. Nowadays, whoever wishes is made a priest, as it was in the time of Jeroboam.

114. A multitude not reduced to unity, is confusion. A unity not dependent on the multitude, is despotism.

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115. Men consult only the ear, because they want courage.

116. In all our intercourse, we should be able to say to those who are offended, "Why do you complain?"

117. Children who are terrified by a countenance they have disfigured, act like children; but how comes it to pass that the being who is so feeble when an infant, is so courageous in latter life? It is not so, he only changes his weakness to other objects.

118. It is incomprehensible that God should exist, and incomprehensible that He should not exist; that a soul should be united to a body, and that we should have no soul; that the world should be created, and that it should not be created; that original sin should exist, and that it should not exist, etc.

119. Atheists ought to have the clearest proofs of their opinions, but it is not perfectly clear that the soul is material.

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120. No men are so credulous as unbelievers ; they will believe the miracles of Vespasian, in order to disbelieve those of Moses.

121. On the philosophy of Des Cartes.— We may say, in general, this is produced by figure and motion—for that is true ; but to say what figure and motion, and to compose a machine, is ridiculous, for it is useless, uncertain, and troublesome. And if it were true, we should not reckon all the philosophy in the world worth an hour's anxiety.

DETACHED MORAL THOUGHTS

1. Good maxims are very current ; but their right application is neglected. For instance, no one doubts that life itself should be hazarded for the public good : and by many this is put in practice ; but men will scarcely ever venture so much for the cause of Religion. An inequality of condition is absolutely necessary ; but this being agreed upon, occasions the exercise not only of supreme dominion, but of the most absolute tyranny. The mind requires a little relaxation : this is very true, but often perverted into an apology for unbounded dissipation. Certain limits may be imagined, but in actual life there are no limits ; the laws attempt to impose them, but men's minds will not submit to their control.

2. The commands of reason are far more

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imperious than those of a master ; for in disobeying the one, a man is unhappy ; in disobeying the other, he is a fool.

✓ 3. Why do you murder me ? A strange question ! do you not live on the other side of the water ? If you lived on this side, my good Sir, I should indeed be an assassin for killing you ; but you live on the other side : I am acting, therefore, like a man of honour, and everything is as it should be.

4. Men of irregular lives charge the sober with acting unnaturally, but imagine that they themselves act agreeably to nature : thus, when a ship gets under weigh, the people on shore appear to be receding. The same expressions are used by all, a fixed point is necessary to decide. The port answers this purpose for the passengers ; but where shall we find a similar point in morals ?

5. As fashion regulates the agreeable, so it determines what is just. If mankind really understood justice, that most general of all

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maxims would never have been established : That every one should follow the manners of his own country. The lustre of real equity would have compelled the homage of all nations, and legislators would never have taken for their model, instead of this unchangeable rectitude, the fancies and whims of Persia and Germany. Its authority would have been acknowledged in all kingdoms, and through every age.

6. Justice is that which is established ; and therefore, all our established laws are considered just without examination, simply because they are established.

7. The only universal rules, for ordinary things, are the laws of a country, and in other cases, the majority. Why is this ? It is because the power is there. Hence kings, who have power from other sources, are not regulated by the majorities in their cabinet.

8. No doubt an equality of goods is just ; but as it is impossible to make men follow the

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dictates of justice by suasion, we must make them submit to force. Since it is impossible for justice alone to regulate men's minds without external force, physical power is legalized; so that justice and force being combined, peace, the greatest of all blessings, is the result. Summum jus, summa injuria.

To decide by majorities is the best method, because it is something visible, and includes the power of compelling obedience; yet, after all, it is a mode of deliberation adapted to inferior minds.

If it were possible, we should put force into the hands of justice; but as force will not suffer itself to be managed as we like, because it is palpable, while justice is an immaterial quality, to be disposed of according to our fancy, we put justice into the hands of force; and that which men are forced to observe, assumes the name of Justice.

774 41 / 9. It is just to obey what is just; it is necessary to obey what is strongest. Justice without force is powerless; power without justice is tyrannical. Justice without force

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will be thwarted, as long as wicked men exist ; force without justice will be reprobated by all the good. Therefore, justice and force must be joined, in order that what is just may be powerful, and that what is powerful may be just.

