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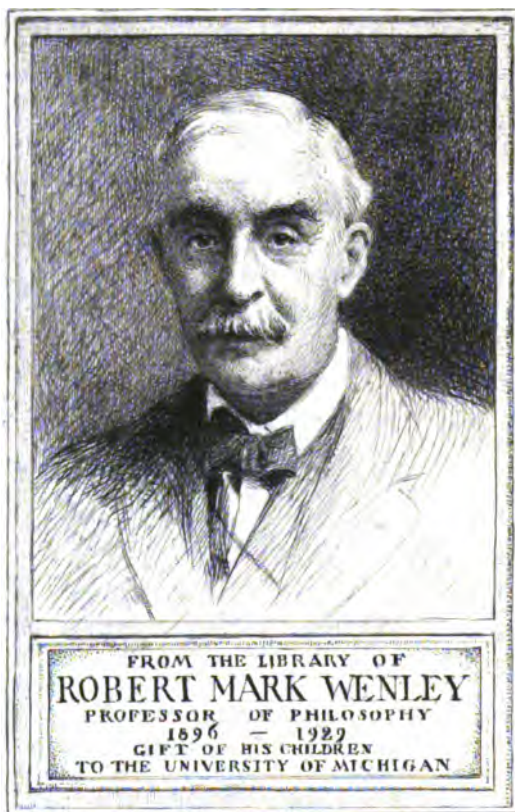
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IN MATTERS OF  
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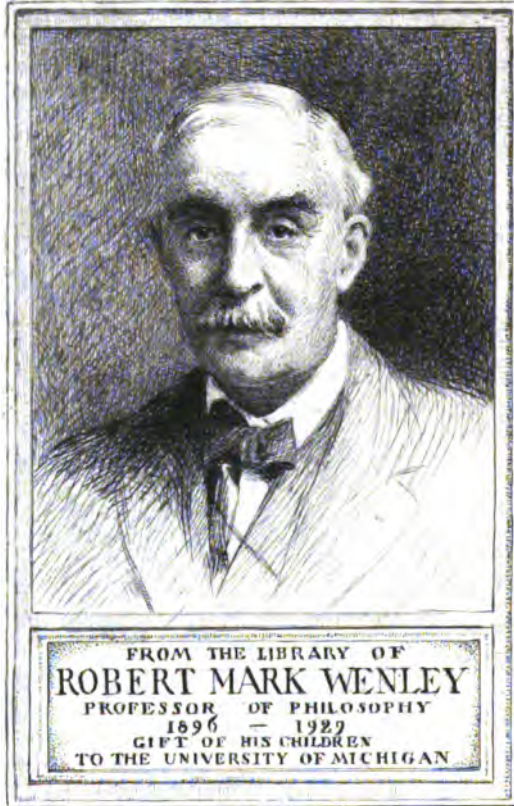
*BY THE ABBÉ F. DE LAMENNAIS.*



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ESSAY ON RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE



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ESSAY  
ON INDIFFERENCE  
IN MATTERS OF  
RELIGION

By THE ABBÉ F<sup>Hugues</sup> DE LAMENNAIS<sup>Robert</sup>

*Impius, cum in profundum venerit . . . contemnit.*  
—PROV. xviii, 3

TRANSLATED BY  
LORD STANLEY OF ALDERLEY

LONDON

JOHN MACQUEEN

HASTINGS HOUSE, NORFOLK STREET, STRAND

1895

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 ERRATUM

Page 10, line 3, for *obstination* read *obstinacy*.

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

'Indifference is worse than error.'

*Sermon preached at St Roch, Paris, April 1861, by Archbishop Manning.*

LET no man turn aside from this book because he is not a Roman Catholic. Many men may find words and sentences in it with which they may disagree (as has been the case with the translator); but the main object of the book, as indicated by its title, is one that concerns all men alike, and its arguments are more needed in England now, than when they were first written, to combat the rationalistic tendency developed by some of the Oxford Essays and the spirit of infidelity of Voltaire and Rousseau, which has penetrated wherever those French writers are read and understood.

*February 10, 1862.*

The Abbé Lamennais was born at St Malo in 1782. His father belonged to a rich mercantile and ship-owning family, he had received letters of nobility in 1786 from Louis XVI, about the last which he signed. Felicité Lamennais had an elder brother Jean, who became a priest; Feli, as he used to sign his name, at the age of 22, or in 1804, became professor of mathematics at St Malo, and first became a communi-

cant in 1808. When he was 26 years of age he published 'Reflections on the State of the Church in France,' which was instantly seized by Napoleon's police, and he had to withdraw from their notice. In 1812 he and his brother published a book on the Institution of Bishops: this book supported the view that the election of bishops must be confirmed by the Holy See. In 1814, Lamennais wrote a violent attack on Napoleon on account of his foundation of the Imperial University; and shortly after that, Napoleon having escaped from Elba, Lamennais had to fly to England, where he was well received in London by the Abbé Carron; but he was not well received by Mrs Jerningham, sister-in-law of Lord Stafford, who did not ask him to sit down, and thought him dull and stupid, evidently from his shyness. He remained seven months in England, and in December 1815 entered St Sulpice, where he was taken for dull and stupid; at the end of a fortnight he came back to the Feuillantines and the Abbé Carron, and in 1816 he was ordained at Rennes. Lamennais was then thirty-four. He went back to the Abbé Carron, and there finished the first volume of his 'Essay on Indifference in Religion' which appeared in 1817. After his first visit to Rome he returned in 1824 to his paternal home, La Chênaye, two leagues from Dinan, where he lived in peace till 1833.

From September 1830 he and the Père Lacordaire and the Abbé Gebert conducted the newspaper the *Avenir* which sought to conciliate the Church and modern liberal ideas. The *Avenir* was condemned at

Rome in August 1832, and Lamennais went thither to submit himself. After some time he obtained a promise that nothing more should follow the censure of that newspaper. In a state of half-submission he returned to France through Germany; and at Munich, at a banquet offered to him by some philosophers, the encyclical letter against the *Avenir* was presented to him. This irritated him to such a degree that he returned to La Chênaye and finished the 'Paroles d'un Croyant' with an outburst against Rome and the Pope.

In 1834, two bishops endeavoured without success to bring back the Abbé Lamennais to better sentiments. His last letter from his house is dated April 5, 1836. After that he became an inmate of Ste. Pelagie, a debtor's prison. Lamennais had chosen for his tomb a place under the trees near his house and chapel; but in 1854, after an old age of isolation, which was an expiation, he died and was buried in the common grave (*fosse commune*). His brother the Abbé Jean died shortly afterwards of grief.

I have not read Lamennais' second volume nor his other works; and if I had, I should not offer an opinion upon them. M. de Ste. Beuve says that his doctrine of 'General Consent' was not regarded at Rome as an error, but as of a deceptive nature (*comme trompeur*), and as requiring the study of too many religions and philosophical theories. This doctrine, like the assertion that no savages have been found without some notions of religion, has long been familiar in England, and some of the philosophers who thought they had disposed of Revealed Religion have latterly



attacked Natural Religion, and endeavoured to show that there are savages without any religion. One of these books was put upon the Index at Rome, and its importation prohibited at St Petersburg. With regard to the newspaper *Avenir*, I gather from the criticism of it in the biography of Lamennais, by M. Peigné, published in 1863, and from the references to the *Avenir*, in Mrs Bishop's 'Life of Mrs Craven,' that the newspaper was censured at Rome for political rather than theological reasons. M. Peigné makes it clear, also, that from a child, Lamennais was of a headstrong and rather sullen disposition, subject to fits of anger, for which he made excuses, saying that were it not for the relief afforded by these outbursts he would go mad; and that when he broke out in rebellion against Rome, it was not from intellectual pride, but from temper, which made him at times hardly a responsible being; and that it is a calamity that the author of the first volume of the 'Essay on Religious Indifference' should have been goaded, as he was, past endurance—for M. Peigné says he was accused of all the seven capital sins, and that his adversaries would have liked to invent an eighth with which to charge him.

In February of 1862, I was staying with the late Ahmed Vefyk Pasha at Constantinople, when he put this book<sup>1</sup> into my hands, and recommended me to translate it into English. I set to work, and finished the first eight chapters in thirty-eight days of February and March; the other four chapters

<sup>1</sup>4th Edition, 1818.

were finished later, by the 9th of August.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after that I endeavoured to get the book published; those to whom I addressed myself, whilst approving my translation, thought that the book was too exclusively Roman Catholic to suit their public, and Chapter VII was specially objected to. The MS. then got mislaid, and I only found it in February last, with the correspondence of 1862 and 1863. This led me to read Chapter VII; when I came to the conclusion that if there had been any reason in 1862 for presenting Lamennais' Essay to English readers there was still more reason for doing so now, for the incriminated Chapter VII contains the strongest arguments against the doctrine of the 'Fundamental Points,' or (in modern parlance) Common Christianity, School Board religion, or undenominational religious instruction without either creeds or explanation of the Bible.

The aversion felt and expressed by some to dogma and dogmatic teaching, is due in a great measure to the word dogma having been used for doctrine. The latter is a Latin word meaning teaching: dogma is a Greek word originally meaning an opinion, it then became a received opinion, an authoritative opinion, a decree, a *senatus-consultum*; and in modern English a dogmatic assertion, or a dogmatic disputant, carries with it the sense of arrogance. This alteration of meaning is a defect common to other Greek expressions: thus sophism and sophistry convey the idea of quibbling rather than of wisdom.

<sup>1</sup> The whole was done in 114 days.

I am not in a position to enter into any controversy on the subject ; but I would hazard the expression of the opinion that there is little in the Abbé Lamennais' Essay to hurt the feelings of members of the Anglican Church, and that they would repudiate as strongly as he has done the writings of various philosophical writers, both English and French ; and that the Protestants whom the Abbé attacks are not the clergy of the Church of England, but rather those persons who consider baths and wash-houses religious purposes, and objects of endowment to be preferred to parish churches for public worship. There is not much difference between such Protestants and one whom his friends requested the late Sir Henry Rawlinson when at Baghdad to allow them to present to him. Yielding to their importunity, Sir Henry Rawlinson received the neophyte, and asked him what his notion was of leaving his Church to become a Protestant ; and was astounded at receiving the answer, ' I drink wine, I eat pork, and I do not believe in God.'

The late Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Manning, had entered into some understanding with the Nonconformists, at the time of the disestablishment of the Irish Church, not to ask for any of the Church property for his Church. Several years later I inferred from some articles of his, on Voluntary Schools, that his views had been modified as to Dissenters. I asked one of his priests, ' How is it that the Archbishop seems to be less fond of the Dissenters?' and the answer was, ' Because he sees dissent leads to atheism.'

I must give another reminiscence of my friend, the instigator of this translation. A year or two before he gave me this book at Constantinople, he was Ottoman ambassador at Paris, and at that time importuned me to call upon M. Renan, and I did so. M. Renan had published his opinion that the Aryan or Indo-European nations were racially and naturally inclined to polytheism, whilst the Semitic nations were racially inclined to monotheism ; and, oblivious of Phœnician Astarte, he said that to speak of a goddess would be a solecism in Semitic languages. So I tackled him on this point, and asked him what he made of Baalim and Ashtaroth, the latter a feminine plural, and of the words 'Lat' and 'ilat,' which are to be found in the most elementary Arabic dictionaries. He got out of this very lamely, but as far as I know, did not correct what he had written. On my return to the Ottoman Embassy I told Ahmed Vefyk Pasha that I had found M. Renan an uninteresting person, and not one of much learning, and I asked why he had been so anxious that I should see him. His answer was that he wished me to see the man so that his books should do me no harm. Several years later I called on the Chief Rabbi, or ostensible Chief Rabbi, at Constantinople. The conversation was begun in Spanish ; but, as my Spanish was not sufficiently archaic for him, we changed to Turkish, and the Chief Rabbi asked me what I thought of Renan. I said he was a man who had done much injury to Religion. The Chief Rabbi corrected this, saying that a man might do great injury to himself but not to Religion.

Chapters X and XI would be more political than theological, but for the fact that the author shows the necessity for an intimate connection between Church and State, and that order in the State depends upon sound doctrine. These chapters entirely dispose of utilitarian morality—'la morale independante,' as it has been named in France since Lamennais' time. They show also that, although the House of Lords may yield to the expressed will of the representatives of the people in matters of expediency, it should not yield in matters of right and wrong, such as were involved in the Bill to disendow the Church of England in Wales which was presented by the recent Liberal Ministry.

*August 1895*

## INTRODUCTION

THE age that is most ailing is not that which is violent in behalf of error, but the age which neglects, which disdains the truth. There is still power, and consequently hope, wherever violent commotions are felt: but when all motion is extinguished, when the pulse has ceased to beat, when a cold chill has reached the heart, what next is to be expected but an approaching and unavoidable dissolution.

It would be vain to attempt to dissemble the fact, that society in Europe is advancing rapidly to this fatal limit. The sounds which clamour within its breast, the throes which shake it, are not the most alarming symptoms which it presents to the observer. But who will extricate it from this lethargic indifference, this profound apathy, into which it is falling before our eyes? Who will breathe upon these dried bones to reanimate them? Good and evil, the tree which gives life, and that which produces death, nourished by the same soil, grow up in the midst of nations, which pass by without raising their heads, and stretching forth their hands pluck their fruits at hazard. Religion, morality, honour, duty, the most

sacred principles and the most noble sentiments, are no longer more than a kind of dream—brilliant and airy phantoms, which play for a moment in the far distances of thought, soon to disappear, and never to return. No, nothing similar had ever been seen, or could ever have been imagined. Long and persevering efforts, an untiring strife of man against his conscience and his reason, were needed to arrive at length at this brutal carelessness. Pause a moment to look at that lord of the creation: what an incomprehensible debasement! His weakened mind is at ease only amidst darkness. To him joy, peace and happiness is to be ignorant; he has lost even the very desire to know that which most interests him. Contemplating truth and error with equal disgust, he affects to believe that it is not possible to discriminate between them, in order to confound them in a common contempt; the last excess of intellectual depravity to which it is allowed him to reach: *cum in profundum venerit, contemnit.*

When one comes to consider this prodigious aberration, a certain unspeakable pity is felt for human nature. For can any more wretched situation be conceived than that of a being equally ignorant of his duties and his destinies; or any stranger overthrow of reason, than to put pride and happiness in this very ignorance, which ought much rather to be the subject of inconsolable lamentation.

The primary cause of so shameful a degradation is less the weakness of our mind, than its subjection to the body. Fallen under the dominion of the senses,

man grows into the habit of judging only by them, or upon their testimony. He sees no reality except in that which strikes them; everything else appears to him in the light of vague abstractions and fantasies. He lives only in the material world: the intellectual world is nothing to him. He would even deny the existence of his thoughts, if it were less present and less near to him; but being unable, if I may so speak, to separate himself from it, nevertheless refusing to acknowledge it for what it is, he makes it out to be a result of his organisation, and materialises it, so as not to be obliged to admit of the existence of essences inaccessible to the senses.

And, wonderful to relate, the cultivation of the physical sciences, which remind man at every moment of his superiority over the brutes, by occupying him continually with material objects, strengthen in him that abject inclination to abase himself to the level of the lowest creatures. Then his soul became disgusted with itself, it blushed for its heavenly origin, and strove to extinguish the last recollection of it. That immense love, which is the basis of its nature, man has turned it aside from its course in order to apply it solely to the body; it has loved the body as the object of its destiny; it has sought to identify itself with it, to be perishable like it; it has said to itself: Thou shalt die! and it thrilled with hope.

If overreaching its destiny, it could indeed acquire death, the means which it has taken would be infallible; and by annihilating truth with respect to itself, it has as much as was in its power annihilated



itself, for in whatever sense it may be taken, truth is the life, the sole cause of the existence of man and society. Moreover, in the moral, as well as in the political order of things, everything tends to destruction, and advances with more or less rapidity towards that limit in proportion as the war against truth is more or less successful, more or less active. A recent and too memorable experiment leaves no doubt upon this point, and to whoever does not wilfully blind himself, it is evident that the French revolution, which was so pre-eminently destructive, owed its deadly character only to the impious frenzy of its promoters, who with a fury till then unheard of, attacked all truths at the same time.

It is not, however, but what there has ever existed in the depths of the heart of man a secret opposition to truth, which interferes with its inclinations and humiliates its pride. He loves and fears it; he desires it and seeks for it from natural inclination as the condition of his well-being; and often later, weary of its yoke, he is irritated at having found it: a singular contradiction, which philosophy alone will never be able to explain. After having uselessly wearied our mind, we must get religion to make amends for its incapacity, and come and unbind the knot, whose folds, deeply hid, escape equally from our search and our conjectures; it is necessary, in short, that we should be enlightened as to our real condition by a brighter light than that of our vacillating reason, and that the Author of our nature should Himself reveal to us the cause of the contradictions which

astonish us. Then only the veil falls, and we perceive man such as he is: we discover in him two different beings, who continually combat one another and triumph by turns; the one attached to everything good, noble, and true; the other inclined to all that is evil, vile and false; the one springing up with love towards truth and virtue, the other plunging with rage into crime and error: and faith unfolding before our eyes this mystery of grandeur and baseness, shows us in the first of these beings the primitive man, such as he came out of the hand of God; and in the second, man degraded, corrupted by a first fault, bearing the indelible mark of his fall stamped on his forehead, and receiving together with life a fatal inheritance of vicious inclinations, and of sorrows, which he will transmit from generation to generation, to his latest descendant. Thus by what he has received from the Creator, man participates in the perfections of the Deity of whom he is the image: intelligence and love, and an infinite desire to love and to know, raise him perpetually towards heaven, where in the contemplation of the truth which does not die, he tastes, as it were, the first fruits of his own immortality. The mere appearance of good transports him with joy. Try to imagine a magnanimous action, a generous impulse which is not natural to his heart. Is any great sacrifice to be undertaken for a noble end? a sublime instinct, more prompt than thought makes him thrill with delight; he does not hesitate, or calculate, he blesses his good fortune and devotes himself to it. If humanity or conscience speak, at once

you will see him with the sacred name of God on his lips, fly to barbarous nations at the extremities of the earth, to enlighten his fellow-men, to alleviate their misfortunes, to soften their customs, to extend the holy rule of truth ; you will see him descend into deep dungeons, and go to meet torture, to bear witness to it openly, and joyfully die in order to prepare its triumph.

There are then in each man, and by a necessary sequence in each nation, two conflicting powers, the senses and reason ; or to use the profoundly philosophical language of our sacred books, the flesh and the spirit ;<sup>1</sup> and accordingly as one or other prevails, truth or error, virtue or crime, predominate in society and in the individual.

Man indeed aspires by his reason to the possession of the truth, noble nourishment of his intellect, and strains with irrepressible force towards order the preserver of all things. Thence the inclination which men show for generous beliefs, for severe and elevated doctrines, and the most spiritual dogmas : thence also that insatiable ardour of knowing, that thirst of immortality, that religious instinct, that faith as enlightened as it is simple, in all that is beautiful, sublime, useful, and so far full of reality ; thence lastly that astonishing empire which man exercises over himself, over his feelings, over his passions, and even his thoughts ; that contempt of frivolous pleasures and material enjoyments ; that insurmountable disgust for

<sup>1</sup> Caro enim concupiscit adversus spiritum ; spiritus autem adversus carnem : hæc enim sibi invicem adversantur. Ep. ad Galat. v, 17.

everything that passes away ; those longings for an immutable and infinite good, which the heart already feels, though the spirit does not yet understand it ; that immense love of virtue, and that inexpressible anguish, when he has turned aside from it ; that tender compassion for all kinds of physical and moral wretchedness, and that constant disposition to sacrifice oneself for another, that sole source of whatever is great, touching, and loveable in human life.

Through his senses, on the contrary, man, inclined to the earth, buried in physical enjoyments, and without taste for the intellectual pleasures, resembles the brutes, and takes pleasure in the likeness. His intellect becomes obscured, but too slowly to please him : with what ardour also he labours to obscure it still more. It would seem that truth is torture to him, so deep and vivid is the hatred with which it inspires him. He pursues it without ceasing, attacks it with fury, sometimes in others, sometimes in himself, in his mind, in his heart, in his conscience. Fruitless efforts ! at the very moment when he fancies himself the victor, whilst full of pride, he congratulates himself on having at length overthrown and annihilated that implacable truth, the awful vision more threatening and more formidable returns again to harass him.