Justice is open to dispute ; force is palpable and indisputable. Thus we have only to add force to justice. Unable to make what is just to be powerful, we must make what is powerful to be just.

10. It is dangerous to tell the people that the laws are not just ; for their obedience depends on the contrary belief. For this reason, they must be told, at the same time, that they must obey, because they are the laws ; as our superiors must be obeyed, not because they are just, but because they are our superiors. If they fall in with these views, all sedition is prevented. This is all that properly belongs to the definition of Justice.

11. It is well that the laws and customs of a state should be obeyed, simply because they

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are established, and that the people should understand that this makes them just. In this case, they will never disown their authority; but if it is attempted to assert their justice on any other grounds, it will easily be rendered questionable; and nothing more is wanted to dispose the people to revolt.

12. When the question to be decided is, whether a war should be made, in which thousands will perish, and numbers of Spaniards be condemned to die, all depends on the will of one man, and he, too, an interested individual; the right of decision ought to be vested in a third unbiassed party.

13. "I am handsome, therefore I ought to be feared"; "I am strong, therefore I ought to be loved," etc. Speeches of this kind are false and tyrannical. Tyranny consists in wishing to obtain, by one method, what can be obtained only by another. There are different orders of sentiment suited to the various kinds of excellence. Love is appropriate to the agreeable, fear to power, and belief to knowledge. There

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is a propriety in thus exercising the feelings, and it would be unjust to withhold them, or to fix them upon other subjects. It is equally erroneous and tyrannical to say, "Such a one is not strong, therefore I will not love him ; he is not clever, therefore I will not fear him." Tyranny consists in the desire of universal and irregular dominion.

14. Some vices adhere to us only by means of others ; they are like so many branches which fall when the trunk is cut down.

15. When a malignant passion can support its pretensions by reason, its violence is increased, and it never fails to set forth the claims of reason with the utmost force. When austerity or self-denial is not regulated by a regard to real good, and we are obliged to return to the dictates of nature, that also operates with greater power, owing to the revulsion.

16. The exhilaration produced by amusement is not happiness, for it arises from what is

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extraneous to ourselves : it is therefore dependent on circumstances, and consequently liable to be disturbed by a thousand accidents and unavoidable misfortunes.

17. Great enlargement of mind, not less than extreme limitation of faculty, is charged with folly. Nothing obtains currency in the world but mediocrity. The multitude have established this order of things, and are on the alert to let no one escape, who attempts to break through at either end. As for myself, I have no hankering after distinction, and am content to remain just where society chooses to place me ; or if I show any dislike to the lower end, it arises not from the inferiority of the situation, but because it is one of the extremes : I should be quite as reluctant to occupy the upper end. To pass beyond the medium, is to go out of the sphere of humanity ; true greatness of mind consists in keeping within it ; though it is too often imagined to consist in going out of it.

✓ 18. In order to gain the reputation of being a poet, a man must put on the badge of a poet ; ✓

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or to rank high in the mathematics, he must put on the badge of a mathematician. But men of sense, who are free from all such vanity, wear no particular badges: the reputation of an embroiderer or a poet is all one to them. They are not called poets or geometricians, though they can decide on the merits of those who profess to be such. Their character is an enigma to the rest of the world. When they mix with society, they readily join in whatever happens to be the topic of conversation. They make no unnecessary display of their talents, but wait till an occasion calls them into action, and then their superiority appears: with such persons, it is equally in character that their diction should not excite attention when the subject does not require eloquence, and that it should attract our notice, when the occasion admits of eloquence. It is poor commendation to say of a man, as he enters a room, that he is a clever poet; and an unfavourable indication of his abilities when he is appealed to only respecting a set of verses. Man is a being full of wants, and likes no person so well as those who can satisfy them. Such a one,

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they tell me, is a good mathematician ; but what have I to do with mathematics ? I hear another applauded as a military tactician ; but I detest war, and wish to live in peace with the whole world. What we want then, is a man of practical good sense, who can help us out in the daily occurrences of life.

19. When in health, we cannot imagine how we should behave if we were sick : but when sickness comes, it induces us to take medicine readily. The passions which agitated us in the time of health, and the desires after social amusements which were then so vivid, subside and vanish under the pressure of disease. Nature bestows upon us passions and desires suited to the change in our condition. We ought not therefore to blame her for the apprehensions we are prone to indulge : they are the offspring of our own fancy, which connects with the state in which we are, the feelings of the state in which we are not.

20. Discourses on humility cherish pride in the vain-glorious, but promote humility in the

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humble; and just in the same way sceptical discussions increase the confidence of the dogmatic. Few persons talk of humility in a humble spirit, or of chastity with a chaste mind, or of doubt with hesitation. We are made up of falsehood, duplicity and contradiction. We disguise ourselves from others, and even conceal ourselves from our own view.

21. Virtuous actions which have been concealed from notoriety are the most estimable. Whenever I meet with such in history, they delight me exceedingly. But then they have not been quite concealed, or they would not have been on record; and as far as this circumstance goes, it diminishes their merit: it would have been more virtuous to have resolved to conceal them entirely.

22. A jester is a contemptible character.

✓ 23. Selfishness is hateful; therefore those who do not renounce it, but are satisfied simply with concealing it, are always hateful. "By no means," I hear someone say, "for if

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we treat every one with courtesy, they have no just ground for hating us." I grant this would be true, if the only thing hateful in self-love, were the uneasiness its indulgence occasions us. But if I hate it because it is unjust, aiming as it does to be the centre of everything, there is not a moment in which I can cease to hate it. In a word, selfishness has two qualities; it is essentially unjust, because it aims at becoming the centre of every thing; and it is offensive to others, because it would make them its slaves: for every one in whom self is a leading principle is the enemy, and would be the tyrant of the human race. Your courtesy, I allow, checks the injurious operation of selfishness, but does not alter the injustice of its nature; do what you will, you cannot render it an object of approbation to those who hate injustice; though the unjust may be pleased that they no longer meet it as an enemy: thus you continue unjust yourself, and please none but those who are likewise unjust.

24. I do not admire a man who possesses

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one virtue in perfection, unless he possesses, at the same time, in an equal degree, the opposite virtue ; and such was Epaminondas, in whom the greatest valour was combined with the greatest benignity. Where this is not the case, the character, instead of rising, sinks. Mental greatness is shown not by being at one extremity of the scale, but by touching both ends at once, and filling up the interval too. This, however, may be nothing more than the quick transition of the mind from one extreme to the other, so that it shall be really only in one point at any given time, like a firebrand which, by a rapid gyration, presents the appearance of a circle of flame ; but if so, it indicates the agility, if not the comprehensiveness of the mind.

25. If our present condition were a happy one, there would be no occasion to shun the thoughts of it. Trifles console us, because trifles afflict us.

26. I used to spend much of my time in the study of the abstract sciences, but I lost my

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relish for them, when I found so few with whom I could exchange thoughts respecting them. As soon as I began the study of Man, I saw that these subjects were not suited to his nature, and that I had mistaken the best method of employing my faculties, in attempting to investigate them, much more than others in remaining ignorant of them: I felt persuaded, however, that I should have plenty of companions in the study of man, which is our proper study. But here again I have been mistaken. There are fewer students of human nature than of Geometry.

27. When all things move at the same rate (as in a vessel under sail) nothing appears to move. When a whole community falls into disorder, individual irregularities are not observed, because the standard is lost. But let any one set himself against the general current of society, and he becomes a fixed point, from which to measure the aberrations of the rest.

28. Philosophers have assumed the credit of

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being very ingenious, for the classifications of their moral systems. But can they explain why they should use four divisions rather than six? Why should they make four cardinal virtues rather than ten? Why define virtue to consist in *abstine et sustine* (abstain and endure) rather than in anything else? But mark, say you, a single word contains a whole system. Yes, but it is of no use unless you explain it; and if you proceed to the explanation, and lay open the precept which includes all others, that very confusion is produced which you intended to avoid. In short, as long as moral precepts are contained in one word, they are unknown and useless; and when developed they reappear in their original confusion. Nature has constituted each of them separately; and though we may comprise one within another, each exists independently of the rest. Thus all these classifications and technical phrases have scarcely any use, but to relieve the memory, and to be a sort of indexes of their contents.