But if man, the slave of his senses, is the enemy of truth, and consequently of the lofty doctrines which emanate from heaven and call him back there, he is none the less an enemy of the eternal laws of order, because after all, order is but the whole of the truths which result from the nature of beings and their rela-

tions, truths which are called duties, because they are not only the object of the intellect, but they must also influence the conduct which they rule, by imposing the double obligation of forbidding oneself certain acts, and of producing the contrary ones. Now, all truths holding one to another, and being in a way confounded together at their source, man is constrained to attack them all, as soon as the interest of his passions has once led him to shake one of them. Thus by a necessary connection, corruption of morals brings forth corruption of the mind ; disorder in action brings disorder into the thoughts, or error ; and depravity of the moral being, brings with it a similar depravity of the intellectual being. Inconsistency harasses the human heart as much as it is repugnant to the reason ; and for that reason it is often sufficient for a man to change the mode of life, in order to believe the truth which he before denied. But even abstract truth, becomes infallibly an object of hatred, so long as practical virtue is not an object of love ; and as hatred is by nature a principle of destruction, the same as love is a principle of production and preservation, man debased by the senses, and given up to the pleasures of the body becomes naturally destructive : his soul becomes hardened, and takes pleasure in the sight of ruins and bloodshed : he acquires barbarous tastes and ferocious habits ; and it is a very remarkable observation, that all nations that have been impious, or if it is preferred, unbelieving, have been voluptuous nations, and all voluptuous nations are cruel. Take into consideration the heathen nations : what forgetfulness of

humanity in war as in peace, in the laws as well as in the customs, in the temples as in the theatre, in the heart of the master as in that of the father! But also what abject materialism in religion! what aversion to the doctrines which tend to elevate man, and to spiritualise his thoughts! Polished and learned Greece sends Socrates to execution because he proclaimed the unity of God; and this same Greece crowned with flowers, sings hymns at its sacrifices of human victims, and covers its territory with infamous altars.

Subjection to the senses always produces a warm opposition to moral and intellectual truths, and there is no need to seek further for the cause of the profound hatred of Christianity which certain individuals and certain nations have shown at all times. It is the perpetual combat, the deadly fight of the *flesh against the spirit*, of the senses which Christianity strives to reduce to subjection, against reason which it enfranchises, enlightens, and spiritualises, because that in its precepts and its dogmas, it is but the manifestation and bringing together of all the truths useful to man.

At the period when Christianity appeared upon earth, the human race no longer lived, so to speak, except through the senses. Public worship become an empty show, attached itself to no belief. It was preserved from habit, by reason of its pomps and festivals, and especially because it was connected with the State institutions. Moreover, the religion itself inspired neither faith nor veneration. The learned

and the great sent it down with disdain to the populace, which being perhaps less corrupt, required that the vices which it adored under borrowed names, should present something divine at least in their emblems. For all that, in reality, there existed no other religion than pleasure ; and sects, the most severe at their origin, rapidly degenerating from a factitious austerity, had arrived, by a subversion of ideas which passed into the language itself, so far as to identify virtue with pleasure.

From these few observations, an opinion may be formed of the good faith of the writers who have alleged that Christianity had established itself as a matter of course. It had indeed only to overcome the interests, the passions and the opinions. It was all at once seen to advance, armed with a cross of wood, into the midst of the intoxicating joys and the dissolute religions of a world grown old in corruption. To the brilliant festivities of paganism, to the graceful imagery of an enchanting mythology, to the commodious freedom of philosophic morality, to all the allurements of art and pleasure, it opposes the pomp of grief, solemn and lugubrious ceremonies, the tears of penitence, terrible menaces and awful mysteries, the fearful ostentation of poverty, sackcloth, ashes, and all the emblems of absolute deprivation, and profound consternation ; for that was all that the heathen world at first perceived in Christianity. Immediately the passions rushed forth with fury against the enemy that came forward to dispute their empire. The nations hurried in crowds under their banners ; avarice

brought thither the priests of the idols, pride led the sages, and policy the emperors. Then began a fearful war : neither age nor sex were spared ; the public places, the roads, the fields, and even the most deserted places were covered with instruments of torture, with racks, stakes, and scaffolds ; the public games formed a part of the carnage ; from all sides men hastened to gloat over the agony and death of the innocent victims of the massacre, and that barbarous cry, *the Christians to the lions*, caused the multitude, intoxicated with blood, to thrill with joy. But during these terrible holocausts offered in haste to expiring divinities, each one of them must have its chosen victims ; and an ingenious cruelty invents new tortures for modesty. At last the weary executioners pause, the axe escapes from their hands : I know not what heavenly virtue, emanating from the cross, begins to affect even them. Following the example of whole nations subjugated before them, they fall at the feet of Christianity, which promises them immortality in exchange for repentance, and already fills them with hope. Sacred sign of peace and salvation, its radiant standard floats afar over the fragments of shattered paganism. The Cæsars in their jealousy had conspired to ruin it, and now it is sitting on the throne of the Cæsars, How has it conquered so great a power ? By presenting its bosom to the sword, and its unarmed hands to the manacles. How has it triumphed over such fury ? By delivering itself up without resistance to its persecutors.

Thus, the first assaults which it had to sustain, were



those of blind violence. God, no doubt, ordained it in this wise, because He knew that the courage and constancy of the martyrs were more fitting than any other spectacle, for astonishing and convincing men under the dominion of their senses.

Moreover Christianity, but just born, had not yet been able to disperse the mists accumulated in the human mind, or to familiarise it with the lofty consideration of severe tenets, and an entirely spiritual theology. Its doctrine, too much raised above the usual ideas of heathen nations for them to be able to grasp it as a whole, or to penetrate its profundity, could not be for them the subject of enlightened inquiry, or of rigid discussion. It was needed that Christianity little by little should set straight, and strengthen human reason, so that that same reason might be in a condition to dispute with it, without being too much disgraced by the emptiness of its sophistry. Celsus, it is true, raised questions of great importance. There are to be found, in the fragments of his writings which remain to us, amidst a crowd of absurd opinions and extravagant ideas, the germ of the objections to the foundation of faith, which were reproduced with more art by Rousseau. But the extreme superiority of the latter, the lofty ideas of God, of His providence and justice, of our nature, duties, and destiny, which the author of *Emile* mingles with his errors, purely Christian ideas, unknown to the ancients, show over what an immense space Christianity had led the human mind, during the centuries which separate the first adversaries of our doctrine from the Genevese sophist.

Thus difficulties and solutions, lights and obscurity, all is foreseen and provided for from afar with profound wisdom ; everything is progressively unfolded at the precise time when this development becomes necessary, and always for the triumph of truth, triumph all the more glorious that it is less peaceful.

In proportion as the intellect extends and perfects itself by meditating upon the intellectual truths which religion teaches to little children as well as to men of the most vast genius, it embraces the cause of the passions, declares itself their ally, and trying its strength against the truths to which it owes it, snatches from itself the bread which gives it life. Then fresh truths, shortly after equally attacked, hasten to the defence of those which a hostile reasoning puts in peril. Each dogma is the occasion for a particular heresy, because they must all be tried and confirmed. Proofs become multiplied with the objections, and Christianity becomes thoroughly developed.<sup>1</sup>

But the persecution of the senses succeeded to that of sophistry : faith remained intact, yet morals became depraved. These austere Christians, seduced by pleasure, give themselves up to disorders whose very name ought to have been for ever unknown to them. License penetrates even into the sanctuary ; the altar and the sacrifice are polluted by unworthy hands. What will become of Christianity thus profaned ? Of a sudden a vivifying principle excites a salutary fermentation in this corrupt mass ; everything changes

<sup>1</sup> *Improbatio quippe hæreticorum facit eminere quid Ecclesia sentiat, et quid habeat sana doctrina. S. Aug. Conf. lib. vii chap. xix, No. 2.*

and is renewed ; apostles inflamed with a divine zeal cause the tears of repentance to flow ; order is restored by holy discipline ; the languishing virtues everywhere raise themselves up again and flourish ; prodigies of charities, miracles of love again astonish the consoled earth ; the *spirit* has triumphed over the *flesh* a second time, and the Church recovers her children.

Let it not be imagined, however, that this peace is durable : but a few truces due to weariness interrupt the struggle between error and truth whose power, although irresistible over the understanding, does not go so far as to destroy by its own act, the opposition of a perverted will. Even under the empire of evidence, man continues free, not to be mistaken, but to set himself in insurrection ; not to shut his eyes, but to deny what he sees : a fearful liberty which being too often made use of, becomes, for him who knows how to reflect, the least equivocal proof of the original vice of our nature, and at the same time the explanation of the trials to which religion has been perpetually exposed since its origin. Ceaselessly agitated by some storm, it is a part of its destiny, as of that of man, never to enjoy here below a perfect repose. Pride, licentiousness, avarice, all the passions leagued against it, continually excited new wars against it, but also prepared for it new triumphs. Wonderful power of Christian society ! Heresy at one time supple, at another audacious, takes all forms, conceals itself under all masks, turns and bends in all directions in order to shake its dogmas ; and constantly invariable

in its doctrine the Church sees the rebel sects expire one after another at its feet : the spirit of independence, or the ambition of dominating, excites within its bosom divisions often followed by deplorable schisms ; immediately from its flank, torn but ever fruitful, came forth in crowds, new children to console it for those which it has lost : jealous princes infringe on its rights, and try to disturb its divine hierarchy ; in spite of their violence and their cunning, the Church's government strengthened by the blows aimed at it, subsists unaltered, and perpetuates itself from century to century amidst the transitions and ruins of human governments ; like to those ancient monuments of Egypt, where the wandering Arab at even pitches under the shelter of their motionless mass, the tents, which next morning he will carry away, and tries to detach some of their stones, but soon wearied of a fruitless labour, he plunges and disappears into unknown solitudes.

But now it is by the basis, that Christianity and the domain of morality are to be attacked. It has been seen that the Church and all its dogmas rest upon authority as upon unmoveable rock. Immediately the multitude of sectarians, divided upon everything else, unite in order to undermine this foundation of all truth. At the first moment, Reform is their rallying cry, later it will be philosophy. Listen to them, they are coming to free the earth from the abuses introduced by time or by the passions, and to cure the human mind of the prejudices which obscure it. Armed with this seductive pretext they multiply without end the objects of

their destruction: the supremacy of the head of the Church, episcopacy, the pastoral order, the sacraments, worship and its sacred pomps, nothing escapes from the boldness of their reforming zeal. Vieing with one another in mutilating the faith, and in a manner, hastening to deliver themselves from the torment of believing, as well as from that of obeying, they rapidly proclaim in their ephemeral creeds, the abolition of all religions and social dogmas. Lutherans, Socinians, deists, atheists, under these different names which indicate successive phases of the same doctrine, they all pursue with indefatigable perseverance their plan of attack against authority. They deny the mysteries of Christianity; they deny its morality; they deny its author; 'they deny God, they deny their own existence. There ends human reason.'<sup>1</sup>

Hitherto I have only depicted the frenzy of their opinions; but who will paint their frantic rage? Who will relate their impious efforts, and their black conspiracies? Madmen! in vain do they attack a religion against which it is not given to man to prevail: it lifts its head crowned with light, whilst they, rolling from abyss to abyss, traversing in their fall every degree of error, and unable to pause at any one, sinking under the avenging weight of the truths which they blaspheme, they fall and sink still lower in the murky gulf of indifference, where crime, in stupid quietude, sleeps in the arms of pleasure, at the feet of the hideous idol of nothingness.

Such are the unhappy bounds at which necessarily

<sup>1</sup> Essai analytique sur les Lois de l'ordre social, par M. de Bonald.

ends all philosophy without rule, which instead of letting itself be led by a superior guide, by divine reason itself, strives to substitute for it human reason, makes it the basis of faith, and ends by denying everything, because it cannot understand and will not practise anything.

One of those men who discover things far off, because they are able to place themselves on a great height, Bossuet, observing that already all dogmas had been by turns attacked without success, predicted, more than a century ago, what we now see passing before our eyes. Feeble minds which, witnessing the effects, still try to deny the cause, listen to the prophetic words of the Christian orator: 'I foresee that libertines and free thinkers may become discredited, not from any horror of their sentiments but because everything will be held indifferent except pleasure and business.'<sup>1</sup> You have heard, now look around you and answer. What do you perceive on all sides, but a profound indifference as to duties and belief, along with an unbridled love of pleasure, and gold, by means of which there is nothing which cannot be obtained? Everything is bought, because everything is sold, conscience, honour, religion, opinions, dignities, power, consideration, even respect; vast wreck of all truth and of all virtue.

The absolute extinction of the moral sense does not allow people even to interest themselves in speculative error; it is left for what it is, as is the case with truth; no one thinks of it, or takes any care about it; not being able to destroy the book of Nature, which is

<sup>1</sup> Sermon for the 2nd Sunday in Advent.

magnificently opened to all beholders, they efface carefully from it the name of God, and hastening to turn over the pages which remind them of the Creator, they stop only at those which instruct us of the properties of bodies, and of the enjoyments which can be derived from them.

And observe what an immense distance had to be traversed before arriving at the last excesses which I have just painted. Successively driven in from all the posts which it occupied, a haughty reason, which wishes not only to know all, but also to destroy and create according to its caprice and the interest of the passions, takes refuge in one ruin after another, always pursued by the truth which presses on it, and does not give it time to breathe. Repulsed to the limits of the intellectual world, having no other asylum than the atheism it blindly throws itself into, to hide in the darkness the humiliation of defeat. There, begins a new punishment: so as to assure itself of this so dearly bought asylum, it must needs go on destroying, and there remains nothing for it to destroy but itself. In this desperate position, what will reason do? what resolution will it take? It shudders, but does not hesitate; pride prevails, and the sacrifice is made.

From that moment, to agitation and fever, sad but certain signs of life, there succeed the calm and the silence of death, no more contention or quarrels: it would seem to be perfect peace; a mournful, desolating peace, a thousand times more destructive than the war which preceded it.

Undeceived as to its own dreams, not venturing to reproduce the sophisms so often refuted, and being unable nevertheless to invent new ones, because there exist but a certain number of objections which can possibly be brought against the same truths, philosophy, irritated by its own powerlessness, all at once ceases to reason, though it thought itself so strong in reason. It no longer says : Listen to my proofs : but, I will not listen to yours. After numberless attempts, not having made the slightest breach in Christianity, it declares it to be unworthy of its assaults, unworthy even of examination. Arrived at the bottom of the abyss, it contemns, and henceforth too well instructed to affront the evidence which would soon be elicited by a serious discussion, it answers coldly to everything that may be said to it : what does it signify to me ? and turns away its head smiling with disdain.

Atheism, said Leibnitz, will be the latest heresy : and in fact the indifference which follows in its train is not a doctrine, since the really indifferent deny nothing, and affirm nothing ; it is not even a doubt, for doubt a state of suspense between contrary probabilities, presupposes a previous examination ; it is a systematic ignorance, a voluntary sleep of the soul, which wears out its vigour by resisting its own thoughts and struggling against importunate recollections ; a general sluggishness of the moral faculties, an absolute privation of ideas upon that which it is most important to man to know. Such is, as much so at least as speech can describe, that which offers nought but what is vague, undecided, and negative ;



such is the hideous and barren monster which is called indifference. All the theories of philosophy, all the doctrines of impiety have melted away and disappeared in this devouring system, true tomb of the intelligence, into which it descends alone, abandoned equally by truth and error; an empty sepulchre, in which not even bones are to be seen.

From this fatal disposition, which has become almost universal, a new kind of persecution and trials, has grown up under the name of tolerance, the last no doubt, which Christianity has to undergo.<sup>1</sup> In vain does a hypocritical philosophy give out far and wide the alluring words of moderation, indulgence, mutual support and peace; the perfidious sweetness of its speech ill disguises the bitterness of the feelings fostered in its heart. Do what it will, its inveterate hatred of all religious principle penetrates through these feigned demonstrations of general benevolence and mildness. Strange moderation indeed, and still more strange tolerance! We have sometimes heard it said that wisdom at times advises the temporary toleration of certain errors; but to tolerate the truth, what else is this than an insolent and sacrilegious pretension, a seditious protest against the sovereignty which belongs to it in the moral world, an implicit avowal of inability to destroy it? Before this age of enlightenment, who ever heard talk of tolerating the

<sup>1</sup> That which is predicted to us for the end of time, will be in a manner a personal war of the *man of sin* against God; and the condition towards which we are advancing is one of the signs by which is to be recognised that last war announced by Jesus Christ. *Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii, 8.

immortality of the soul, a future state, the chastisement of crime, and the recompenses of virtue, of tolerating God! To what too does this tolerance reduce itself in reality? Contemplate the state of Religion: it is no longer proscribed, but it is enslaved; its ministers are no longer massacred, but they are degraded, so as the better to fetter their office. Degradation is the weapon with which it is attacked. Contempt, outrageous disdain, and the still more bitter insult of an offensive protection, are heaped upon it. A few pieces of money, which the avarice which gives, envies of the misery which receives, derisive honours, checks without number, oppressive laws, continual disappointments, and imprisonment; those are the magnificent gifts which most governments bestow upon religion without wearying. Taught by a terrible experience, they no longer dare try to do without it entirely, but a feeling stronger than the voice of experience induces them to demolish with one hand what they build up with the other. Interest even, interest usually so strong has not power enough to persuade them to dissemble the secret aversion which the creeds under their protection inspire them with. Convinced against its will of the necessity of uniting earth to heaven, and man to his Author, the high policy of the present day goes to seek out of the Sanctuary the Supreme Being worshipped there; it clothes it with purple shreds, puts a reed sceptre in its hand, a crown of thorns on its head, and shows it to the people saying: There is God!

Need there be any wonder that religion thus

humiliated and dishonoured, only gathers indifference? After eighteen hundred years of struggles and triumphs, Christianity at last meets with the same fate as its founder. Summoned, so to speak, to appear, not before a proconsul, but before the whole human race, it is asked the question: *Art thou a King?* Is it true that you pretend to reign over us, as you are accused of doing? It is yourself that has said it, it replies, yes, I am king: I rule over the understandings by enlightening them, over hearts by guiding their movements and even their desires; I rule over society by my benefits. The world was buried in the darkness of error, *I am come to bring to it the truth;* that is my title: *every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.* But already this word has no longer any sense for a perverted reason; it is necessary to have it explained: *What is truth?* asks the careless and stupid judge; and without waiting for an answer, *he goes out,* declares that *he finds no fault at all* in the accused prisoner, and delivers him up with indifference to the multitude to make sport, and soon a victim of him.<sup>1</sup>

This drama, profound in its simplicity, like all that is contained in the Gospel, paints better than a long discourse, that moral breaking down, that kind of intellectual death, into which men and nations fall, whenever, ceasing to be deceived by the delusions of error, they obstinately refuse to yield to the conviction of the truth. 'Such is,' exclaimed an eloquent orator a few years ago, 'such is at present the great wound of

<sup>1</sup> See John xviii, 37, 38.

the Church, or, to make use of an expression of the sacred books, its incurable wound, *desperata est plaga ejus*.<sup>1</sup> For what can we oppose to this state of things? It is possible to resist violence and open force; but how are those invisible arms to be met, carelessness and disdain which escape from all kind of struggle, and how can we drive impiety from this last post in which wearied with fighting it has finished by entrenching itself? We know well the remedies for diseases of the body; but who will discover the remedy for this epidemic disease of the mind? It is possible to know how to cure a sick person who desires his cure; but that one who does not desire to be well, and does not even know that he is ill, he who at the very gates of death, has all the confidence and security of health, how is he to be approached, and who will save him? We know how to refute an error, or defend a dogma; but what refutation remains to be made, or what instruction to be given when doubt takes the place of everything, and that the first dogma is contempt of all dogmas? We know the check that can be imposed on religious fanaticism, since it is found in religion itself, but how is philosophical fanaticism to be checked? Where then will be its counterpoise, and how can we make men listen to reason, who have no other rule of truth than their own reason, and who like those foolishly presumptuous Pharisees mentioned in St John, say to us coldly and dogmatically: We are wise because we are wise, and we see because we see: *Quia videmus?*<sup>2</sup> Lastly, we

<sup>1</sup> St John ix, 41.

<sup>2</sup> Micah i. 9.

can stop a torrent in its impetuous course, but who can stir these muddy and stagnant waters of corruption which is the result of reflection, and which takes pleasure in its repose, and leaves no energy but for intrigue and cupidity? And who else but God, by an extraordinary miracle of His mercy, can draw us out of that indefinable torpor which at once disconcerts the observations of the wise, and the solicitude of pastors; and from that moral lethargy against which neither the force of reason, nor of zeal, nor of the laws, nor of arms, can do anything.<sup>1</sup>

Incomprehensible dulness of the men of our time! The more they are struck the more they harden themselves; the more efforts truth makes to bring them back, the more indifferent they are to truth. Let them die then, since they choose to die! But let us at least take away from them all excuse; let us expose their unreason and inconsistency; let us force them to blush for the idol to which they sacrificed all, truth, virtue, and life itself.

We shall have attained this object if we show that religious indifference which is vaunted as the last effort of reason, and the most precious benefit of philosophy, is as absurd in its principles as it is fatal in its effects. Now, we hope to surround these two propositions with so much evidence, that even those who might retain the sorry bravery of denying them, will not make any attempt to combat them by reasoning.

<sup>1</sup> Lettre pastorale de mgr. l'Evêque de Troyes a l'occasion de son entrée dans son diocèse. p. II.

And in the first place nothing is more absurd than indifference, because in reason it can only rest upon these two principles: That we have no interest in ascertaining the truth of religion; or that it is impossible to discover the truth which it is requisite for us to know. But these two principles are equally false, equally absurd; we will prove it, and we will besides show that there exists, for all men in general, and for each man in particular, a sure, easy, infallible means of convincing oneself of the necessity of religion, and of discerning the true one.

In the second place, nothing is more fatal than indifference, because it leads directly to every calamity as to every crime, because it imperceptibly enervates and destroys all the moral faculties; because lastly, it is incompatible with the order or even the existence of society.

And so as to take away from idleness, as well as from ignorance, even the slightest pretext for quieting themselves in this lamentable state, we will carefully put aside all argumentation which involves knowledge foreign to the common run of men; so that the most ordinary good sense will be sufficient for reading this book with advantage.

Perhaps a few weak minds, a few flighty dispositions, not yet entirely perverted, after having been drawn away by what is called the *progress of the age*, filled with a fitting dread at the sight of the abyss into which they were running, will decide upon seriously examining that which hitherto they have despised

without knowing. That is all we ask of them. We do not say to them : Believe ; but : Examine.

Although our subject does not require us to demonstrate the truth of Christianity, we will, however, offer proofs enough of it to convince those who are sincerely incredulous. Perhaps they may even derive a more useful instruction here than they could have drawn from a direct refutation of their errors, but certainly in any case they will find in it enough motives for justifying, indeed for imperiously commanding the examination which we invite them to undertake. May they determine upon it for the glory of truth and for their own happiness ! Whatever one may attempt to persuade oneself, these two things are inseparable : there is no happiness except in the bosom of truth, because there only is repose. Error intoxicates, indifference makes torpid ; but neither one nor the other fills the void of the heart. We repeat our sole desire is that men should inquire with good faith ; we have only proposed to ourselves to obtain that ; and if we obtain it from a single man, our labour will be too well repaid.

# ESSAY ON RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE

## CHAPTER I

General considerations on religious indifference.—Exposition of the three systems to which indifference as to doctrine may be reduced.

THE human mind has its periods of wisdom and of madness, of greatness and of decay, like society ; and society itself is only subjected to these various revolutions, because they are natural to the human mind, in whose destinies it invariably participates. This truth which, by binding together morality and legislation, gives a fixed basis to political theories, had not escaped the acute genius of Pascal. No one has better understood the power of opinion, which he names the *Queen of the World* ; and it will be understood that he does not make too great an assertion, if his thoughts are examined into, and if opinion be held to mean the dominant doctrines. Their empire over men is absolute, although it sometimes only becomes apparent with time ; and this is what deceives so many superficial observers, incapable of embracing in a single mental glance, a vast body of relations, and of connecting at wide intervals the present with the past. They perceive facts, and seek their causes but too near to themselves ; spectators of the tempests which agitate society, of the ebb and tide of the events which compose its history, they explain each wave by the wave which immediately presses it on, instead of first going back to the impulse which produced them all. It is thus that the Reformation of the sixteenth century has been seriously attributed to the jealousy of a monk, and the French Revolution to a deficit of some millions in the finances.



It must be said, for it can never be sufficiently known, everything proceeds from doctrines, morals, literature, constitutions, laws, the prosperity and disasters of States, civilisation and barbarity, and those fearful crises which carry off or renovate nations, according as there remains more or less life in them.

✓ Man only acts because he believes, and men in the mass always act in conformity with what they believe, because the passions of the multitude are themselves determined by their beliefs. If the belief is pure and true, the general tendency of actions will be straightforward and in harmony with order; if the belief is erroneous, the actions will on the contrary become depraved, for error vitiates and truth perfects. This was much felt at the origin of Christianity, when the religion of the senses and the religion of the mind, existing side by side in the same society, their effects could at any moment be compared by the eyes, at the same time that the reason compared their doctrines.

✓ It follows from that, firstly, that with regard to society, there is no doctrine that is indifferent in religion, in morals, in politics: secondly, that indifference, considered as a permanent state of the soul, is opposed to the nature of man, and destructive of his being.

We say that with regard to society, no doctrine can be a matter of indifference; and it is strange that it should be requisite to prove in this enlightened age, to Christian nations, a principle so evident, that the pagan nations had made it one of their first political maxims. They felt that the stability of States depended on the stability of beliefs. Moreover, see how jealous they showed themselves of the preservation of the established doctrines, especially at the period of their really greatest power and purest glory. The oath is well known which the young Athenians used to take in the temple of Agraulos: 'I swear to fight to the last breath for the interests of religion and country; and I will remain constantly attached to the faith of my fathers.' Cato feared the introduction into his country of the philosophy of the Greeks, only because he foresaw that in learning to dispute about

everything, the Romans would end by not believing in anything. The event completely justified his fears. Several times banished from Rome, the philosophers at length triumphed over the resistance of the laws, the wisdom of the senate, and even over the destinies of the eternal city. A few dreamers, armed with doubts, did that which the armies of all the world had been unable to do ; they vanquished with opinions that proud republic which had conquered the earth ; and it is a fact worthy the most serious consideration, that all the empires whose history is known to us, and which time and prudence had consolidated, have been overthrown by sophists.

The great changes in political order always coincide with similar changes in opinion ; and the secret of moving nations is but the art of persuading them. The more lively is this persuasion, the more powerful is the action resulting from it. Mahomed persuades a few Arabs that their sword is to subject the whole world to the Koran, and in less than a century the crescent is planted from the banks of the Euphrates to those of the Ebro. Luther and his disciples persuade a portion of Europe that the sovereignty resides in the people, and soon the blood of kings flows on the scaffold. The logic of nations is as rigorous as even the truth of God. An individual may recoil before consequences, society never does. Something stronger than the fear of its own destruction draws it on ; and even in perishing, it obeys the general law, the preserver of intelligent beings, that inimitable universal reason, which is, so to say, the foundation of all minds, and of which nothing could affect the inflexible straightforwardness, whether it be applied to error or to the truth.

Now, in all doctrine there is necessarily either truth or error ; every doctrine, therefore, influences society either for good or for evil ; there is not then any doctrine indifferent to society, unless it be maintained that virtue and vice, order and disorder are indifferent matters. This has indeed been asserted, and I know of nothing which more strongly proves the existence of the law which I just now mentioned, and which sooner or later compels the most extreme consequences to result from their premises, because it costs less to pride to admit them,

and sometimes less to conscience to put them in practice, than it costs reason to deny them.

In the ages named barbarous, Christianity had consolidated and moderated the governing power, sanctified obedience, established true social relations, purified morals, and often supplied laws. It had covered Europe with admirable institutions which, filling up the ever wide gap left by political institutions, attached to the State the innumerable class of unfortunates by the soft influence of a charity prodigal of good deeds. Thanks to the empire which it exercised over ideas, and still more over hearts, man became sacred to man. No doubt there still were passions, and consequently crimes ; but religion knew how to draw forth from them new virtues through repentance. Actions and thoughts in subjection to the immutable rule of duty tended, as a whole, to the general good ; and this is the characteristic feature of the period. Men were powerful for the advantage of the weak, and rich for the poor. Instead of dreaming of a state of things exempt from all imperfection, the existing order was left to perfect itself by degrees ; and each one in his own sphere devoted himself to remedying the particular evil which struck him. Hence, besides temporary largesses, so many durable establishments erected in favour of poverty, which rose at every step almost, in towns, in the country, on the high roads, like triumphal arches of charity. Men did not then believe themselves to have fulfilled all the duties of humanity by throwing a morsel of bread to the wretched ; they knew that a sensible and intelligent being *does not live by bread alone*,<sup>1</sup> and that the most painful sufferings are not physical sufferings. An eminently spiritual and compassionate doctrine brought forth a new kind of sublime commiseration, ceaselessly occupied in gathering to itself the broken spirits, and in distributing to them a proportionate and salutary nourishment. Not less noble in feelings, than inexhaustible in its resources, pity did not extend its care solely to bodily wants ; stricken souls and wounded hearts had also their hospitals ; and the established belief acting equally on govern-

<sup>1</sup> Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo, quod prodit de ore Dei. Matt. iv, 4.

ments and on the nations, society was ruled by an infinite power of love.

It is needless to remark that in recalling the influence of religion over the destinies of the human race at this period, I am solely considering those effects which were general, permanent, and uniform in all countries, not that I am unaware in how many circumstances the public happiness was disturbed either by private passions, or by opinions more or less opposed to received doctrines; and in this respect, the greater part of the calamities, of which the history of those times has preserved the recollection, singularly support what I have said of the absolute power of belief over men in masses; for among those calamities, all those that can be attributed to the people, or to a portion of the people, were caused by some religious or political error by which the multitude was influenced.

In spite, however, of partial disorders and slight deviations, Europe was advancing towards that perfection to which Christianity calls nations as well as individuals, when the Reformation came suddenly to arrest its progress, and to precipitate it into an abyss into which it is daily sinking, and the bottom of which we do not yet know. How did this revolution come about? By a total change of doctrines. The principle of examination was substituted for that of authority, the necessary basis of religious and social faith; that is to say, human reason was put in the place of divine reason, or man in the place of God. Man then became the enemy of man, because, being sovereign by right in political as well as in religious order, each one practically claimed dominion, and tried to set up the rule of his private judgment, and of his personal power: an absurd but consistent pretension, which inevitably was to end in political servitude and religious anarchy, which is in reality but the servitude of all the errors. Such was the cause of the furious wars which filled Germany, Bohemia, France, England, and the Low Countries with bloodshed. The spirit of independence, or the spirit of domination, for under opposite appearances it is at bottom the same spirit, passed from opinion into the morals. Authority had been denied, men

freed themselves from obedience, and each new negation led to a new destruction. By denying the atonement, worship and the monuments of worship were destroyed ; by denying free will and a future state, duties were destroyed ; lastly, the denial of God was the destruction of everything, of laws, of society, of man himself.

After so decisive an experiment, I do not think that there will be any attempt to cast doubt upon the extreme influence of doctrines on society, or to suppose that there can be any which are indifferent to it. But if people will not believe experience, let them at least believe philosophy. Did it not lately, in order to propagate its errors, which it calls truths, base itself upon the intimate and inseparable relation which exists between belief and actions, between the weal and woe of the human race and ruling opinions? It has not ceased for fifty years to repeat this maxim ; and the proofs with which it has recently been pleased to support it, have completed the demonstration, so as to satisfy the most blind.

It would be sufficient to know that no doctrine is a matter of indifference with respect to society, to conclude that indifference is opposed to the nature of man who is essentially sociable. Without, however, insisting upon a conclusion, the truth of which might not be universally felt, let us try to arrive at this truth by another road.

Absolute indifference may be defined as 'The extinction of all feeling of love and hatred in the heart, owing to the absence of all judgment or belief in the mind.' Now to judge, to believe, to love, to hate, are acts inherent in the nature of intelligent beings. It is essentially their mode of existence, and to deprive them of it would be to annihilate them. Take away desire or love, you destroy will ; take away conviction or faith, and I mean by this word the acquiescence of the mind in a truth real or presumed, and you destroy the intelligence ; for to be intelligent is to judge, to pronounce that there is good or evil, truth or error in the objects or in the ideas which the mind considers. Our reason may, no doubt, make a mistake because it is finite, that is to say, imperfect, and because a thousand foreign causes concur in disturbing it, it judges wrongly, because it only sees a part of

what it ought to see in order to judge rightly, or it sees it through clouds which obscure it; but even then our reason is not indifferent, it necessarily judges from what it perceives, or thinks it perceives.

It is true that, when free from troubles, we acknowledge that we are not sufficiently enlightened, we possess the faculty of suspending our judgment; but even that is a judgment of another kind, or the declaration of a clearly perceived truth, I mean our ignorance, insurmountable or voluntary. In this case, indifference becomes not only possible but inevitable; for how is it possible to love or to hate that which is unknown? This partial or relative indifference is not, however, like absolute indifference, destructive of the intellect; it is but the sad effect either of the natural limits, or of the arbitrary bounds imposed on reason by a feeble or corrupt will; and indifference under this last head comes into the domain of morality; for when it depends upon us to know it may be a crime, and a very great crime to remain indifferent.

For that matter, indifference of whatsoever nature, is always a subject of humiliation, since it always results from a want of enlightenment or from an imperfect intellect. What glory could a reasonable creature derive from an ignorance which degrades it? Imagine this ignorance to be perpetually increasing, indifference will grow in proportion, and you will arrive at the same time at complete indifference, and absolute idiotcy.

In order that mankind should be indifferent to things that they know, there must needs be something indifferent in itself: 'Now I do not fear to assert,' says one of our most profound writers, 'that there is nothing of the kind, nothing indifferent, neither in nature, nor in law, nor in morals, nor in art and sciences, nor *a fortiori* in religion. . . In everything there is truth and falsehood, good and evil, order and disorder: good and evil in morals, good and evil in philosophy, in politics, in literature, in oratory, in poetry, etc., etc., good and evil in the laws as in the arts, in morals as in manners, in conduct as in opinions, in speculative as in practical matters.<sup>1</sup> Indeed man, in

<sup>1</sup> Sur la Tolerance des opinions, by M. de Bonald, *Spectateur Français Nineteenth Century*, vol. 14, pp. 69-71.

reality, is indifferent only with regard to what he is ignorant of, or to that which does not exist for him. He is in a condition of like or dislike towards all the objects of his thoughts, and cares for his opinions sometimes more than for life itself.<sup>1</sup> Thence the innate desire to cause our opinions to prevail, even in the most trifling matters; thence the charm of study, the more lively the more the intellect is cultivated and extended: Thence controversies of all kinds, on physics and morals, on theology and on grammar; thence sects and academics, public discords and the drama, the passions which shake society, and the virtues which preserve it; lastly, from thence comes the spirit of proselytism, so absurdly charged against the Christians, and which is to be met with, wherever any conviction exists, in conversations as to the pulpit, in politics as in letters, in sciences as in morals, in philosophy as in religion, with this single difference, that in religion it is more durable and nobler because it contains more truths, and more important truths.

Speak to that labourer, intent on ploughing the earth, of the laws of attraction, which maintain it in its orbit; unintelligible to him, your conversation will leave him indifferent to the laws you are speaking of, and of which he is ignorant. These laws, however, are very far from being indifferent in themselves, since the order of the universe depends on them: they are also anything but indifferent to the astronomer, who demonstrates their existence, and by means of them calculates the celestial phenomena, and never wearies of contemplating their admirable regularity, and their wonderful fecundity.

Thus the domain of indifference becomes contracted in proportion to the development of the intellect. God is indifferent to nothing, because He is all-knowing: matter is indifferent to everything, because it knows of nothing. Man, placed between these two extremities, is more or less indifferent according to his more or less ignorance or knowledge, that is to say, accordingly as he draws nigh to purely material creatures, or to the Supremely Intelligent Being:

<sup>1</sup> Any opinion may be preferred to life, the love of which seems so strong and so natural.—PASCAL.

whence it follows that materialism tends to speculative indifference, and in the end to stupefaction ; whilst religion, by raising man towards God, by familiarising him with the most lofty thoughts and the most spiritual doctrines, infinitely perfects his intelligence,<sup>1</sup> and does not permit him to be indifferent to anything which essentially interests him. ✓

And it is necessary here to recall to memory our primitive degradation, and the perpetual strife between the senses and the spirit, which is the consequence of it, in order to understand how religion, by the very reason of the perfection which it exacts from us, and of its own perfection, becomes an object of hatred to many, and later of indifference. Since everything in it is rigidly true, in its eyes nothing is indifferent, either in dogma, in morals, or in worship. It cannot therefore leave man free to believe and act as he pleases ; it constrains him to submit his reason to faith, his inclinations to duty, even his body to the practices which it imposes. Now, by subjecting in this manner the whole man, it wearies and renders desperate the passions. Never submissive, even whilst they obey, they ceaselessly labour to break a yoke which they do not bear without murmuring. Pride, *the father of lies*, and the eternal enemy of authority, suggests to the mind a crowd of sophisms, all the more seductive from their being flattering to the secret desires of the heart. People are very near ceasing to acknowledge as true that which they fancy themselves to have an interest in discovering to be false. By degrees prejudices strengthen and extend themselves, example misleads, and almost always influenced, though unwillingly, by the principle of authority which is attacked, each one founds his convictions on the alleged convictions of others. Such is briefly the history of all rebellions against truth ; people doubt because others doubt, they deny because others deny, and because it is convenient to doubt and to deny. Nevertheless, at the first outset, a need is felt of filling the void left by the rejected symbols ; a wish to believe is still felt, and necessarily so, for faith is in the nature of man, and absolute incredulity is only ✓

<sup>1</sup> It is clear that the true religion is alone in question here. The others are but *opinions*, and insomuch as they are false, pernicious opinions.



reached by degrees. People thus greedily seize upon the semblances of truth which are presented to them ; they attach themselves to them with a kind of violent obstination, as men cling to the fragments of a wreck, and the blind conviction of error produces fanaticism in conduct. Each error has but its day, and that brief enough ; they could not establish their abode in the human reason ; they live there, if I may so speak, under canvas ; the mind is compelled to pass on from one to another until it has exhausted them all. Then, sooner than return to the truth which it fears, it puts on against it the armour of ignorance, distraction, and forgetfulness. A perverse will rigidly banishes the truth from the intellect ; it is treated like those proscribers who cannot be convicted by law, but whom a jealous tyrant causes to disappear during their lifetime from society.

Whenever a nation arrives at this state of absolute indifference to the truth, do not doubt that its end is nigh. It is the least equivocal sign of the decrepitude of nations. In their careless apathy, they resemble an old man who has lost all his recollections ; there is nothing left to be destroyed in him but a few worn out organs, and natural causes day by day hurry on their disgusting decomposition. An object of pity and disgust, even to little children, whom a noble instinct prevents from recognising a man where they no longer perceive thought, he drags on sluggishly, a remnant of material life, and without desires as without regrets, sinks by degrees into the grave.

No doubt it would depend on governments to prevent this terrible dissolution, by protecting from the passions those vital doctrines, which are the sources of that vigour and energy which are observed in some societies. Authority can do everything, both for good and for evil, for in evil as in good there is no action on nations except through authority ; and the general authority, when it continues to be what it ought to be, always and naturally prevails over separate authorities which might tend to upset order, either by open violence, or more perilously, by opinions ; this, indeed, is the reason of the perpetual duration of religious society, whose general authority, in virtue of a divine privilege, is sheltered from the errors and

weaknesses to which authority is subject in political society. But usually, far from putting a check on the license of thought, when there would still be time to arrest its progress, governments favour it, at least by their example. They it is who first cease to believe, and irreligion takes its departure from the rulers, or from those near the rulers, to spread from one to another until it reach the lowest classes of the nation. More attached to its belief, because it has fewer motives for wishing that it might be false, the common people for a long time resist the influence of the upper classes. It defends with its conscience its faith, which is attacked through the mind, and in the recesses of its heart, surrounds its hopes and consolations with a sacred barrier. But when once it has succumbed, when by dint of corruption, its interests have become changed; when the most hideous vices have become its habitual customs, without remorse disturbing its sleep; when the punishments and rewards of another life appear to it only as childish prejudices; when religion has lost for it its terrors, and its doctrines and precepts have alike become unknown to it; when it smiles with pity at the very name of God; then I ask of myself with trembling, whether there remain any human means of bringing back such a nation to belief in the truth, and to the practice of virtue; I ask whether men may yet be made of such degraded beings; and I dare not pronounce.