29. If we wish to reprove a person for his

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good, and to convince him of his mistakes, we must take notice in what point of view he has considered the matter in question, and acknowledge the correctness of his discernment so far ; for correct it will generally be, within certain limits. He will be pleased to find that he was not altogether in the wrong, and that his mistakes were only owing to not having surveyed the subject on all sides. For not to have noticed everything is not esteemed disgraceful, but men are reluctant to acknowledge themselves mistaken in what they have observed : and perhaps this feeling arises from its being a fact, that the mind is naturally correct in its perceptions of what it sees, just as the notices of the senses are always true.

30. A man's virtues must be measured, not by his extraordinary efforts, but by his usual course of action.

31. The great and the little are subject to the same accidents, the same vexations, and the same passions ; but the former are near the circumference of the wheel, the latter are

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at the centre, and are therefore less agitated by the same movements.

32. We must not take for granted that a man speaks the truth because he has no interest in telling a falsehood, for there are those who lie for the lie's sake.

33. Alexander's continence has had far fewer imitators than his drunkenness. While no shame is felt for being less virtuous than he was, men think themselves excusable if they are not more vicious. They fancy, that when they indulge in the vices of the great, they rise above the vices of the multitude, without reflecting that the same vices are common to both. They unite with the great just at the point where they unite with the multitude ; for however elevated the former may be, they are still in contact with the rest of mankind at some points. They are not suspended in the air, and dissevered from all connection with the earth. If they are above us, it is because their heads are more elevated ; their feet are as low as our own. They stand on

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the same level, they walk on the same earth, and by their lower extremities are as debased as ourselves, as children, or even as brutes.

✓ 34. It is the contest, and not the victory, which gives us pleasure. We like to see the combats of animals, but not the victor tearing the vanquished in pieces. We may ask, what object can there be excepting the victory? Yet when that is gained, our interest in the whole affair is lost. It is the same in games of hazard; it is the same in the investigation of truth. We are pleased to witness the collision of opinions, but not to contemplate truth when discovered; we behold it with pleasure only in a militant state. We are not interested by the things themselves, but by the search for them. And so there is pleasure in observing the conflict of two opposite passions; but when one gains the mastery, it becomes brute violence. In dramatic representations, we turn away from scenes which are placid without uncertainty, wretched without hope, and full of passion without refinement.

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35. Men are taught everything excepting honesty; and yet nothing is deemed a greater insult than to suspect a person of a flaw in this point. So that men make the greatest pretensions to know the only thing which has never been taught them.

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36. How silly the attempt of Montaigne to delineate his own character! and that not in an accidental manner, and contrary to his own fixed principles, a mistake to which every one is liable, but in accordance with his principles, and as his main and principal design! For to talk nonsense by accident, and without reflection, is common enough: but to take pains to gossip, as he has done, is intolerable.

37. To utter expressions of pity for the unfortunate, does not thwart any natural propensity: on the contrary, men are well pleased to give this proof of their humanity, and thus to acquire a reputation for tenderness by bestowing what costs them nothing; but such benevolence is of little value.

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38. Could it have been supposed, that a man might possess the friendship of the King of England, the King of Poland, and the Queen of Sweden, and yet might find it difficult to obtain a retreat and an asylum ?

39. All objects that come under our notice have various qualities, and the mind has various inclinations : nothing is presented to the mind in a simple state, nor is the mind in a simple state when it examines any object ; hence we sometimes laugh and cry at the same thing.

40. The powerful, the beautiful, the witty and the religious, form distinct classes, and each is confined within certain limits, beyond which it can exercise no control. Sometimes, however, they come into collision : the strong and the beautiful contend for the mastery ; but most absurdly, for their supremacy is of different kinds. Self-ignorance leads them to aim at universal dominion. But nothing can attain this, not even physical power, which has no authority in the republic of letters, being only master of external actions.

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41. *Ferox gens nullam esse vitam sine armis putat.* Some men would rather die than live in a state of peace: others would lose their lives sooner than go to war. There is no sentiment of the human mind, which, on some occasions, will not be held dearer than life, though the love of that is so strong and so natural.