It is to the purpose to point out that many must be excluded from the number of the really indifferent, who only put on this sad affectation; since, for whoever is neither stupid, nor grossly ignorant, it is not so easy as might be imagined to be indifferent about religion, which we meet with everywhere, each moment, within us and without us, and which in all cases makes our torment or our consolation. This religion is by no means indifferent to that sect of philosophers which but lately striving to abolish its very name demolished its temples, and massacred its ministers. Hatred, an implacable hatred, that is the feeling which animates these apostles of impiety, whose blind fanaticism would sacrifice society entirely for the triumph of their disastrous principles. Certainly those madmen are to be pitied, their

ever quarter it may come. Let us do honour to the intellect which has been given us, by raising it to the contemplation of the infinite immutable truth, which contains our eternal interests within its bosom. Our perfection is to know, and our happiness to love it. Created as we are for it and immortality, let us think that life is going to escape from us, to escape from us for ever : let us raise our looks still higher ; and travellers for a brief space in foreign regions, let us not take a sad pride in persuading ourselves that we have no home.

## CHAPTER II

Considerations on the first system of indifference, or on the doctrine of those who, seeing in Religion only a political institution, think it necessary only for the common people.

RELIGION is found near the cradle of all nations, as philosophy is found near their graves. 'No State,' says Rousseau, 'was ever founded without religion serving as its base,'<sup>1</sup> and when recently philosophy sought to found a State without religion, it was forced to give it ruins for a basis; it established authority upon the right of overthrowing it, property upon spoliation, personal security upon the sanguinary interests of the multitude, laws upon their caprice. This philosophical social order existed for a few months, during which Europe saw accumulated within its bosom more crimes and calamities than are presented in the history of ten preceding centuries; and if God had not shortened those dreadful days, I do not know whether a human being would have remained to gather the fruit of the most fearful lesson which has ever terrified the earth.

Whatever certain sophists may have said, it is therefore proved by facts, that a nation of atheists could not last long.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Contrat Social*, liv. iv, chap. 8.

<sup>2</sup> The atheist Diderot, whose appreciation of his own doctrine is not to be suspected, admits this; and his admission has the more weight, inasmuch as it is contained in a letter which, not being intended for publication, must represent the real sentiments of its author more truly than his other works. These are his words: 'It has sometimes been said that a Christian people, such as it should be according to the spirit of the gospel, could not exist. This would be much more true of a nation of philosophers, if it were possible to form one; it would meet with destruction on leaving the cradle, through the faultiness of its constitution.' *Literary Correspondence*, etc. Grimm and Diderot, vol i, p. 492.

since the attempt only to substitute atheism for religion had thoroughly overturned society in France. Moreover the contrary opinion, put forward simply as a paradox at first by men of a disordered imagination, could only become the belief of a small number of madmen, as full of pride as they were devoid of enlightenment, and so profoundly perverted, that in them each thought was a crime.

In all times it has been felt that religion is the sole foundation of duty, as in its turn duty is the sole bond of society. Nothing can supply the place of conscience, which itself supplies everything. However much one may speak to men of the public good, and of general interests, private interest will constantly be their motive; and the very power of religion consists in its showing to each one an immense advantage in uniting for the general good. Common sense only is wanted to see that. The legislators of antiquity did not misapprehend this;<sup>1</sup> instead of unwisely reasoning against religion they made use of it to consolidate the social edifice; they placed it everywhere, in the family beside the domestic hearth, and in the State as part of the constitution and the government. They represented laws as descended from heaven, and attached something divine, in the public estimation, to every act of human life, to all the civil institutions, even to inanimate objects, to the woods, to the rivers, to the stones, intended to separate inheritances: and a closer view will bring the conviction that if paganism multiplied its gods to infinity, it was only because of the infinite need of the Deity felt by man.

When morals became corrupted, when reason began to examine into belief with aversion, it was doubtless easy for it to recognise the falseness of polytheism; but it was not whatever there might be that was false in the religion, which ran counter to the desires of the heart, and for that reason excited its hatred: also philosophy leaving idolatry at peace, principally directed its attacks against those truths which hampered the passions, against the principles of morality, against future rewards and punishments, and against the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. The

<sup>1</sup> *Rex Anius, rex idem, hominum, divumque sacerdos.*—VIRGIL. *Note of Transl.*

licentiousness which it protected procured for it numerous disciples: but so far from putting in doubt the political necessity of Religion, they were so much struck by it, that they confounded it with purely political institutions, and believed it to be an invention of legislators. On this ground it remained externally sacred as the laws, and a magistrate imbued with the atheistical principles of *Epicurus*, would have punished with inflexible severity any infringement of the established religion.

Before examining this philosophical system, it will be to the purpose to see it, so to speak, in action both among the ancients and the moderns. It is the shortest and the most certain method for forming a just idea of it.

It introduced itself amongst the Romans towards the decline of the republic, and its origin coincides with the decline of public and private virtue.<sup>1</sup> It penetrated in the first place amongst the great and the rich, ever easily led away by that which flatters their vanity, calms the passions, or brings relief to the torments of dulness; the common people for a long time was a stranger to this new philosophy, and to this period must be referred the picture which Gibbon has drawn of the religious state of the empire;

‘The various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the

<sup>1</sup> Horace is full of remonstrances against scepticism and infidelity and attributes to it the decline of the State. *Note of Translator.*

Insanientis dum sapientiæ—  
 Cælum ipsum petimus stultitia; neque  
 Per nostrum patimur scelus  
 Iracunda Jovem ponere fulmina.  
 Delicta majorum immeritus lues  
 Romane, donec templa refeceris—  
 Dis te minorem quod geris, imperas:  
 Hinc omne principium, huc refer exitum.  
 Di multa neglecti dederunt  
 Hesperiaë mala luctuosæ  
 Fecunda culpæ secula nuptias  
 Primum inquinavere et genus et domos:  
 Hoc fonte derivata clades  
 In patrium populumque fluxit.  
 Non his juvenus orta parentibus  
 Infecit æquor sanguine Punico.

magistrate as equally useful, and thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence but even religious concord.' . . .

The superstition of the people was not embittered by any mixture of theological rancour; nor was it confined by the chains of any speculative system. The devout polytheist, though fondly attached to his national rites, admitted with implicit faith, the different religions of the earth.'

'In their writings and conversation, the philosophers of antiquity asserted the independent dignity of reason; but they resigned their actions to the commands of law and of custom. Viewing with a smile of pity and indulgence, the various errors of the vulgar, they diligently practised the ceremonies of their fathers, devoutly frequented the temples of the gods, and sometimes condescending to act a part on the theatre of superstition, they concealed the sentiments of an atheist under the sacerdotal robes. Reasoners of such a temper were scarcely inclined to wrangle about their respective modes of faith, or of worship. It was indifferent to them what shape the folly of the multitude might choose to assume; and they approached with the same inward contempt, and the same external reverence, the altars of the Lybian, the Olympian, or the Capitoline Jupiter.'<sup>1</sup>

Less surprise would be felt at the complacency with which Gibbon paints Roman incredulity, had he been ignorant of its terrible effects. But he knew better than any other, that the *internal contempt* of the philosophers, not only for the *Lybian* or *Olympian Jupiter*, but for any divinity whatever, was not slow to propagate itself amongst devout polytheists, and that following the example of the great, become indifferent to all, excepting pleasure, the multitude so lost confidence in the ancient follies and superstitions, that the empire deprived of the support which it derived from religion, tottered all of a sudden like a drunken man, and at length disappeared in the mire, into which it was ignominiously dragged by nations strong in their belief and morals. Montesquieu does not shrink from attributing this fall to the philosophy of Epicurus, the results of which Gibbon so naively admires.<sup>1</sup> He has not perceived that the picture which he meant to make

<sup>1</sup> History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Vol. i. chap. ii.

attractive, is but a fearful description of the internal vice which was to lead Rome irremediably to its destruction.

By attentive consideration of the human race, at the period at which this great revolution commenced, there will be no difficulty in disentangling from amidst the crash of events, the causes which rendered it necessary. The social body was worn out, and the apparent vigour which it continued yet for some time to show, was almost solely owing to the preservation of military discipline, which soon fell off like other things. The absolute power of the emperors momentarily supplied the place of laws, morals, and religion. There was a sad kind of imitation of order, because there was obedience, and there was obedience because there was terror. The sword of the legionary was the sceptre with which those proud Romans were governed, who had imposed fetters on the whole world; and as there had never been an example of a similar domination, so there never existed one of a like servitude.

Beginning with the reign of Tiberius, men's souls reached a point of degradation, which astonishes even at the present time: or, rather, a degradation which already existed became manifest, and which only waited for a first example and vile hire, to produce itself in open day, and in a manner to assume a formal possession of dishonour. In truth, a few rare virtues still appeared far between in society, like those fires lit at night on the shores of a stormy sea, to point out the path of the seaman; but they seemed to shine only to light up the wrecks which they should have prevented. And these very virtues, examined coldly, what were they after all, but the easy courage to die, say rather, to escape from the fatigue of living? The strength of the greatest souls consisted in bending under the burden of those dreadful times. Let the whole nation be judged by the exceptions.

The human mind no longer knew whither to betake itself. Stripped of its belief, and even of its opinions, it swam at hazard in an immense ocean of doubt and uncertainty. There

<sup>1</sup> Bolingbroke thinks on this point exactly like Montesquieu: The neglect and contempt of Religion were, he says, the chief causes of the evils which Rome subsequently endured. Religion and the State declined in the same proportion. Vol. iv, p. 428.



was no longer any paganism, there was not even any philosophy, unless that name were applied to those vague trials of wit, by which some Romans enlivened their leisure in the gardens of their villas, or under the porticos of their palaces, without bringing forth from these ingenious discussions, any fixed rule of conduct, or a principle to guide the conscience. They argued on the gods, to doubt whether they existed ; on duties, in order to elude them ; on death, to come to the conclusion that time pressed to enjoy life ; and beyond all this, they abandoned themselves indolently to the current of the stream which whirled away in confusion the fragments of social order, the men, the institutions, and the empire itself.

But notwithstanding the general indifference, and perhaps because of that indifference, the public worship still maintained its ground ; but a public worship void of faith, and consequently devoid of effect. The immortal gods were still appealed to at the 'rostrum' ; never had the orators abounded more in severe maxims, or pompous moral sentences : and yet society was visibly growing weaker : for phrases are not beliefs, and futile declamations do not replace social doctrines. Philosophy itself, although decided on seeing nothing in those doctrines but prejudices, has in our time admitted their indispensable necessity. 'Doubtless, men must have prejudices,' says one of its most celebrated disciples, in a work in which he teaches atheism ; 'without them there is no spring, no action ; everything grows sluggish and dies.'<sup>1</sup> Thus the *death* of society, the *death* of the human race would be the result of the victory which modern wisdom is striving to gain over what it calls *prejudices*. We knew this only too well already ; but it is pleasing to hear the admission from its own mouth.

Christianity, therefore, found the empire in that state of moral falling away, which results from the deprivation of the truth, and which presages an approaching dissolution ; and to establish itself, it had to overcome the general indifference, and the resistance of the magistrates, who were decided on supporting paganism, not as a religion, but as a State institution. Such was almost the single motive which dictated so many sanguinary edicts.

<sup>1</sup> Literary Correspondence of Grimm and Diderot, vol. 5, p. 8.

Fanaticism had so small a share in it that the philosopher Marcus Aurelius, and Trajan were no less persecutors than Nero. They proscribed the Christians as enemies of the laws, and it is very remarkable that political intolerance is the most implacable, and the most barbarous, because it is in no wise softened by the religion which it defends.<sup>1</sup> In every religion, even though false, there is something generous and favourable to humanity : State policy, on the contrary, is without pity, and constantly calm and cold, even when it is atrocious. This has been seen in all periods ; and nothing in this respect more resembles the persecutions of the early Christians by the emperors, than the persecutions of the Catholics by England. But I will elsewhere treat of that important subject which deserves particular attention.

There is but one means of withdrawing men from the indifference into which they are thrown by the abuse of reason ; it is to subdue that haughty reason, by forcing it to bend under an authority so lofty and so dazzling, that its rights cannot remain unrecognised. It must be convinced that there exists a superior reason, an immutable rule of truth, to which it must submit itself, as to the supreme monarch of all understandings. In a word reason must, by recognising the sovereignty of God, raise itself to an absolute obedience, which restraining it in its place, which it never leaves but to lose itself, prevents it from robbing itself of the possession of the truth. Now that is what Christianity did admirably. It announced itself in the first place with all the external characteristics of divinity ; and when it had proved its celestial origin, it banished all doubts, leaving no necessary truth undecided, and constrained human reason to prostrate itself before the Divine reason, and to listen in silence, with full assent to the sublime lessons dictated by it. The principle of action, or faith, having acquired a degree of power proportioned to the infinite authority which taught, it became possible to say to man : *Be perfect even as God is perfect*; everything could be commanded to him, because, *all things are possible to him that believeth*<sup>2</sup> : and certainly whoever has an idea of what the

<sup>1</sup> This explains the tyranny of the Education Department.  
Omnia possible sunt credenti. Marc ix, 22.

human race was under Tiberius and his successors, will own that nothing less than infinite power was wanted to substitute for the morals of those abominable centuries, the severe morality of the gospel, and its rigid teaching in the stead of sceptical philosophy, whose dissolute maxims had so deeply planted its roots in all hearts. In the eyes of him who understands this miracle is more striking than the resurrection of a dead body; and the word that revives a dead body, recalling it to the life of the senses, is perhaps less wonderful than that which revives a whole nation by recalling it to the life of intelligence.

A constant fidelity to the fundamental principle of the Christian religion preserved Europe for fifteen centuries, not from the passing scandal of error but from the fatal lethargy of indifference. This terrible malady was only seen to spring up again in its bosom, at the moment when reason, rebelling against the supreme authority which had hitherto guided it, struggled to recover that servile independence from which Christianity had freed it.

The Reformation which showed early an abject leaning and an unholy veneration for the heroes of ancient philosophy,<sup>1</sup> was itself from its origin, only a system of anarchical philosophy, and a monstrous attempt against the universal power which rules the society of the intellect. It made the human mind go backwards to paganism; and causes similar to those which had acted on the Romans, at the time of their greatest corruption, produced similar effects amongst some modern nations, victims, without their knowledge, of the same destructive principles. Let us consider for a moment England in

<sup>1</sup> In the profession of faith presented to Francis I by Zwingli, that chief of the Reformation in Switzerland, placed in heaven by the side of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, not only Socrates, Aristides, Antigone, Numa, Camillus, the Catos, the Scipios, but also Hercules and Theseus. 'I do not know why,' says Bossuet, 'he did not place there Apollo and Bacchus, even Jupiter; and if he was prevented from doing so by the infamous acts attributed to them by their poets, those of Hercules were they lesser?' (*Hist. des variat.* Liv. II n. 19). Luther himself was terrified at seeing the Reformation at its birth, fall into indifference as to religions. He wrote that Zwingli 'had become a pagan by placing impious pagans, and even Scipio an Epicurean, even Numa the devil's agent for setting up idolatry amongst the Romans, in the ranks of the blessed souls. For of what avail are baptism, the other sacraments, the Scriptures, and Jesus Christ Himself, if the impious, the idolaters, and the epicureans are holy and blessed? And that, what else is it but to teach that each one can be saved in his own religion and belief?' (Parv. conf. Luth. hosp., p. 2, 187).

particular. Her isolated position allowed the Reformation to develop itself there with fewer obstacles, so that nowhere can one observe better the progress of its advance, or its influence on society.

The anarchists of 1793 sought to establish social order upon *liberty* and *equality*, absolute *liberty* of action, and *equality* of authority or of rights: which was but the logical consequence of the sovereignty of the people, which on the one side excluding all superiors, leaves each one entirely *free* or master of himself; and on the other side belonging *equally* to all, it must be divided among all *equally*. It is known in what this doctrine soon resulted: but what I want to draw attention to here, is its perfect conformity with the theological doctrine of the protestants. Having laid down as a principle the sovereignty of human reason in matters of faith, they tried to give as a basis for Religion, *Liberty* and *Equality*, that is to say, *liberty* in belief, and *equality* of authority; and this doctrine held in common by political and religious revolutionists, must have had, and in reality has had a similar result in the political and in the religious order of things: in the one it produced all the crimes, in the other all the errors; and, during the fatal discords which brought one of her kings to the scaffold, England underwent simultaneously this double effect.

Each sect, however, feeling that it was losing ground, tried to assume over its members an authority regulating their belief and actions, or to seize upon some fragments of the conservative principle which had imprudently been broken up. Useless attempt: it was immediately pointed out to it that it could not claim such an authority without passing a condemnation on itself: and the absolute impossibility of finding a resting place amidst the quicksands of the Reformation, constrained consistent minds rapidly to pass through the whole of Christianity so as to arrive at the same limit as the ancient philosophy, that is to say, in the first place, to atheism, and next to indifference, which contains all errors together, because it at once excludes all truths.

A revolution then took place in men's minds similar to that which occurred at Rome towards the end of the Republic:

men ceased to occupy themselves with the truth of Religion in order to consider it from a purely political point of view. They made it a State institution, completely subordinate to the chief of the State, even in matters of dogma. Men had refused to believe in Christianity on the authority of God, and they reached the point of not believing in God except on the authority of the king: 'because it is immoral and impious,' says a celebrated English philosopher, 'when the sovereign has sanctioned a creed, to deny or cast doubt upon the divine authority of a single line or a single syllable of that creed,' seeing that, 'the testimony and authority of the laws are the sole guarantee that we have against error.'<sup>1</sup>

Such is also the opinion of Hobbes; Christians, according to him, are obliged to obey the laws of an infidel prince, even in matters of religion: 'Thought is free; but when it comes to confession of that Faith, private reason must submit to the general reason; that is to say to God's lieutenant.'<sup>2</sup>

It would not be possible more entirely to confound political and religious order, nor to show a more profound indifference to the truth. The need of public worship was felt, and consequently of an authority to defend it against the inconstancy of opinion; and as men no longer knew of any external authority other than human authority or force, they made the depository of the power of the State, the independent arbiter in matters of faith. The passions and interests gave themselves a religion, as they had given themselves a constitution; and religion was indeed only an article of that constitution: a kind of contract between the nation and the sovereign, in which the nation stipulated its religious servitude in exchange for what it gained in political freedom, and when I say servitude, I say it advisedly; for servitude consists not in obedience to authority, which on the contrary is the only true freedom, but in subjection to an authority devoid of right.

As soon as religion had become simply a political institution, and faith a law of the State, whoever publicly professed a different faith was necessarily considered as a rebel against the laws and an enemy of the State. Hence the persecutions

<sup>1</sup> Lord Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, vol. i, pp. 231-360.

<sup>2</sup> *Leviathan*, p. 238.

which the dissenters underwent in England, persecutions which were of a purely political nature. For, observe the difference: the Church being a spiritual association, and regarding different religions only under a spiritual aspect, that is to say, as true or false, is supremely intolerant of errors; but it only decrees spiritual penalties against individuals. The State, on the contrary, only looking at religion from a point of view independent of its truth is supremely tolerant of errors; it reserves all its severity for the individuals, because it can only know of external derelictions or actions. Thus the laws in England did not declare such and such doctrines false, but they deprived the followers of such and such a form of worship of civil rights, and condemned persons convicted of having practised the proscribed forms of worship, to imprisonment, to banishment, to death, all purely civil penalties.

However, the indifference to the truth, which was at the bottom of these laws, each day more and more protected against their rigour the sects sprung from protestantism, which all participated more or less in the same indifference. Sisters so to say of the established religion, they were drawn nearer together, by common feelings and interests; whilst the Catholic Religion, equally opposed to each one of them, had them all for enemies, and ended by bearing alone the burden of an oppressive legislation. The same thing had happened to Christianity, under the emperors: they rigorously proscribed it on account of its incompatibility with the Religion of the Empire, and tolerated idolatrous forms of worship, because being founded on the same error, they did not mutually exclude one another, and what means are there of contesting this parallel, when one sees England prescribe to its agents in Canada, with the minutest details, odious measures of persecution of the Catholic religion; and at the same time, guarantee under a solemn treaty to the inhabitants of the island of Ceylon, the liberty of idolatry: and be present through an embassy at the religious ceremonies of these nations, and offer sacriligious gifts to their divinities?

A nation from whom this dishonouring scandal did not draw forth a universal cry of indignation and horror, is no longer a Christian nation. It is arriving at the last limit of

religious indifference, and that is what preserves it from the fanaticism of impiety. For that matter, this ever increasing indifference gradually weakens the political intolerance, and sooner or later will triumph over it. That moment will be the time so long desired of Catholic emancipation. The mass of the nation indifferent to all errors, will soon be indifferent even to the truth; by dint of despising it, it will endure it. Public opinion has already done almost everything in this matter: the Government alone resists, and it is easy to understand why.<sup>1</sup> The existence of the Anglican Church which is bound up with the constitution of the State; and the Government fears to place its factitious religion in front of a real religion. It will be obliged, however, to make up its mind to this, for this event is necessary. A policy of foresight, instead of retarding, would perhaps hasten it; it is moreover, easy to perceive that this cannot but be advantageous to England: a prey to that devouring cupidity, which never fails to beset nations at their decline, she puts forth a restless and prodigious activity, which some take to be life, and which is life, as fever is life, or as the contractions of a galvanised corpse are life. She is dead in her morals, and at the first unexpected blow that may fall upon her riches, great will be the surprise at seeing that great body, which was supposed to be so vigorous, expire of inanition after a few convulsions. There exist in this nation, nevertheless, some germs of regeneration: but it can only be re-animated through belief. The Established Church being at present a nullity in that

<sup>1</sup> It is to be hoped that Catholic emancipation will soon be followed by its natural complement, the removal of the Established Church in Ireland from purely Catholic districts where its maintenance is as great an anomaly as would be any attack upon it in England. Those who wish to do away with church rates in England must for consistency's sake support the restoration of church property to its original owners in districts where they are the only persons to whom it can be of any service. The following newspaper extract on this subject is confirmatory of many of the author's statements in this chapter. 'He (Mr Milner Gibson), was almost apologetic in the avowal of his sincere and deliberate conviction that the Established Church would be strengthened rather than weakened by the abolition of compulsory rates; and he hazarded the remark that *it is not inconsistent with the position of a member of the Church of England to believe in the great Protestant principles of the right of private judgment and of religious equality*, with the air of a speaker who feared he was trespassing on the verge of paradox.'—*Saturday Review*, February 15, 1862.

I have been glad to find that I had advocated concurrent endowment seven years before it was proposed by the Duke of Cleveland and a few days later by Earl Stanhope in the Irish Church debate. June 1895.—*Notes of Translator*.

respect,<sup>1</sup> England has to choose between the fanaticism of a few turbulent sects, and the Catholic religion, that is to say, between opinions which after having agitated her for some time, will bring her back again to the same point at which she now stands; and a stable doctrine, severe because it is perfect, eminently conservative because it is eminently true, and which alone can save her at once from the slow dissolution of indifference, and also from the disastrous troubles into which the anarchical errors of the independent sects would infallibly precipitate her.

The rest of Europe, with the exception of some Catholic countries, is internally harassed by the same malady. Everywhere indifference to the truth leads to the system of religious *liberty* and *equality*. This system in several countries assumes a more rapid development even than in England, because it has not got to overcome the barrier of the laws and the political constitution. It is admitted, indeed, that a religion is necessary for the nation, but any religion whatsoever; it matters little which, the choice is left to itself; and in order that it may form its choice with the greater *liberty*, all are presented to it with an equal respect, or rather, with an equal contempt. The Governments, if there are any, which still attach importance to doctrines, instead of seeking to assist themselves by their means, only try to neutralise them respectively by a skilful mixture. Dupes, like their subjects, and still more so than their subjects of the enlightenment of the age, they seem to take a pleasure in brandishing before their peoples the torch of modern wisdom, in the glare of which there is nothing that does not appear either indifferent or false, to begin with their own rights. It would seem as though they imagined that men will become more docile and less restless when their belief shall have become petrified. They have no idea that obedience to authority, even the civil authority, when it is not the forced effect of constraint, is the greatest effort of faith. If

<sup>1</sup> Warburton, who died, Bishop of Gloucester in 1779, was frightened at the destiny prepared for England by the anarchy of doctrines under which he saw her labouring. 'What,' said he, 'will become of this unfortunate nation, placed like a body of troops between two fires; the fury of irreligion, and the fury of fanaticism!'—*Warburton's Letters*, p. 47.



anything could be ridiculous by which the fate of nations is compromised, it would be to see these absurd despisers of common sense and experience, wasting their *protection* on all the so-called religious follies which have ever degraded the human mind, and forming collections of forms of worship, as pictures are collected in a museum. Thanks to this idea the public religion is only the herding together of all private religions. Ministers are paid to teach that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and others are paid to deny it. The sacerdotal office degraded, and placed like a minor under the guardianship of the administration, depends on the caprice of the lowest clerk; and whilst among the pagans, there was no temple which had not its sacred revenues, not a divinity whose adorers had not made it independent, in a manner by endowing its altars: the Deity of the Christians, barely admitted to a provisional pay, appears each year upon a budget that is an outrage, as a stipendiary of the State, no doubt until the time shall have come for placing it on the retired list.

That the policy of this century should smile complacently at this sublime result of its maxims; that it should congratulate itself on the peace which it has been able to establish between hostile religions is not a matter for surprise, but for lamentation. Peace, a profound peace, reigned also over the sad plains where Germanicus found confounded together the bones of the Germans and the bones of the soldiers of Varus.

Contemplate society: it is by observing it with an attentive eye that an equitable judgment can be formed of this so vaunted philosophical system. Religion as a belief was everywhere, and its absence has made itself felt everywhere. It had been in the government to watch over the interests of the people, and to protect it against abuses of the administration of tyranny; it had been amidst the people to secure the stability of the government, and to protect it against the attempts of the masses or against anarchy; hence it resulted that government was mild and strong, and the nation free and obedient. But no sooner had Religion ceased to be a divine belief, than governments and peoples, arrayed in a kind of state of war (because power without counterpoise tends to

despotism, and obedience without security to rebellion), became forced to ask mutual guarantees of each other and to seek for security in compacts that were illusory, because infractions of them had no other judge than the interested parties themselves. Such is the cause which brings forth in Europe a crowd of constitutions half-monarchical, half-republican ; in truth, temporary treaties between despotism and anarchy.

While Religion still was among the nations as a motive, as a source of patriotic energy, society in moments of crisis drew from it an infinite power of resistance and preservation. That which happened in our day in Spain makes this very clear. The generous cry inspired by Christianity into a whole nation : *Let us die for the just cause !* will not be forgotten for a long time. And the noble efforts of that believing people to maintain its independence, efforts which success crowned, and must needs have crowned, are still more remarkable from the contrast with the weakness, the cowardice it might be said, of some other nations. Thus Religion, by compelling man to obey the government, ensures the liberty of the governed ; whilst incredulity, of which indifference is the lowest term, by destroying the principle of obedience, predisposes to servitude, and leads to it sooner or later.

Religion used to intervene as legislator and arbiter in all social transactions. Marriage owed to it its sanctity ; and after having strengthened and consecrated the foundation of family, it preserved it by a wise concord of authority and dependence. All institutions borrowed something moral from it ; and as government is necessary wherever there is an assemblage of similar beings, in the smallest school as well as in the most vast empire, everywhere it ennobled obedience by the most sublime motives. Wonderful to relate ! it substituted veneration for envy, by showing the shadow of God in all that received a share of His power. The spirit of charity, which is special to it, drew classes nearer together without confounding them, and benefits and gratitude formed the mild bonds which united them. In this manner, and by detaching the Christian from temporal interests, it bound closely man to man, families to families, generations to generations, even nations to nations. What has been seen

to succeed to this happy state? In marriage, a brutal dissolution, and the annihilation of the conjugal bond, transformed into a temporary agreement: anarchy in families, aversion to authority amongst inferiors, hardness amongst the great and selfishness in all; bad faith in contracts, a sacrilegious contempt of oaths, discord amongst citizens, and international hatreds, which recall the most horrible epochs of history.

Religion lastly existed amongst individuals as a restraint. That restraint once shattered, those actions which the laws could not reach remained without any other rule than the passions. The whole of morality has been written in the pages of the Criminal Code, fearful morality of which the magistrate is the priest, and the executioner the avenger. The distinction between right and wrong begins at the foot of the scaffold, and there only ends the domain of indifference. Man has been told Religion is an invention of man; then all appeared to him to be human inventions, even society, even justice; and feeling himself great enough to obey God only, he contemptuously rejected the yoke of man. From that instant laws were for him but obstacles, and powerless obstacles; for there is no escape from conscience, but there may be from the law; and the hope of succeeding is often such, that without the fear of a future life, there would be folly in abstaining from the attempt. Wisdom consists solely in balancing the risk with the interest. Thus, not only have the virtues vanished, but crime, I dread to say it, crime without infamy as without remorse, is no more than a simple combination of chances, a vulgar speculation, a calculation; less than that, a sport with which childhood even amuses its idleness, and which becomes a habit to it, before the passions have made it a need.

Such is the result of the doctrine whose history I have sketched. The world has seen it twice, and the last time with a more dangerous character, it spread its ravages over nations, enervated and led astray. Eighteen centuries ago it disappeared before rising Christianity: it will again disappear before Christianity fully developed, or else society and the human race will disappear before it.

### CHAPTER III

Continuation of the same Subject.

It has been seen in the preceding chapter that the system, whose origin and effects were therein set forth, is a fatal system ; we will in addition prove that it is an absurd system.

Without Religion there is no society : philosophy admits this ; but what is the conclusion that it draws ? Philosophy declares that since society has only been able to establish and preserve itself with the assistance of religious beliefs, it is the lawgivers who have invented Religion. Ask of it who are these lawgivers to whom the human race is indebted for so important an invention : it knows nothing of it. Beg of philosophy to name at least one nation amidst whom Religion has been known to have had a beginning, and to assign about the time of this wonderful discovery : its historical knowledge does not go back so far as that. As far back as it may search, a more ancient faith and worship are always to be found, and all the monuments of antiquity agree in giving the lie to its conjectures<sup>1</sup>

It might be enough to stop there and to say to philosophy, you are asserting a new fact ; a fact contrary to all historical documents, as well as to the traditions of the whole world, Your simple assertion is not sufficient to upset this imposing mass of testimony. Somewhat more is needed, proofs are wanted : therefore prove your assertion or hold your peace.

What could it reply to anyone who held this language ? Philosophy, which takes a pride in bending to no authority,

<sup>1</sup> Dr Allan Menzies has attempted a History of Religion and a reviewer in the *Realm* of April 19, 1895, says he has failed : ' Yet he has tried to exhibit the great manifestations of human piety in their genealogical connection ; and so will others till the heavens are old. The task is vain : but man were not man did he not attempt it.' *Note of Translator.*—June, 1895.

would it exact from others a blind submission to its own? The annals of nations are in our hands also. Whatever it has there read, we can read also; let it then show us the page on which it is written: *In this year God was invented.*

Truly philosophy sometimes employs strange logic:

'This is so because I assert it, and I assert it because it appears to me that it cannot be otherwise.' Is not that a powerful proposition? How pitiful! But contempt is increased by a close examination of the incoherent dreams which are given to us as certainties.

How is it that it does not perceive, that before that there were lawgivers, there were men assembled together, consequently there was society, and consequently a Religion, as it admits itself.

Society is the natural state, the *necessary* state of man: without society he can neither reproduce nor preserve himself; therefore Religion, without which society could not exist, is like society *necessary*; therefore it is not a human invention.

In truth, mankind may reject ancient beliefs, and accept of new ones. Certain religions may vary in that which is arbitrary in them, either to the advantage or to the detriment of social order; but the pith has always subsisted, without which society had been deprived of a necessary condition of its existence; and the philosophers whom I am combating reason like the physiologist, who from the fact of the necessity of air to set in motion the organs and vivify the human body, should conclude that men had invented air.

I own that the ancient lawgivers availed themselves of the current beliefs to impress upon their laws a sort of divine consecration. But if Religion had been but a part of those laws, if it had not preceded them, by what means could it have been a sanction of them? The necessity for laws is manifest, it is felt by all mankind; and yet lawgivers, instead of leaning upon this evident necessity, would have sought out beyond human reason, for an absurdity to make it the basis of social order: who will ever believe such a thing?

Moreover, it must not be supposed that it is given to man to change by a word the ideas of mankind. It is not indeed to be conceived that a people could exist without a Religion;

but if religion were false, or in other words, if it were merely a political invention, it is still less easy to conceive that it should have been able to establish and perpetuate itself amongst all nations without exception. No example can be found of an error thus universally adopted, and above all an error which runs counter to the passions. This is so contrary to human nature, that I would more easily understand the general adoption of an erroneous logic ; at least it would meet with no opposition from the desires of the heart.

Observe besides, that whilst laws vary almost to infinity, in the same manner as do forms of government, the fundamental dogmas of religion are everywhere immutably the same. Do you recognise in this astonishing uniformity the character of a human invention? Error is arbitrary, hence comes it that in what in them is false, religions do not resemble, and even contradict one another ; but there are certain points which are common to them all, and I ask the reason why ; I ask to have explained to me this wonderful agreement between inventors entirely unknown one to another. Will it be said that the same error, with the purpose of making use of it to establish social order, has by chance fallen into the minds of the lawgivers of all countries and all ages? Strange chance, to which we owe society! But chance after all is no explanation, and certainly in giving a reason for geometry, the argument would not be accepted, that chance had led the inventors of this science in different nations to have the same notions of proportion and shape, and to attribute the same properties to them. The question then ever comes up again, and will never be resolved, except by the supposition of a general tradition more ancient than the lawgivers, that is to say, a religion anterior to human institutions and positive laws.

Everything brings us back to this conclusion, history, reasoning, and the experience which we have of ourselves and of our fellowmen. Religion is so natural to man, that perhaps he has not got in him a more indestructible sentiment. Even when his mind pushes it aside, there is yet something in his heart which recalls it to him ; and that religious instinct which is to be found in all men, is also the same in all men.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I advance nothing here but what has been formally avowed by the philosophy

Entirely sheltered from the variations of opinion, nothing changes its nature, nothing alters it. The poor savage who adores the Great Spirit in the wastes of the New World, has not, doubtless, as clear and as extended a notion of the Deity as Bossuet; but he has the same feeling with respect to it. Now is it in the power of laws to create feelings, nay universal, invincible feelings? What should we think of the person who should tell us that,—the human race lived scattered abroad, each one only thought of himself, only cared for himself; no moral bond existed between father and children, no mutual affection, no durable intercourse; the lawgiver invented paternal love, and filial gratitude, and family arose.

And even if these absurdities were swallowed up, new ones would present themselves in crowds. Take away religion, you destroy all moral obligation; and in fact the ancient and modern philosophers, who have attacked the fundamental truths of religion, have at the same time shaken the fundamental precepts of morality. The inventors of religion are according to them also the inventors of morality. Before them there was neither just nor unjust, neither crime nor virtue; nothing was right or wrong of itself; to feed an aged father or to cut his throat were indifferent actions.<sup>1</sup> The whole man rises up

of the ancients, and from which it has drawn the conclusions in good faith. There are truths so powerful that few minds have the sad strength to resist them. Cicero says, 'This then would appear to be most strongly urged as a reason why we should believe the existence of the gods, it is that there is no people so savage, none so utterly uncultivated, whose mind has not been influenced by the feeling of the deity. Many have unworthy opinions respecting the gods, but this is usually the effect of vicious customs: all, however, believe that a divine power and nature exists. Neither, indeed, is this the effect of mutual communications or the agreement of mankind, nor is it a feeling established by institutions or by laws. In all things the common feeling of all races is to be considered as being the law of Nature. *Firmissimum hoc afferri videtur, cur deos esse credamus, quod nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium tam sit immanis, cujus mentem non imbuerit deorum opinio. Multi de diis prava sentiunt: id enim vitioso more effici solet: omnes tamen esse vim et naturam divinam arbitrantur. Nec vero id colloquitio hominum, aut consensus efficit, non institutis opinio est confirmata, non legibus. Omni autem in re consensus omnium gentium, lex naturæ putanda est.*' *Tuscul. lib. I. i.*

<sup>1</sup> According to Hobbes, 'every man, by the law of Nature, has a right over all things and persons, so that the natural state of mankind is a state of war of all against each, and of each one against all: reason counsels each man to attempt either by force or cunning to subject the greatest possible number of his fellow-men, so long as he runs no risk on the part of a power superior to his own: civil laws are the sole rule of right and wrong, of what is just and what is unjust, of honesty and dishonesty; and prior to these laws all actions were indifferent in their nature,' *Vid de Cive, chap. vi; sect. xviii, ch. x, section I, ch. xii.*

indignantly at the very idea, and conscience utters a cry of horror. But why do I speak of conscience? If morality has no foundation in the nature of created beings, if, as they have said, and they who see in religion only a political institution must have said it, morality is only based on laws or arbitrary will, conscience itself is only a prejudice, a creation of the lawgiver. Thus there was no conscience, no morality, no religion, before this unknown lawgiver turned his mind to invent all this. And men are to be found who place their pride in making themselves believe these inconceivable follies! At least, they ought to acknowledge that it ill becomes them to tax anybody with credulity.

This is not all. The system which I am examining presupposes both the falseness of religion and its necessity for the maintenance of social order. Now, religion is of no use except inasmuch as it is believed in. Either then all the members of a society must believe in religion, or it must be that religion is necessary only to a part of the members of society. And as it would involve a contradiction that those who consider religion to be false should believe in religion, it became obligatory to establish the principle that religion is necessary only to the people: a principle which is destructive of all religion, as admitted by Condorcet,<sup>1</sup> and which contains more inconsistencies than could be pointed out in a single volume.

And firstly, in the language of philosophy every one that believes is of the people, even were he the chief of the State. Therefore by arguing that religion is only necessary for the people, it is the same as saying that it is necessary to all men except to those who do not believe in it; whence it follows that if no one believed in it, it would not be necessary to anyone. In truth, it is not easy to understand how, in this case, it would not cease to be indispensable to society: it is a mystery, the

Leviathan, pp. 24, 25, 60, 61, 62, 63, 71. It must not be supposed that Hobbes wished directly to establish these prodigious maxims, but he saw that in good logic they were the necessary deductions from his premises, and he liked better to admit them than to abandon his premises. A first error often leads minds which reason a long way off.

<sup>1</sup> 'Any religion which is defended on the ground of its being a belief which it is useful to leave to the people, can only look forward to a more or less prolonged death struggle.' *Esquisse d'un tableau des progrès de l'esprit humain.*



secret of which it has not yet pleased philosophy to reveal to us, and which seems destined for a long time yet to exercise the faith of its adepts.

✓ In the second place, religion only is necessary to the people itself, because it is the basis of duty and the rule of morals. Now, would the philosopher think himself independent in these two respects ; or has he found another foundation for morality ? I know that such a foundation has been sought for, with an ardour equal to the interest supposed to lie in the discovery, but I also know what Rousseau thought of this empty search, which ever ends at private interest. A philosopher himself, he thoroughly knew his brotherhood ; I may then confidently lean on his authority in a matter in which certainly he is not to be suspected of partiality. Do you, who trusting to some sophists, think it fine to believe nothing, but whose honest soul still attaches a merit to virtue, remember well these words of the author of *Emile*, 'I do not admit that anyone can be virtuous without religion. I long entertained that deceptive opinion, with which I am thoroughly disenchanted.'<sup>1</sup> Without descending to personal arguments it is allowable to observe that the annals of philosophy would be far from sustaining the slightest comparison with the annals of religion in that respect. Now, if it is sometimes honourable to separate oneself from the people, it is not so at least, when together with religion, virtue also is abandoned to it.

✓ I will admit, however, for a moment that interest well understood, or any other motive of the same kind, supplies the place to certain individuals, of the obligatory precepts of a divine morality and of conscience, admitting also that religion is really necessary only to the common people : even at this rate, it ought to be the most sacred of laws, since it is the most important of institutions. To attack it, to ruin it in the minds of men, is to undermine the basis of the state, it is to become guilty of the enormous crime of high treason against society in the first degree. Now, among the philosophers who admit the political necessity of religion, how many of them are there that do not labour with all their

<sup>1</sup> *Lettre sur les Spectacles.*

might, each according to his character and means, some by their writings, others by their speech, and all by their example, to discredit religion, and to propagate incredulity, even down to the lowest classes of the people? That, like Gibbon's sage, they should 'look with pity on the errors of the vulgar' is the natural consequence of their own errors: but to be consistent, they ought, like the same sage, 'to practise with exactness the religious ceremonies of their ancestors, and devoutly haunt the temples of God.' Their system obliges them to it; is that, however, what we see? Would they not on the contrary blush to partake in appearance of the opinions of the people, or even to dissemble their contempt for the objects of its respect and faith? Their pride would have to suffer too much if they thought that they could be confounded with the crowd of believers. They separate themselves from it with disdain, they are prodigal of bitter sarcasms and insulting derision; and jealous of showing an imaginary superiority of mind, they willingly sacrifice the sacred interests of the State, and their own principles to the pitiable delusions of a blind self-love: so that even were they not the most senseless of mankind, they would yet be, judging them by their own doctrine, the most inconsistent and the most criminal.