42. How difficult is it to submit a literary work to the judgment of another person, without biassing his mind by our very manner of doing it. If we drop some such expression as "It seems to me very beautiful;" or, "It is rather obscure," we either beguile his imagination into the same sentiment, or prompt him to adopt the contrary. It would be much better to say nothing, for then he would form his own judgment, or at least would judge according to the mood he happened to be in and as affected by circumstances, of which we were not the disposers. After all, our silence itself will produce some effect, and will be variously interpreted according to the humour we happen to be in; some conjecture will be

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formed from our looks and the tones of our voice. So easy is it to remove the judgment from its proper basis, or rather so very slight and unstable is that basis !

43. Montaigne's opinion respecting custom is just ; as soon as it is really such ; and when we find it established, it ought to be followed, without examining whether it is rational or not, provided it opposes neither natural right, nor the divine law. The multitude, it is true, follows custom under the belief of its justice, or they would soon abandon it : for men do not like to own subjection to any thing but reason and justice. Custom, without this notion, would be looked upon as tyranny ; whereas the dominion of reason and justice is no more tyranny than that of pleasure.

44. The knowledge of external things will never compensate, in times of affliction, for ignorance of what relates to our moral being : but moral wisdom will always compensate for ignorance of external things.

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45. Time puts an end to our sorrows and our quarrels, because our characters alter, and we become as it were different beings. Neither the offender nor the offended is the same person. It is like a nation with which all intercourse has been broken off, but renewed after a generation or two have passed away. They are still Frenchmen, but not the same individuals.

46. What are the features of our condition ? Inconstancy, weariness, disquietude. If any one wishes to be thoroughly acquainted with the vanity of man, he has only to consider the causes and effects of love. The cause is *un je ne sais quoi*, and the effects are terrible. This *je ne sais quoi*, such a little thing that we can scarcely discern its existence, shakes the earth, agitates princes, and armies, and the whole human race. If Cleopatra's nose had been a few lines shorter, the state of the world would have been changed.

47. It seems to me that Cæsar was too old to set about amusing himself with the conquest

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of the world. This sort of amusement was suited to Alexander: he was a young man whose impetuosity it was almost impossible to restrain; but Cæsar should have been too sedate for such an enterprise.

48. Fickleness in our pleasures arises from a sense of the emptiness of those we have tried, and ignorance of the vanity of the rest.

49. Kings and princes sometimes divert themselves. If they were always on their thrones they would soon be tired of them. Grandeur must be laid aside in order to be felt.

50. Whatever my state of mind may be, it is little influenced by the weather. The storm and the sunshine are within my own breast: the success or failure of my projects makes scarcely any difference. Sometimes I endeavour to rise superior to misfortune, and the glory of the attempt makes it pleasurable; while at other times, in the midst of prosperity, I am indifferent or disgusted.

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51. While putting my thoughts on paper, they sometimes escape me ; but this reminds me of my weakness, which I am so apt to forget, and affords as much instruction as the thoughts could do that I have lost ; for I aim above all things to know my own nothingness.

52. It is very striking to observe, that there are in the world men who have forsworn all the laws of God and nature, and yet observe others of their own making with the utmost scrupulosity : highwaymen for example.

53. "This dog is mine," says the child of a poor man : "this is my place in the sunshine : " in such expressions we may detect the germ and image of a tyranny that would extend itself over the whole earth.

54. "Have the goodness to excuse the remark, but your manners are awkward." Were it not for this apology, I would not have taken what you said as an affront. Let me tell you nothing is so offensive as an apology.

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55. People in general suppose that Plato and Aristotle always appeared in full dress, with a grave and philosophic air. Instead of this, they were sociable beings, who could enjoy themselves with their friends like other people: and when they wrote their treatises on law and politics, it was to amuse and divert themselves, and formed the least philosophic and serious part of their lives. Their philosophical character was shown much more in living without luxury and ostentation.

56. Men are prone to indulge wishes of evil: not against the unfortunate, but against those whom they behold in the pride of wealth: we shall be mistaken if we form a different opinion.