And if they should renounce their wretched vanity of philosophers for the sake of the public good, if they should consent to commingle in our temples with the common people, it would not depend upon them to disguise their real sentiments enough for them to remain unknown to the multitude. It is not in the power of man to put this much constraint on himself. The unbeliever may do what he will to arrange his outward appearance, to watch over his words and movements, he will never perfectly resemble a Christian: and he will the less resemble him the more his soul preserves of sincerity and delicacy: there is something so vile in hypocrisy, that all honest hearts have an invincible repugnance to it. And how should the vague motive of public utility, which only affects him indirectly, obtain from the philosopher that which faith, with its immortal hopes and terrors, does not always obtain from the believer? To these considerations add weariness, that irksomeness which is inseparable from practices con-

sidered as ridiculous, pride secretly wounded, and do not doubt but that the *internal contempt* mentioned by Gibbon would soon pierce through the *apparent respect*. From that moment begin again the objections just before mentioned. The people will perceive that it is *looked upon with pity*, and will not be slow to blush for a religion which humiliates it. With the persuasion that religion is shared in by imbecility and ignorance, do you think that this partition will be very flattering to the people?

Philosophers, speak less of the dignity of man, or respect it more. What! it is in the name of reason, it is whilst emphatically exalting its imprescriptible rights, that you coldly condemn more than three-quarters of the human race to be the dupes of imposture! For pity's sake, show yourselves more generous towards your brethren; allow a few rays of the light, which you congratulate yourselves on possessing, to reach as far as them. And truly it does not depend upon you to prevent it: for, bear it well in mind, if virtues and consequently strength are needed to be religious; only the passions and therefore weakness are wanted to become incredulous. The heart inclines to that side with the whole weight of its corruption. And you imagine that throwing religion to the people and telling it that it is a necessary check upon it, it will hasten to seize it, and abandon the reins to you. Indeed, I see well enough that that would be convenient. The people would abstain for you, and you should enjoy for it. But in this ingenious calculation you forget two things, pride and cupidity. When once it shall have become a received opinion that religion is but a decoy with which to amuse the people; who will be willing to be of the people, and to impose upon himself painstaking duties, in order to acquire the flattering reputation of a fool? Each one taking example from the class immediately above, will think to rise by disbelieving, and will not the less repeat in a disdainful tone, that religion is necessary for the people. The great will send down religion, with disdain, to the magistrates, the magistrates to the middle classes, the middle classes to the artisans, the artisans to the day labourers, and these will turn over religion to the lowest beggars, from whom it will meet

with rebuffs. Like to those divine messengers mentioned in our sacred books, that daughter of heaven, a stranger in the midst of society, and seeking a resting place there in vain, will be reduced to sit upon the stones in the public streets, surrounded by a mocking crowd, which would blush to offer her a hospitable asylum.

I appeal to past experience : what has introduced irreligion into cottages ? Reasoning ? No, but the contagion of example, and the shame of appearing to be credulous. Such is, together with the attraction of licentiousness, the real cause of the increase of unbelief, and certainly philosophy is strangely confiding, if it had seriously hoped to separate the human race into two classes, of which one should believe for the security of the other, and in return should gather only disdain ; of which one should acknowledge no other duty than to obey its inclinations, while the other should renounce its inclinations in order to pay obedience to chimerical duties ; of which one should mock at all that the other respected complacently : so that on the one side would be found together with independence all that man seeks here below ; and on the other together with subjection to prejudices all that man dreads and hates, without other compensation than contempt. Is not this a happy and profound combination ? What insanity ! and yet this is what is believed and admired in preference to the truth. But Nature, whose laws do not vary at the will of the passions, soon refutes in a terrible manner these theories which human pride essays to set in opposition to eternal order. Here the facts speak, and loudly enough to be heard even by those who close their ears to reason. If any one preserved the sad courage of vaunting to us political religions, in the midst of the ruins of faith, morals, and society, all these ruins together would raise their voice to confound him. Thus religion is indispensable in this system, and by admitting the system, religion could not continue to exist : reader draw the conclusion.

Let us grant to indifferent politicians what they assert, let us admit that religion is but an error, morality an error, and let us see what will follow. These errors, they own it, are necessary to society. Now, mankind only preserves itself in

✓ a state of society ; it is also in a state of society alone that his intellectual faculties develop themselves, that he raises himself above the brutes, by the exercise of his reason, by cultivation of the sciences, by the practice of virtue. On the other side error does not exist of necessity, it may have been, or may not have been invented ; it is the contingent product of what is called chance. Whence it results :

1. That society is simply an effect of chance, and that according to all probabilities the human race should have perished at its birth, since it has only been able to perpetuate itself by the assistance of an accidental invention, infinitely less probable than the invention of aerostatics : for after all this is but the application of certain and immutable laws, whereas the first is related to nothing real, and is only founded in the imagination.

2. That according to the laws of Nature, which are only the expression of eternal truths, or of the necessary relations of beings, society ought not to have established itself, nor the human race to have perpetuated itself ; and that, consequently, the truth is destructive of society and destructive of man.

3. That the development of the intellectual faculties, or the exercise of reason, which only takes place in the state of society, is opposed to Nature, or as Rousseau expresses himself, that, 'the man who thinks is a depraved animal.'<sup>1</sup>

4. That all in man that is grandest and noblest, his enlightenment, his genius, his virtues, are the produce of error ; so absurd a conclusion, that Diderot himself establishes the contrary proposition as an axiom : He says, 'Error from truth (or error of doctrine) influences every reasonable and consistent creature, and cannot fail to render it vicious.'<sup>2</sup>

5. That the perfection of man and his very existence is founded on a violation of natural laws ; the knowledge of the truth on the conviction of error : I know not what next ! for these absurdities grow complicated, and multiply to a degree that does not allow of enumerating them. And yet it is necessary either to admit them all or to abjure logic, or give up

<sup>1</sup> Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes.

<sup>2</sup> Essai sur le Merite et la Vertu, part ii, section 3.

the system from which they consistently result. Is it possible for one to hesitate in such an alternative? Is it possible for reason voluntarily to condemn itself to believe, I do not say that which it could not understand, but that of which it clearly conceives the impossibility? What is there in this stupid and degrading credulity that can flatter pride! Whoever was to devise a theory of physical science founded on such palpable contradictions, would excite general ridicule and contempt. Now, do contradictions change their nature and become proofs when brought forward to overthrow duty and religion? In the system which I am examining it is impossible that religion should be true; in the same system it is impossible that it should be false. Of these two contradictory propositions, one is the foundation of the system, the other is its consequence. How escape from this dilemma, except by denying reason itself, and transforming absurdity into a positive motive of belief? I am a Christian; but, I declare it, I reject Christianity, I disavow its doctrine, from the moment that it is shown to me that my faith rests on so humiliating a basis.

I cannot here refrain from offering a reflection to the reader, which I beg of him to meditate upon seriously. In writing this chapter, I had no intention of proving the truth of religion, I wished only to refute a particular system of philosophy; and yet the immediate conclusion from what has just been read, is that religion is necessarily true, since it is evidently absurd to suppose it false: so certain is it that it would be impossible to think about religion, and to consider it from any point of view, without its truth shining out in a manner as striking as unexpected. A thousand different paths end at the same limit, a thousand different arguments lead to the same conclusion; so that in the almost infinite multitude of proofs which concur to establish the most important of truths, there is not a single man, whatever be the nature and power of his mind, who does not readily discover that one proof which suits him, which was so to say, destined for him by providence, provided always that he seek for it, instead of employing all his efforts to repel it.

In recapitulating the considerations developed in this and

in the preceding chapter, it is to be observed (1) that the doctrine of those with whom religion is only a political institution, necessary for the people alone, is destructive of society, because it is destructive of religion, without which it is admitted that society could not exist.

(2) That this doctrine is absurd and contradictory, in the first place, because it presupposes that no society could exist without religion, and that religion could only have been invented and established in a society already existing : in the second place, because it is to be concluded from it, that society, which is a necessary state, is a state contrary to nature, an accidental invention, an arbitrary institution founded on error, and which only subsists by aid of error ; that according to the immutable laws of order, and the relations derived from the nature of beings, mankind ought not to have been preserved ; thus man's existence is contrary to Nature ; that duties are equally contrary to Nature ; the development of human reason contrary to Nature ; that the truth is a cause of disorder and death, error a principle of perfection and of life : finally, that it is impossible that religion should be true, and at the same time impossible that it should be false.

(3) That this system, admitting of the consideration of various religions, and of religion in general, only from a purely political point of view, reposes consequently on absolute indifference as to the truth in matters of religion. To refute the fundamental doctrine of indifference will, therefore, be to overthrow the basis of this system in particular.

And should I not already be justified in terminating this discussion, by calling upon the adversaries either to abandon their principles, or to prove that they do not carry with them the consequences which I attribute to them? But no ; I know how much it costs man to acknowledge that he has been mistaken ; I know how long he struggles against that painful conviction. All that I expect, all that I ask for, is that after having meditated upon the preceding reflections, the philosophers to whom they are addressed will consent merely to doubt, to suspect, that it is just possible that they are misleading themselves, and that religion may not be a human inven-

tion. This simple doubt imposes on them the duty of inquiry. They are bound to it as reasonable beings ; they are doubly obliged to it as philosophers. For, after all, what is it that they so bitterly reproach the vulgar for? for believing without examination, from habit, from prejudice. Now, is it honourable, is it wise, to be incredulous in the same manner in which it is asserted that it is absurd to be believing? The people, at least, with its prejudices, reserves to itself hope ; and even were it mistaken, should it be necessary to choose between this heavenly feeling and those sad gleams which only lighten up the void, the lot of the Christian would yet be beautiful enough.



## CHAPTER IV

Considerations on the Second System of Indifference, or on the theory of those who, doubting the truth of all positive religions, think that each man ought to follow that in which he was born, and who acknowledge no other than natural religion as incontestably true.

THE pernicious consequences of the preceding system, and the absurdities with which it abounds, having led certain philosophers to modify it, a new theory of indifference has been thereby produced. Less bold than the first, without being more satisfactory, it will shortly be seen that it would not bear the slightest examination. It would not be easy to comprehend the delusion which it produces in certain minds, if on the other hand it were not well known with what a humiliating facility man accepts all opinions which flatter his prejudices and favour his inclinations.

The most skilful defender of the doctrine which I am going to attack is, without contradiction, J. J. Rousseau. I could not therefore do better than borrow his own words to set it forth. This method, besides being less dry than a simple analysis, will set aside all suspicion of unfairness on my part.

Let us first show in what the principles of Rousseau differ from the principles of the philosophers refuted in the preceding chapters. This comparison will assist the reader in forming a clear and precise idea of the one and the other. The system of indifference, making religion a political institution, contains within it atheism, and upsets all the duties and all the hopes of man. Rousseau looks upon the existence of

God, the spirituality of the soul, the existence of another life, as so many sacred dogmas and incontestable truths.

He is indignant at any one daring to shake them : he says, 'Fly, fly from those who under the pretext of explaining Nature, sow desolating doctrines in men's hearts, and whose open scepticism is a hundred times more positive and dogmatic than the decided tone of their adversaries. Under the haughty pretext that they alone are enlightened, true and sincere, they imperiously subject us to their abrupt decisions, and they have the pretension of giving us the unintelligible systems built on their imagination as the true principles of things. After that, upsetting, destroying, trampling under foot all that men respect, they take away from the afflicted the last consolation of their wretchedness, from the powerful and the rich the sole check upon their passions ; they pluck out from the inmost heart remorse for crimes, and hopes of virtue, and yet boast that they are the benefactors of the human race. Never, say they is truth hurtful to men : I believe it as they do, and it is, to my mind, a strong proof that what they teach is not the truth.'<sup>1</sup>

According to the first category of indifferent persons, religion and morality are human institutions. Rousseau maintains that 'real duties are independent of human institutions,' and that 'without faith, no true virtue exists.'<sup>2</sup> and as virtue is the duty of man, he admits that there are 'dogmas which every man is obliged to believe'<sup>3</sup> a proposition directly opposed to the principle that religion is necessary only to the common people.

Rousseau then rejects the whole system of those who consider religion merely as a political institution. He judges it as I have judged it, to be altogether false and hurtful, and hurtful because it is false ; which includes the supposition that in matters of doctrine, truth is inseparable from utility, or in other terms, that every doctrine that is advantageous to the human race, and with still greater reason, any necessary doctrine, is a true doctrine. I beg the reader to remember this observation.

<sup>1</sup> Emile tom iii, p. 197 edition of La Haye 1762.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. pp. 196, 197. .      <sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 187.

So far Rousseau is but the organ of universal tradition. His reason is in accordance with the reason of all nations, in accordance with experience, in accordance with all the authorities worthy of being produced in such a great question ; and as it always happens when a person follows such guides, strong in the excellence of the cause and the assent of past ages, truth under his pen assumes such a character of conviction that no attempt even has been made to answer his arguments.

But as soon as he begins to listen only to his own judgment, and that, hemmed in between Christianity, to which his premises lead, and the *desolating doctrines* which he has so eloquently refuted, he attempts to open for himself a chimerical path which shall end at neither of these two extreme points; his ideas become confused, and wandering from sophism to sophism, he falls almost at each step into the plainest inconsistencies, which all the subtleties of a skilful use of language could not succeed in disguising.

It has been noticed that he admits the necessity of a religion for all men. Now, this being laid down, what remains but to decide between the various religions, after an examination sufficient to determine a choice which wisdom might own to? But this is positively what Rousseau does not wish. 'Should a man be misled,' he says, 'he takes away from himself a great excuse before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge. Will he not rather pardon the error in which one was brought up, than that which oneself has dared to choose.'<sup>1</sup>

Now this speech has no sense, or else the author supposes that a true religion does exist; for if it did not exist, where would be the danger of *wandering from the way* in seeking it? To wander, is to go further from the object to which one is tending, now if this object is imaginary how can it be conceived that one is going further from it? Can distance be increased from that which does not exist? Observe, moreover, that Rousseau owns that in matters of religion error may be criminal in the eyes of the *Sovereign Judge*; he must needs then also own that there exists a true religion, for if there were

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom iii, p. 196

no truth error would be inevitable, and an unavoidable error needs neither *excuse* nor *pardon*.

Besides, as two contrary doctrines cannot be true at the same time, from the moment that a true religion exists, there can exist but one, and Jean Jacques owns this in formal terms: 'Among so many divers religions which proscribe and exclude one another mutually, *one alone is real*, if so much as one be so.' All the religions, except one, are then necessarily false; all the religions, except one, are therefore *hurtful*, according to Rousseau, whose words I have quoted above. Now, religions that are *hurtful* are certainly not *necessary* to man; if, then, a religion is necessary as Rousseau maintains, it can be only the one true religion. By the very fact of its being the only true one, it is the only good one, the only necessary one, the only one that comes from God. Now, is it credible, that while imposing on men the duty of following it, He has refused them the means of discerning it? There is a reluctance to do so, nevertheless Rousseau must say it, or abandon his maxims, and he cannot say it without falling, as has just been seen, into palpable contradictions.

To get out of the dilemma, he throws himself into fresh contradictions. It results from his admissions, that there is a true religion, and that there is but one: the conclusion is, that all men are bound to embrace it. But this conclusion would lead him directly to Christianity, which he strives to overthrow. What then does he do? He pretends that it is not possible to discern the true religion, and, moreover, as he acknowledges the necessity for all men of a religion, he advises each one to follow that in which he was born. If there were really impossibility of discovering the true one, this would no doubt be the wisest proceeding, provided that they all fulfilled the object for which Rousseau thinks them necessary. Now, error being, according to him, essentially *hurtful*, that object could not be fulfilled by false religions. He is therefore obliged to maintain that all religions are indifferent, that is to say, equally good, or equally true; for these two things are in-

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom iii, p. 158

separably bound together in his proposition: let us leave him to explain himself in his own words.

'I considered all the various religions as so many salutary institutions, which in each country prescribe a uniform mode of honouring God by public worship, and which may all have their reasons in the climate, the government, in the character of the people, or in some other local cause which makes one preferable to another.'<sup>1</sup> And again; 'Pay honour generally to the founders of your respective forms of worship; let each one render to his whatever he thinks that he owes him; but let him not despise the founders of other creeds. They have had great minds and great virtues; that is always to be esteemed. They have said that they were sent from God; that may or may not be.'<sup>2</sup>

This is the first time that I hear speak of the great virtues of Mahommed. After that, as it would be absurd to suppose that *Envoys from God* could teach error; and that, on the other hand, a religion founded on imposture could not be a true religion, the last phrase which I have quoted signifies literally: It is possible that all religions are true; it is possible that they are all false. So a choice may be made between this proposition, and these two others, which are not less natural deductions from the premises of Rousseau: All religions are equally true; there exists but one true religion.

For a reader who wishes to get a clear understanding, it is no slight labour to try to make the author of *Emile* agree with himself. This task is enough to dishearten the most subtle disputant. Thus, at an interval of a few pages, Rousseau informs us that there are 'dogmas which every man is *obliged* to believe,'<sup>3</sup> and 'that there is nothing really essential besides the duties of morality,'<sup>4</sup> and as if to render the contradiction more apparent, he adds immediately that 'internal worship is the first of these duties,' and that 'without faith no real virtue exists.'<sup>5</sup> What a strange confusion of ideas! Is internal worship morality? Is faith morality? And if no virtue exists without faith, how can virtue be an *essential duty* without faith being so also?

<sup>1</sup> *Emile* tom iii, p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> Lettre à M. de Beaumont, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> *Emile*, tom iii, p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, tom iii, p. 195.

As soon as the truth is left aside, reason, deprived of its support, is like to a ship which can no longer direct its course, it drifts vaguely, and follows by turns the most opposite directions. Inconsistency is always the companion of error, because man never detaches himself from all truths at once, and those that he retains force him unavoidably to contradict himself. This is what happens to Rousseau almost at every page. 'In the uncertainty in which we are,' he says, 'it is inexcusable presumption to profess another religion than that in which one is born, and falsehood not to practise with sincerity that which one professes.'<sup>1</sup> A few lines before he makes his imaginary personage speak thus: 'Return to the religion of your fathers (the religion of Calvin) . . . it is very simple and very holy; of all religions which are on earth, I believe it to be the one whose morality is the purest, and the one with which reason is best satisfied.'<sup>2</sup>

(1) There are then, even in his own opinion, various degrees of uncertainty, and consequently motives of preference, since a religion exists *with which reason is best satisfied*, now on what ground would one be obliged to live in a religion with which reason would be *less satisfied*? Jean Jacques makes a false reproach to Christianity of exacting an absolute sacrifice of reason, and here he makes it a duty for men to act against the light of their reason. Of what use will it be then, if we are not to consult it on a point upon which our eternal condition depends? Rousseau informs us, in his confessions, that he had done well enough for himself by tossing up heads or tails in the matter of his salvation; and he advises in consequence everybody to do as much. For fear of being misled, or of misleading oneself, he excludes authority and reason both together; this is a great deal however, would it not be possible to effect a compromise? Chance no doubt has its value; but philosophy seems to me to exaggerate it a little.

(2) In Rousseau's eyes, Calvinism is a *very simple* and a *very holy* religion. Now a very holy religion is a very true religion; otherwise, what would be the meaning of this word *holy*? The uncertainty about which the author of Emile

<sup>1</sup> Emile tom. iii, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

alarmed us just now, is not then after all so much to be feared, since it has not prevented him from discovering a very true religion? The others being necessarily false, why should it not be allowable to leave them for this one? The single difficulty consists in discerning the *only good one*: now there it is according to Rousseau; there is no longer any risk of a mistake; and even if, retracting his admissions, he should suppose all religions good, though not in the same degree; even if the question were to know which is the best, even then there should be no hesitation; for I do not think that he would affirm that anyone should be stopped by the fear that there might exist a religion *more than very true*.

(3) According to him, *there is nothing really essential besides moral duties*, be it so; it is then an *essential duty* to embrace the religion whose morality is the *purest*? not at all; it is on the contrary an *inexcusable presumption*.

This conclusion is so absurd, that it has compelled Rousseau to modify his propositions himself, casually however, in a note, apparently in order not to derange the perfect regularity of the text. Anyhow, he admits that, 'The duty of following and loving the religion of one's country, does not extend to doctrines contrary to good morality.'<sup>1</sup> Do not ask for anything more: you will not obtain another concession. This one is already perhaps but too embarrassing; for without religious principles, without positive law, how can there be any discrimination with certainty between what is, and what is not, contrary to good morality? Each one, however will get out of it as best he can. But as to the rest, were you a thousand times convinced that such a doctrine is false, and in consequence *hurtful*, and in consequence derogatory to Supreme Truth, in the name of philosophy, it is enjoined to you to *love it*; it is a *duty* for you, and assuredly a moral duty since those are the only ones that are essential. Did not the author do wisely to begin by excluding reason from his system?

Another contradiction. After a magnificent laudation of the Gospel, he adds: 'Withal, this same Gospel is full of incredible things, things which are repugnant to reason, and

which it is impossible for any man of sense to conceive or to admit.<sup>1</sup> Does this seem to you positive? Wait a little; you will be told that 'Christianity, not that of the present time, but *that of the Gospel* . . . is a holy, sublime and true religion.'<sup>2</sup> So Christianity is a *holy and sublime* religion, and it is *impossible for any man of sense to accept it*; Christianity is *repugnant to reason*, and Christianity is a *true* religion. Docile admirers of this inconsistent sophist, with what a good grace you reproach the Christians for their obedient faith! Christianity, carefully examined appears to them, as to your master, to be a *true religion*, and they believe in it: unfortunate people, whom prejudices blind to such a degree that they cannot see that *it is impossible for any man of sense to accept this holy, sublime, and true religion, seeing that it is repugnant to reason!*

After all this system of indifference adopted by J. J. Rousseau, is not even his own. In his very contradictions he is but the plagiarist of Chubb and other English deists. This person acknowledges 'That the establishment of Christianity cannot be explained, except by admitting the truth of the account of the evangelists; that the ministry of Jesus Christ and the power displayed by him having been at least in general favourable to the public good, it is probable that God was the first agent of this power, and directed its exercise.' And after some other reflections of the same nature, he adds: 'It follows from this, as it appears to me, that it is probable that Jesus Christ had a divine mission.'<sup>3</sup> This however does not prevent Chubb from thinking that there are also *plausible motives* for attributing a *divine character* to the religion of Mahommed.<sup>4</sup> Let these passages be compared with that in which Rousseau thus speaks of the founders of different creeds: They have said that they were envoys from God; that may or may not be: it will be admitted that the identity of principles is complete. The conclusion is also similar, for, according to the English author: 'To pass from Mahommedanism to Christianity, or from Christianity to Mahommedanism, is solely to abandon one external form of religion for another form;

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Contrat social p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> See Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. ii, pp. 41, 42, 43.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p. 40.



a step which offers no more real advantage, than there is in a man's changing the colour of his clothes, leaving, for instance, a red coat to put on a blue one.<sup>1</sup> And what Chubb here says of the Mahommedans, he says equally of the Pagans,<sup>2</sup> who embraced Christianity at its origin.

Absolute indifference to all religions is then the foundation of this system, which is a hundred times more derogatory to the Deity than atheism, and more humiliating to man, to whom it dares to say: 'Limited being, silly mortal, incapable of discovering the truth, from whence comes this *inexcusable presumption* of seeking to know it? What is it to you whether it exist or not? It does not exist for you. Your *duty* is blindly to obey all the deceivers who may call themselves *envoys from God*. Whatever error they may teach, you must *love* it; whatever form of worship they establish you must *practise it sincerely*. Did fate cause you to be born in a heathen country? Adore the gods of your country, sacrifice to Jupiter, to Mars, to Priapus, to Venus; piously initiate your daughters into the mysteries of the good goddess. In Egypt you shall render divine honours to the sacred crocodiles and to the bull Apis; among the Phenicians, you shall offer up your children to Moloch; in Mexico you shall take up arms to conquer human victims for the hideous idol there worshipped; in other places you shall humbly bow down before a trunk of a tree, before stones, plants, fragments of animals, impure remnants of death. Did you see the light at Constantinople? Repeat with your whole heart: *There is no deity but God, and Mahommed is His apostle!* At Rome you shall despise the same Mahommed as an impostor. All these religions and a thousand others are *so many salutary institutions, which have their reasons in the climate, in the government, in the character of the people, or in some other local cause which makes one preferable to the other*. That is the sole difference, and without harassing himself by selecting, the wise man keeps to that one which chance has given to him.'

Such is, in its simplicity, the doctrine of Jean Jacques; for the single restriction which he brings to it, is evidently chimerical. 'The duty of following and loving the religion of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid pp. 33, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 33.

one's country, does not extend,' he says, 'to dogmas contrary to good morality.' Very good; but where are the nations which, whilst obeying their religious laws, would imagine that they were acting injuriously to *the duties of good morality*? On the contrary, in violating these laws they would think to commit a crime, and to draw down upon themselves the anger of heaven. When the disciples of Mahommed overran Asia, holding in one hand the scimitar and in the other the Koran, is it to be supposed that they would doubt whether they had the right of massacring those who rebelled against the authority of their prophet? Far from feeling any remorse for their slaughter, they were persuaded that they were doing a work pleasing to God. History is full of like examples. In sacrificing their children to Saturn, the inhabitants of Carthage did not apparently stifle the feelings of nature for the mere pleasure of thinking themselves guilty of a horrible crime. Let us say it, for there is no truth more lost sight of or more important; the religion of peoples is their whole morality; and this causes, in part, the danger of the system which I am combating. In sanctioning all creeds, it sanctions all vices, and even all crimes. Polygamy, prostitution, all, even murder, becomes not only allowable, but *salutary*, according to *the climate, the government, and the character of the people*. Good Lord! to what have we come, if it is necessary to refute such a doctrine? And shall they be held blameless towards humanity, because, with perfidious art, and seductive phrases, they shall have surrounded these execrable maxims with the flattering words of concord, tolerance, and peace.

Observe besides that Rousseau will not allow of the examination of doctrines, in order to ascertain if they are true, but whether they are conformable to *good morality*; as if this inquiry were easier than the other, or more within the reach of all men. How many of them are there capable of perceiving the connection, often remote, although very real, which exists between the duties of morality and speculative doctrines? Upon what principles, by what rules will this examination be conducted? By the rule of conscience? At this rate, each one will remain quietly in his own religion; for I am not aware that up to the present time the conscience of the

Mussulman, the Chinese, the Hindu, or the Tahitian, has ever made any one of them disgusted with his creed. It will be referred to reason, say you. I understand ; morality will be made a problem for solution, and that of necessity ; for in order to judge if a doctrine is *contrary to good morality*, this good morality ought first to be known with certainty. There will then be never ending debates on duties, as among the philosophers of Greece and those of our days ; and from utter weariness in seeking for a foundation amidst vain abstractions, the duties will be denied in order to close the discussion. This has ever been the proceeding of philosophy. Let me be told of a single virtue which it has respected ? a single vice of which it has blushed to become the apologist ? From Aristippus down to Diderot, it has never done aught but set the passions at ease, by striving to conciliate man's duties with his desires, or rather by making his desires the sole rule of his duties. And there is no religion, not even that of the Druids, whose morality is not preferable to that of the philosophers. The Druids, at least, recommended the virtues which maintain good order in families, respect for age, and conjugal fidelity : they immolated, it is true, human victims to their sanguinary divinities, but since that in its turn, philosophy has seen fit to immolate a still greater number, to a divinity no less terrible, I do not see that it offers, even in this respect, any superior advantage ; unless perhaps it be more consoling, more pleasing, and more in conformity to the dignity of man to be sacrificed on the altars of the goddess of Reason, than on those of the god Teutates.

Experience therefore proves that, as soon as morality is considered independently of religion, morality becomes as problematic as religion itself. So that the restriction which Rousseau brings to his system is in reality null. He excludes reasoning on the one side, and he admits it on the other, but with conditions which make it impossible for most men, and dangerous to all ; for take away the promises and threats of religion, and all men have a perceptible interest in deceiving themselves as to their duties ; and Rousseau himself furnishes in his writings more than one example of the manner in which a person may render obscure, for the sake of

the passions, the clearest and most essential precepts of morality.

To reduce the discussion to its most simple terms, there are but three suppositions possible: either all religions are true, or they are all false, or lastly there exists one only true religion.

The hypothesis that all religions are true is evidently absurd; contradictory dogmas, yes and no could not be true at the same time. This is mere common sense. 'Among so many various religions which mutually prescribe and exclude one another, one alone is the right one, if so be that one is,'<sup>1</sup> says Rousseau.

The supposition that all religions are false upsets the foundation of the system of the author of *Emile*. For, in that system religion is necessary to society, and to all the members of society. It is a *duty to follow and love the religion of one's country*. Now, error which, by the admission of Rousseau, Chubb, and Diderot, is *hurtful* by nature, and *cannot fail to render vicious every reasonable and consistent creature*, is certainly *not necessary* either to man or to society: *to love* that which is false, and from that very fact pernicious, could not be a *duty* for anyone. Therefore, if all religions are false, religion far from being useful, is prejudicial; far from being obliged *to love* and *to follow* any one, they should all be despised, hated, and proscribed, as the greatest scourge of humanity. Who, indeed, would dare to make it a *duty*, for a *reasonable creature to love error, which cannot fail to render it vicious?* and what would become of that other principle, that *the duties of morality are the only essential ones?* The supposition which I am discussing is therefore incompatible with Rousseau's system. To admit the one is evidently to reject the other.

There remains the supposition of one only true religion, and in consequence alone useful, alone *necessary*, all the others being false, and consequently *hurtful*. Now under this hypothesis, what could be more absurd, than to make it a duty to man to follow the religion in which he was born?

<sup>1</sup> *Emile*, tom. iii, p. 158.

than to represent all creeds as indifferent, as equally *salutary*? than to attribute to error, the impure source of vice, the same rights as to truth, mother of the virtues? than to interdict to a reasonable creature all use of his reason, in the matter which most of all concerns him? than to constrain him to respect, *to love* follies which are invincibly repugnant to his mind? Is that then what is called philosophy? 'A son, it is said, 'is never wrong in following the religion of his father.' So in the matter of religion, birth decides everything. Here it is a *duty* to be a polytheist, and there it is a *duty* to worship but one God. Faith is to change along with climate, and vary according to the degrees of latitude; so many countries, so many opposing *duties*. Christian in Europe, Mussulman in Persia, idolator in Congo, on the banks of the Ganges, you will render divine honours to Vishnu, your rather credulous father worshipped a stone, an onion, do you preserve this family creed. *A son is never wrong in following the religion of his father.* But that religion is unworthy of God, and degrading to man. Never mind; you are born in it; *to profess another would be an inexcusable presumption.*

Disciples of Jean Jacques recognise the words of your master, and say whether, in the hypothesis of a true religion it is possible to carry inconsistency to a greater length, or to speak more plainly, madness. What, there exists a true religion, and the greater part of mankind would be bound to *profess sincerely* a false one! It will be to them a *duty* to outrage the Deity by a worship which he reproveth! All duty, and Rousseau owns this, is derived from the will of God.<sup>1</sup> It is then Supreme Truth that imposes on three quarters of the human race the obligation of *professing* error and of *loving* it? It would be that God made it a *duty* to certain nations to adore vice? Admit that there are some strange articles in the creed of indifference.

Whichever hypothesis be adopted, the system of Rousseau is therefore repugnant to common sense. In theory it applies a contradiction, and in practice it is impossible, for Jean

<sup>1</sup> All justice comes from God, He alone is its source.' Contrat social, liv. ii, chap. vi.

Jacques requires two things manifestly incompatible. He wishes men to believe all religions equally good, and to *profess sincerely* that of the country of their birth. But has he not himself made the remark that various religions *proscribe and exclude one another mutually*? To *profess one sincerely* is therefore to *exclude and proscribe* all the others. A *sincere* Jew necessarily abhors Christianity, as a *sincere* Christian rejects the Jewish religion. So with a Mussulman, so with a pagan, so with the followers of all the opposite creeds. The nature of things is not changed by rhetorical phrases: it is not to be effected that man should believe the same doctrine to be true and false at the same time; and this alleged *sincere* faith in dogmas which *mutually exclude* each other, is at bottom only incredulity, or absolute indifference.

From the considerations developed in this chapter, I have the right, it seems to me, to conclude that the principles of Rousseau, when stripped of the glitter of a misleading eloquence, offer but a shapeless assemblage of incoherencies, absurdities, and contradictions. Enough perhaps has been said to cause them to be abandoned without further examination: all that I ask, however, is that they may be examined attentively. I would say to the partisans of those maxims, do not hasten to form an opinion, only admit that there are powerful motives for considering them of doubtful veracity. Free yourselves from all previous leanings; seek sincerely that which is true; study the proofs of Christianity, with the same care, the same good faith which you would study a human science. Surely it is as important to you to know if Christianity is true, as to know the theory of electricity, or the laws of gravity. Do once in the interest of your eternal welfare, what you do every day to satisfy your curiosity. If you attach any value at all to truth, reason, and virtue, you are more than anyone else, obliged to seek a fixed rule of belief and conduct; for you, more than anyone, are deficient in this respect. That which you fancy yourself to possess, is null, false, and illusory. It is agreed to in theory, and rejected in practice. Indeed, I ask you, you especially who are born in a Catholic country, of Catholic parents, do you *sincerely profess*, as Rousseau would have it, the religion of

your fathers? Are you to be seen practising the duties which the Catholic Religion imposes on those who *profess* to follow it? Are you present with regularity, in our churches at divine service, and to listen to the teaching of our pastors? Do you obey the laws of the Church? Do you scrupulously observe the precepts of abstinence and fasting? Do you avoid dangerous dramas? Do you go to the confessional? You smile at these questions, and you are not in the wrong. Persuaded as you are that all religions are indifferent, ignorant of whether there be a true religion, and which that true religion is, why in this uncertainty should you inflict upon yourself so much weariness, such laborious practices? You ought though to do so according to your principles; but those contradictory principles, requiring and supposing that which is impossible, force you, and that is the sole profit that you derive from them, to be inconsistent, even in error.

Thus the system of Rousseau, apparently compatible with all religions, practically destroys them all. So also it destroys all virtue; for says Rousseau: 'I do not admit that one can be virtuous without religion; I long held that fallacious opinion, with respect to which I am thoroughly undeceived,'<sup>1</sup> now, in destroying virtue, in destroying religion, this system necessarily destroys society; and it is Rousseau again who says it: 'No state was ever founded, but what religion served as its base':<sup>2</sup> Take away the basis, what becomes of the edifice? Alas! we know it but too well; and if a mistake in this respect were made now, it would not be at least from want of experience.

On the ground of that ever memorable experience, may I not be allowed to judge Rousseau's doctrine as he himself judges that of the philosophers whom I have previously refuted, and to address to him his own words: 'Never, say you, is truth injurious to men. I believe it with you, and to my mind, it is a strong proof that what you teach is not the truth.'

He falls, as well as Hobbes, with the whole weight of his principles, into absolute indifference to religions. The one declares them to be all false, or of human institution; the

<sup>1</sup> Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles.

<sup>2</sup> Contrat Social, liv. iv, chap. viii.

other does not know if there be a true one, and supposing that there were a true one, he pretends that it is impossible to discover it. In the two hypotheses it is equally absurd to believe, and useless to examine. Thus the conclusion is the same, the premises only are different. I only take into consideration here those maxims which are avowed; for, in fact Rousseau only avoids the atheism to which his system leads, by multiplying contradictions. However that may be, in proving that there exists a true religion, I shall complete the refutation of those who are indifferent from considering religion as a political institution; and I shall refute Rousseau by showing that God has given to men a means sure, easy, and infallible to discern the true religion from false religions.

But what if the reader felt a reluctance to follow me into these important discussions, if heedless of the truth, he should refuse to devote to serious meditations some few of those moments of which he is so prodigal for his pleasures, it would be a cause for deep lamentation over the wretchedness of man, whom everything attaches, stirs, interests, except his eternal destinies.



## CHAPTER V

Continuation of the considerations on the Second System of Indifference, and reflections on Natural Religion.

THE sole difficulty to be encountered in combating the doctrines of philosophy consists in reducing them to fixed and precise maxims. When this has been succeeded in, all has been done ; they carry their own refutation along with them. Error is only embarrassing when, putting on a thousand diverse shapes, and eluding with fluctuating inconsistency the mind which tries to seize upon it, it escapes by dint of variations from the grasp of argument. This is the great art of Rousseau, and his constant method. Too acute to deceive himself as to the effects of his system, perceiving at each step the objections which gather together in crowds, he seeks to anticipate or to elude them, either by ambiguous statements or by formal concessions which he soon after tacitly withdraws ; and certain of imposing on an inattentive reader, by the aid of a supple flow of language, and an impassioned tone, he at every moment changes his principles, and the subject ; he skilfully passes, according to his need, from one hypothesis to another, takes up a position, abandons it, and comes back again to it, only to abandon it again : he artfully intermixes error with truth, fixes ridiculous arguments upon his adversaries, and sentiments which they reject, so as to secure to himself a brilliant triumph ; he excites, dazzles, and fascinates with phrases, whenever he cannot convince by proofs, and thus succeeds in creating a delusion in which he does not share. No man ever made a more skilful use of words. With

hardly a thought which belongs to him, he seems to take pleasure in recalling dreams forgotten long ago, and in taking the mind by surprise, by offering them to it embellished with the graces of an enchanting elocution. Such is the charm of his style that it takes possession of the senses, like a soft and sweet melody : meantime the soul is intoxicating itself with the alluring maxims of a philosophy which promises a flattering pre-eminence of enlightenment to pride, independence to thought, and which in fact only produces the enslavement of reason, and death of the intellect.

The principal cause of the contradictions which have astonished us in Rousseau, is that whilst thoroughly convinced that society would be destroyed by the abolition of positive religions, his principles nevertheless forced him to reject them as false, and consequently injurious. 'Their revelations, it is Rousseau who is speaking, are only derogatory to God, to whom they attribute human passions. So far from giving clearer notions about the Great Being, I see that particular dogmas render them confused ; that far from making them more lofty, they lower them ; that besides surrounding them with inconceivable mysteries, they add to them absurd contradictions ; that they make man proud, intolerant, and cruel ; that instead of establishing peace upon earth, they bring into it fire and sword. I ask what good there is in all that, and cannot find an answer. I see in it only the crimes of men and the misery of the human race.'<sup>1</sup>

By adhering strictly to this description, it would have been difficult to make it a *duty* to each man *to love and follow the religion of his country*, that is to say to believe in *absurd contradictions*, to be *proud, intolerant, and cruel* ; to *love and follow* doctrines, which instead of *establishing peace upon earth bring into it fire and sword* ; and in which lastly Rousseau *sees only the crimes of men and the misery of the human race*.

On the other hand, he felt that in proscribing the creeds of which he traces this disparaging portrait, all religion would be annihilated amongst men ; and in his system a religion is absolutely indispensable to men. Having therefore but a

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 133.

choice of contradictions, he has wisely preferred that which was useful to him at the moment : and ceasing to represent positive religions as false and pernicious, he declared them to be all equally *salutary* or equally true. The *duty* of *sincerely professing* that in which a man was born was thence easily deducible, and that was all that Jean Jacques needed for the moment.

Do not, however, think that he abandons his first maxims on that account. No ; to renounce them would be to admit of that revelation which he is combating. He lays down principles according to his wants, leaves them aside when they no longer serve his purpose, and gravely reproduces his previous assertions.

Thus after having advanced that *a son is never in the wrong in following the religion of his father*, he adds : ‘ Do we then sincerely seek the truth ? Let us grant nothing to the rights of birth and to the authority of parents and pastors, but let us recall for the examination of our reason and conscience all that they have taught us since our childhood.’<sup>1</sup> From which it follows either that Jean Jacques contradicts himself grossly, or that *a son is never in the wrong* in not *sincerely seeking the truth*.

After having promulgated and developed the precept of *loving and following the religion of one's country*, he says with the greatest coolness : ‘ So long as nothing is granted to the authority of men, or to the prejudices of the country of one's birth, the sole light of reason cannot, according to nature, carry us further than natural religion.’<sup>2</sup> Is it not a singular way of fortifying the precept in question, to tell us that it has no kind of foundation in reason ?

And this proposition, Rousseau had already expressly established it at the beginning of the second part of his Profession of faith : ‘ You see in my exposition only natural religion : *it is very strange that any other should be needed* : How should I know this necessity ? Of what can I be guilty in serving God according to the lights which He gives to my mind, and the sentiments which He inspires into my heart ? What purity of morals, what dogma useful to man, and honourable

<sup>1</sup> Emile tom. iii, p. 139

<sup>2</sup> Emile tom. iii, p. 204

to his author, can I draw from a positive doctrine, which I could not deduce, without it, by the proper use of my faculties? Show me what could be added for the glory of God, for the good of society, and for my own advantage, to the duties of the natural law, and what virtue you would cause to spring from a new creed, which is not a consequence from mine? The grandest ideas of the Deity come to us through reason alone. Look at the spectacle of Nature, listen to the inner voice. Has not God spoken everything to our eyes, to our conscience, to our judgment? What more will men tell us?