Martial's epigram on the one-eyed is worthless, because it suggests no consolation to those who are in that unfortunate situation, and serves only to display the author's wit: every thing of that sort is contemptible. *Ambitiosa recidet ornamenta.* A writer should study to please men of benevolence and genuine tenderness, not the unkindly and misanthropic.

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57. I know not what to reply to compliments of this sort : “ I have given you a great deal of trouble ; I fear I shall fatigue you : I am afraid this will be tedious : ”—such speeches either embarrass or provoke me.

58. A sincere friend is so valuable an acquisition, even for men of the highest rank in order to guard their reputation and support their interests in their absence, that they should spare no pains to obtain one. But let them be very careful in their choice ; for if they expend their efforts on a vain fool, he will be of no service, whatever he may say on their behalf, for no one will respect his opinion : he will be afraid to open his mouth for them, when he finds himself the weakest ; and as his character possesses no independence, it will not be surprising if he should join the rest of the company in abusing them.

59. Do you wish that men should speak well of you ? Do not say so.

60. Let not men ridicule those who are

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honoured on account of their official situation ; but ask themselves whether they love any one excepting for adventitious qualities. All men naturally hate one another. I venture to assert, that if every thing were known which men say of each other, there would not be four friends in the whole world. To be convinced of this, only consider the quarrels produced by tale-bearing.

61. It is more easy to suffer death without thinking of it, than to think of it when in no danger of suffering it.

62. That a thing so visible as the vanity of the world should be so little apprehended, as to make the assertion, that it is folly to seek after its grandeur, appear strange and striking, is truly astonishing.

He who does not see the vanity of the world must be vain himself. And who does not see it, excepting young people who are taken up with diversions, regardless of the future ? But take away their diversions, and you see them pine away with listlessness ; they then have a sense of their own nothingness, without

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understanding it: for this is wretchedness indeed, to suffer intolerable sadness, as soon as we are forced to self-reflection, and have no object to divert our thoughts.

63. In all human things there is a mixture of truth and falsehood. Essential truth is different: it is purely and altogether true. The alloy of falsehood debases and destroys it. Nothing is true, understanding by the term, unmixed truth. Murder is bad. Yes: for we know very well what is bad and false. But can any one say what is good? Celibacy? I say it is not good, for it would bring the world to an end. Is marriage good? No; continence is far better. Is it right never to put persons to death? No; for the disorders of society would be horrible, and the wicked would kill the good. But is it right to kill? No; for this would destroy nature. We possess neither what is true nor what is useful excepting partially and mixed with what is pernicious and false.

64. Evil may easily be met with, for its forms

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are infinite ; but good is uniform. There is, however, a certain kind of evil as difficult to find as what is generally called good : and men often mistake this particular evil for a good. Indeed it requires an extraordinary capacity to attain such evil.

65. The ties which secure the regard of one class of men to another, are, generally speaking, ties of necessity: for a distinction of ranks is unavoidable. All men are ambitious of dominion, but only some possess the power. But the ties which secure the respect of individuals to one another, are ties of the imagination.

66. We are so unfortunate that we cannot take pleasure in any pursuit but on the condition of being chagrined if we are unsuccessful ; which may be occasioned by a thousand accidents, and happens every hour. Whoever should discover the secret of enjoying a good without being affected by the contrary evil, will have gained a great point.

67. We must not forget our own nature ; we

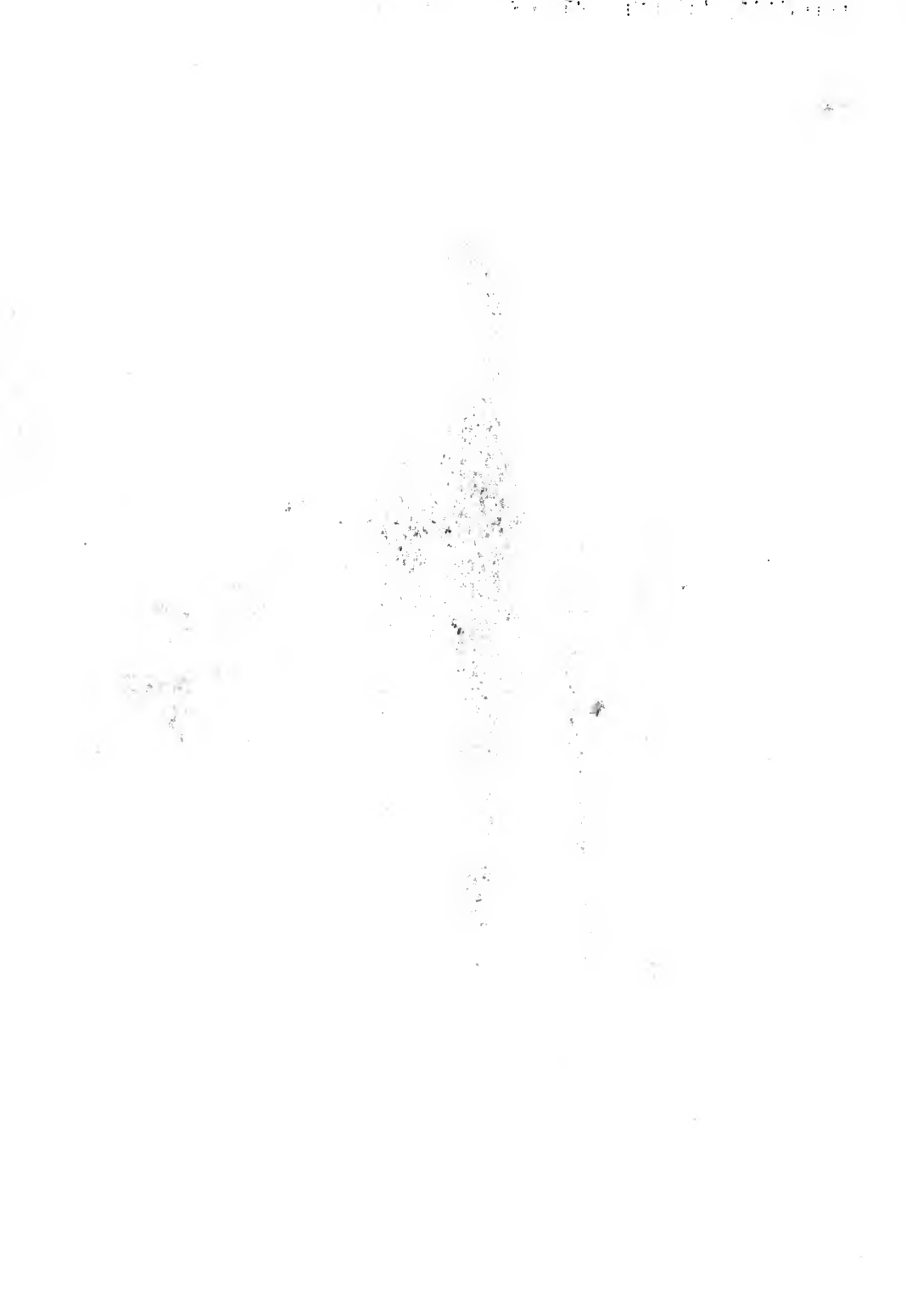
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are body as well as spirit, and hence pure demonstration is not the instrument of persuasion. How very few things are there demonstrable! Arguments act only on the mind. Custom adds strength to argument; it enlists the senses on its side, which imperceptibly carry the understanding along with them. Who can demonstrate that the sun will rise to-morrow, or that we shall die? yet what is more universally believed? Custom persuades men of it; this it is which makes so many Turks and Pagans, this makes soldiers and artisans. It is true we must not appeal to custom when we are in quest of truth, but we must have recourse to it as soon as the understanding sees where the truth lies, that our minds may be thoroughly imbued with belief, of itself so volatile a thing; for to keep the arguments constantly before us would be endless trouble. We must acquire a more easy belief, and such is that of custom, which, without violence, without art, without argument, produces belief, and so inclines all our faculties, that it costs us no effort to retain it. The two parts of our frame must act in unison; the

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mind convinced by those arguments which it suffices to have understood once in our lives, and the senses persuaded by habit, and not allowed to allure us in a contrary direction.

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