A uniform worship was required, I agree; but was this point then of such importance as to need all the might of divine power to establish it? Let us not confound the ceremonies of religion with religion. The worship which God requires is that of the heart; and that, when it is sincere, is always uniform; it is to be possessed by a very foolish vanity to imagine that God takes so much interest in the form of the priest's vestments, in the order of the words which he pronounces, in the gestures which he makes at the altar, and in all his genuflections. Ah: my friend, stand straight upright, you will always be near enough to the ground. God wills to be adored in spirit and in truth: this duty is that of all religions, all countries, and all men. As to the external form of worship, if it must be uniform for the sake of good order, it is simply a matter of police; no revelation is wanted for that.<sup>1</sup>

By starting from these premises, and following them to the end, a result is obtained opposed to the conclusions of Rousseau; but these conclusions being, as I have shown, contradictory in their terms, his disciples are necessarily driven to the bare system of natural religion; that is to say, that looking upon all positive religions as useless, absurd, and pernicious, they reject them all without distinction, and dispense themselves from the practice of any.

Jean Jacques, it is true, distinguishes *religious ceremonial* from religion itself, looks upon external forms of worship, as *simply a matter of police* and in case they *ought to be uniform*, which however he does not decide, seems to think it well to

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, pp. 132, 135.

conform to them *for the sake of good order*. But this condescension is plainly illusory; for in every religion, the form of worship, intimately bound up with the dogma, is so to speak, only its expression: so that it would not be possible in reason to deny the one and practise the other. Thus in the Catholic religion, the sacrifice of the Mass implies the real presence of Jesus Christ, his divinity, etc. Confession implies on the priests, the power of binding and loosing, and the same with the other sacraments. To practise such a form of worship, a man must therefore either be a sincere Catholic, or the vilest of hypocrites and the basest of impostors: there is no middle term. Now Rousseau will assuredly not say that falsehood, imposture, and hypocrisy are compatible with good morality. Moreover, if he did say so, the difficulty would not be less; for the philosopher who against his conscience, should show himself externally as a Catholic, contributing by his example, to preserve and propagate doctrines which, according to Rousseau, *make man proud, intolerant and cruel, and bring fire and sword upon the whole earth*, would be committing one of the greatest crimes which the justice of God could punish.

To throw the reader off the scent, Rousseau feigns to confound public worship with that which is but a slight accessory to it, *the form of the priest's vestments, his gestures, his genuflections*. But this voluntary mistake proves only that he foresaw the objection, and that it seemed easier to him to alter its nature than to answer it.

His system, when disengaged from the heterogeneous contradictions which overlay it, is then but pure deism, a kind of sect brought forth by socinianism about the beginning of the sixteenth century. A witness of the rapid progress of the licence of thought among the protestants, Melancthon foresaw with dread, the greatest disasters, and that no truth, no dogma would arrest the innovators.<sup>1</sup>

Luther had given the fatal impulsion; the human mind was, so to speak, precipitated; nothing henceforth could either hold it back, or moderate its fall; it must needs go on falling continually, until it reached the bottom of the abyss, although

<sup>1</sup> Lib. iv, Epist. xiv.

the Calvinist Viret is the first to make mention, in a work published in 1563, of certain sectaries who took the name of *Deists*,<sup>1</sup> their origin commences further back, and it appears in the writings of the founders of Protestantism, and especially in their confidential letters, that the Reformation felt itself even then internally disturbed by I know not what dreadful malady, a subject of terror even to itself. Dark forebodings agitated its chiefs; they discovered nought in the future, but *frightful struggles* of opinion, and *wars more pitiless than those of the centaurs*. Good Lord, exclaimed one of them, *what a tragedy* posterity will see!<sup>2</sup> The contagion, however, spread from one to another: the *holy evangelical liberty* indefatigably prepared the destruction of the Gospel; for liberty was then the rallying cry of the sectarians, as it has since been that of the factious; and the *liberty to act*, which has upset political order, was but a consequence of the *liberty to think* which had upset religious order.

A century after Socinus, the poison of deism was circulating through all the veins of the Reformation, and its strict theologians, already few in number at this period, speak only of the alarming progress of religious indifference within its bosom. But they deplored the evil and could not apply any remedy. The tree was bearing its fruit; and though this fruit each day appeared more bitter and more dangerous, how prevent it from forming and ripening, whilst the tree of which it was the natural and necessary production was preserved and cultivated with tender solicitude.

Then too, England and Holland, impure receptacles in which fermented the dregs of the sects incessantly brought forth by the ardour of innovation, became peopled with a new kind of men, who under the name of *tolerants* and *free thinkers*, sapped all the props of society, all the bases of Christianity. Restrained by the fear of the law in France, where they took the title of *strong minds*, they multiplied slowly, surrounding themselves with thick shades, whilst Louis XIV lived. And if a *dull sound of impiety* came from time to time to alarm the attentive ear of Bossuet, and rouse the

<sup>1</sup> See Dictionnaire de Bayle, art. Viret.

<sup>2</sup> Histoire des Variat. Lib. v, No. 31

indignation of his great soul, this sound was as yet but, in a manner, subterranean, and trembling incredulity concealed itself from the sight of bishops and magistrates, guardians of sound doctrines. This century was to France that of glory and of religion. With the Regency began a very different period. The morals of Philip and his known opinions had given early promise to the freethinkers of a protector worthy of themselves. Hardly had vice taken possession of the sovereign power, than they felt that they were going to reign. The example of the prince, vanity, the attractions of licentiousness, filled their ranks with a multitude of proselytes, mostly taken from the higher classes of society. Their audacity increased by success, passed the furthest limits; they openly attacked all religious beliefs and institutions. Toussaint gave the signal by his book '*Des mœurs,*' which raised against him the whole of Christian France. But greater scandals soon caused this first scandal to be forgotten. A man of infinite but depraved mind, became persuaded that his renown would be incomplete so long as there remained a single worshipper of Jesus Christ. The incredible activity of this man, his rare talents, his implacable hatred of religion, all concurred to place him at the head of the philosophical party, which he, more than anyone, contributed to increase and strengthen. The crowd pressed around his glory, and a violent conspiracy was openly set on foot against Christianity. It had existed secretly a long time before, according to Jurieu, who tells us that many of the pastors who took refuge in Holland, after the revocation of the edict of Nantes, were of the number of persons secretly indifferent, who, 'since a few years, formed within the reformed churches of France, *that wretched party which conspired against Christianity,*'<sup>1</sup> This testimony is not open to suspicion, and we know now to what school belonged the first authors of the war upon revealed religion.

This school has not for a moment ceased to furnish auxiliaries to the same cause. Bayle was a Protestant; Rousseau, born a Protestant, has but developed Protestant principles; the English deists, from whom Voltaire and his

<sup>1</sup> Tableau du Socinianisme Let. i, page 5.

disciples borrowed almost all their anti-Christian science, were Protestant, and more consistent Protestants than the others, as I shall be able to prove. Thus men had began by reforming or abolishing certain dogmas, and they ended by reforming them all, revelation included. It is at this stage that the modern philosophers took up Protestantism, and ever advancing in reform, they came at last to reform God Himself, and to attempt the realisation of the monstrous fiction of a people of atheists, invented by Bayle, and so cherished by Diderot, and all the wise men of his school. The conviction might then be acquired that impiety, so humane and mild in its language, can, at need, aid itself equally by the axe of the executioner, and the pen of the sophist.

During the first years which followed this sanguinary epoch philosophy, which had hardly come down from the scaffolds on which it held its assizes, and, if I dare say so, still full of death, was nothing but a hideous and fanatical atheism. By degrees, however, men accustomed themselves to hear the name of God pronounced without shuddering. Robespierre had set the example of tolerating the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul, and it was reasonably considered that no one had a right to show himself to be less tolerant than Robespierre.

At the present time, opinion leans to universal indifference. Governments favour it with all their power, and, unheard of fact, strive to drag Christianity into this system ; a new kind of persecution, of which we are far from knowing yet all the effects. Time will develop them, and in deciding the fate of social doctrines, it will decide the fate of society, and the existence of the human race. But let us return to our argument.

The sovereignty of human reason in matters of faith, a fundamental dogma of Protestantism, is also the foundation of deism, and its distinctive character is the absolute exclusion of all revelation. 'Deism,' says an English author, 'is nothing else but the religion essential to man, the true religion of nature and of *reason*.'<sup>1</sup> Rousseau holds the same language. 'The grandest ideas of God come to us through *reason alone*

<sup>1</sup> Deism fairly stated and fully vindicated, p. 5.



Look at the spectacle of Nature, listen to the inner voice. Has not God spoken everything to our eyes, to our conscience, to our judgment? What more will men tell us? *Their revelations* are only derogatory to God, to whom they give human passions.<sup>1</sup>

It now remains to be seen in what consists this religion of *nature and reason*, this religion *essential* to man, and with which nevertheless man has never been able to content himself; for it is a remarkable fact, that at no time has there existed a deist people, that all have had religions which they believed to be revealed, consequently religions opposed to *nature and reason*; which does not prevent Rousseau from making it a *duty* to man to *love and follow them*. Never mind, let us pass over this judicious precept; like Rousseau's disciples, let us leave it to be forgotten. Every religion is essentially composed of dogmas, worship, and morality. Let us example natural religion under these three respects.

Firstly, in the matter of dogmas, the religion of *nature* seems to leave to each one full and entire freedom of choice; and we shall soon see that this could not be otherwise, so many deists so many creeds. That of Lord Cherbury, the patriarch of the English deists, consists of five articles: (1) that there exists a Supreme Being; (2) that we ought to offer up worship to Him; (3) that piety and virtue form the principal part of that worship; (4) that we ought to repent of our sins, and in that case God will pardon them; (5) that the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished in a future life.<sup>2</sup>

A thousand explanations respecting this short creed might be asked of Lord Cherbury. What does he understand by piety? What does he understand by virtue? How does he know with certainty that God will give pardon to repentance? He insinuates that the Christian religion is too indulgent on that point.<sup>3</sup> He knows then the precise measure of repentance which deserves pardon: as if a feeling could be appreciated by measure. Neither does he attempt to decide this, and he leaves man in the most terrible ignorance in which a reasonable and feeble creature could be placed.

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, pp. 132, 133.

<sup>2</sup> De Religione Gentilium.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix ad op. de Relig. laici qu. 6.

If the preceding creed seems to you insufficient, Blount offers you one in seven articles, as follows: (1) That there is a God eternal, infinite, creator of all things; (2) that He governs the world by His providence; (3) that it is our duty to offer Him worship as our Creator and Lord; (4) that this worship consists in prayer and praise; (5) that to obey God is to conform to the rules of strict reason by the practice of the moral virtues; (6) that we must expect, in a future state, punishments or rewards, accordingly as we have acted during this life, which implies the immortality of the soul; (7) that when we have turned aside from the rules of duty, we must repent of it, and trust for pardon to the mercy of God.<sup>1</sup>

The reason of Blount is, as it appears, a little more exacting in matters of faith, than the reason of Lord Cherbury. The latter does not explicitly admit the immortality of the soul in his creed; perhaps it was an oversight, it is impossible to remember everything.

Moreover, though arguing against revelation, Blount wrote to Sydenham: 'In our journey to the other world the common road is without doubt the surest; and although deism is a good preparation for the conscience, if Christianity be sown with it, it will produce a much more abundant harvest.'<sup>2</sup>

Bolingbroke, little satisfied with the creeds of his predecessors, increases wonderfully the breadth of natural religion. He denies that God can be offended by man, and in consequence attacks the doctrine of future rewards and punishments.<sup>3</sup> Everything improves with time.

Whether the soul be material or immaterial, whether it be distinct from the body, and if in that case, it is perishable like the body, or is to survive it: Chubb does not decide these questions, because he perceives nothing upon which a decision could be founded.<sup>4</sup> He appears, however, to lean strongly to materialism;<sup>5</sup> and supposing that there were future rewards and punishments, a thing at least very doubtful in his opinion, the mass of mankind has no cause to feel

<sup>1</sup> The Oracles of Reason, p. 197.      <sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v, pp. 209, 356, 493, 495, 498, 507, 508, 510.

<sup>4</sup> Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. i, pp. 312, 313.      <sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp. 317, 318, 324, 326.

much anxiety about it; for these rewards and punishments would only be for men whose actions have powerfully influenced the happiness or unhappiness of the human race. The others have nothing to hope or to fear. Their life is too insignificant for God to deign to call them to account for it. It would be as well to imagine, says Chubb, that one day all the animals will be judged.<sup>1</sup>

The existence of God is then the only dogma formally admitted by the two last authors whom I have mentioned. This grand and sublime truth, amidst the fragments of all the doctrines of religion, has remained standing in their minds like a single column of an ancient temple which time or the barbarians have overthrown.

Jean Jacques extends a little further the creed of natural religion, but I will show presently that he has no right according to his principles to require any one to adopt a single article of it. He acknowledges the existence of God, the distinction of body and soul, and a future life, in which everyone *will remember what he has felt, and what he has done during his life; and he does not doubt that this recollection will one day make the happiness of the good and the torment of the wicked.* Do not ask me, he says, if there will be other sources of happiness or of punishment; I am ignorant of it.<sup>2</sup>

This doctrine is satisfactory enough for the wicked, especially if the hope be added that their *recollections* will be extinguished along with existence. Now this is what Rousseau leads them to hope, just as he leaves the good in fear of some day arriving at the fatal limit of the happy life which he promises them. 'What is that life, he asks himself, and the soul, is it by nature immortal? My limited understanding comprehends nothing boundless, everything that is called infinite escapes me. What can I deny, or affirm, what reasoning can I frame upon that which I cannot conceive? I believe that the soul survives the body enough for the maintenance of order; who knows if that is enough to last for ever?'<sup>3</sup>

It is thus that *God has spoken everything to his eyes, to his*

<sup>1</sup> Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. i, pp. 395, 400.

<sup>2</sup> Emile, tom. iii, pp. 87, 88.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 86.

*conscience, to his judgment,* Observe besides that he deduces the dogma of a future life from the notion of the attributes of God. He then says, 'If I succeed in discovering successively these attributes of which I have no positive idea, it is by a good use of my reason, through necessary conclusions;<sup>1</sup> but I affirm them without comprehending them, and, at bottom, that is to affirm nothing. I may say to myself: God is in this wise; I feel it; I prove it to myself; I do not conceive any the more how God can be in such wise. Lastly, the more I strive to contemplate His infinite essence, the less conception do I obtain of it; but it is, and that suffices for me; the less I comprehend the more do I adore.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus Rousseau founds the *hope of the just* on attributes of which *he has no positive idea, which he affirms without understanding them, so that in point of fact nothing is affirmed.* Is not that a wonderful certainty, and a very consoling hope? *The more he strives to contemplate the infinite essence of the Deity, the less does he conceive it;* he knows it neither in itself, nor in its attributes: and it is in this way that *the most lofty ideas of the Deity come to us through reason alone,* admirable fact, which philosophy alone could teach us, the grandest idea that we have of the Deity is to have no idea of it!

It will be said, however, *it is, and that is sufficient for us:* its existence is a dogma admitted by all the followers of natural religion. Be it so; but I maintain that according to their principles, they may legitimately deny this dogma, and that sometimes even they must do so.

Indeed, the first rule of Jean Jacques and of all the deists,

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau employs here, and perhaps intentionally, an equivocal expression. In ordinary language by 'consequences *forcées*,' false or at least doubtful conclusions are understood. It might also be said that they are necessary conclusions, which the mind is *forced* to admit. *The good use of reason* of which Rousseau speaks, favours this latter sense: the remainder of the sentence contradicts it; for to draw a conclusion is to *affirm* something; and who *affirms* nothing, comes to no conclusion. Moreover Rousseau falls into a grave error in supposing that it is necessary to understand in order to affirm positively; it is not so, it is enough to have a clear idea what the affirmation is. Thus the word *attraction* recalling to us an idea, and to each of us the same idea, we can affirm or deny the existence of this hidden force, which we do not understand in itself. For that matter, the passage to which this note belongs is not the only one in which Rousseau seeks to conceal the inconsistency and vagueness of his doctrines under the ambiguity of his expression.

<sup>2</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 96.

their fundamental principle, is to form their faith upon the sole light of reason, and consequently to believe nothing that is not clearly conceived. Now putting the case of a philosopher, who should not conceive the existence of God more clearly than Rousseau conceives his essence and his attributes, he may and he ought to deny it, if he is consistent. For to remain undecided upon such a question is impossible as Rousseau informs us: 'Doubt in matters which it is important to us to know is too violent a state for the human mind; it cannot long endure it, it takes a decision, involuntarily, one way or the other.'<sup>1</sup>

Let us for a moment realise this imaginary case; let us put into Rousseau's mouth his own words, and let us see what answer he would get from the philosopher in question, to whom by the way I will only attribute the opinions defended by a celebrated partisan of natural religion.

ROUSSEAU—I pity you sincerely for not believing in the Infinite Being, you do not conceive His existence, I do not any more conceive His attributes, and I believe in them: 'The worthiest use of my reason is to annihilate itself before Him: '<sup>2</sup> follow my example.

THE PHILOSOPHER—'To tell me to subject my reason, is to outrage its author.'<sup>3</sup> He who deceives me can tell me as much; I must have reasons in order to submit my reason.'<sup>4</sup>

ROUSSEAU—Well then, look at the spectacle of nature: it is in that great and sublime book that I learn to serve and adore its divine author. 'No one is excusable for not reading in it, because it speaks to all men in a language intelligible to all minds.'<sup>5</sup> Answer me: has not God spoken everything to our eyes?'

THE PHILOSOPHER—To yours it may be so, but not to mine; and in addition I could not conceal from you, that you seem to me to reason very ill. 'To argue from the course of nature in order to infer the existence of an intelligent cause which has established and which maintains order in the universe, is to take up a principle altogether uncertain and useless, for this subject is entirely beyond the sphere of human experience.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid p. 177.

<sup>6</sup> Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 224.

ROUSSEAU—At least you will admit that ‘God has spoken everything to our judgment?’ You will not deny the eternal connection of cause and effect, from which I have so clearly deduced the existence of the First Being?

THE PHILOSOPHER—Why not? in my way of thinking, ‘no argument could be drawn, not even a probability, from the relation of cause to effect, or of effect to cause;’<sup>1</sup> the connection of cause and effect is entirely arbitrary, not only as a first idea *a priori*, but also after that idea has been suggested to us by experience.<sup>2</sup> You see that we are far from agreeing. Your proofs produce on my mind a quite other impression from what they do on yours: I only perceive sophisms, and sophisms, do not convince me. You tell me besides of a God, *surrounded by inconceivable mysteries*:<sup>3</sup> now, if I once begin to believe inconceivable mysteries, where shall I stop? Who will guide me in the choice which I am to make? By what right should I reject revelation? You have said yourself: ‘He who overlays with mysteries, with contradictions, the creed which he preaches to me teaches me thereby to suspect it.’<sup>4</sup>

ROUSSEAU—I have opened my heart to you without reserve, what I hold to be certain, I have given you as such: I have told you my reasons for believing. It is now for you to judge.<sup>5</sup> I have not got the vanity of thinking myself infallible: others may think doubtful what appears to me demonstrated, and false that which appears to me true; I reason for myself and not for them; I neither blame them nor imitate them; their judgment may be better than mine; but it is not my fault if it is not mine.’<sup>6</sup> The existence of God is certified to me by his works: *No one*, I said to you, *is excusable for not reading in that great and sublime book*: this maxim is, I admit, too general; it escaped from me, like so many others, without sufficient reflection. In point of fact, however, you must have seen that this was neither my first nor my last thought. The proof is in these words which precede by a whole volume those which I repeated just now, and which greatly modify them; ‘The philosopher who does

<sup>1</sup> Hume’s *Philosophical Essays*, pp. 62, 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* pp. 53, 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Emile*, tom. iii, p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* p. 150.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* p. 192.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 179.

not believe is in the wrong, because he makes an ill use of the reason which he has cultivated, and because he is capable of understanding the truths which he rejects.'<sup>1</sup> I own that this passage even is very severe: it shelters the people it is true, but it leaves the philosopher in a difficulty. This grieves me, both for you whom I damn philosophically, and for myself who abhor barbarous intolerance. 'After all, it is no small matter to know that God exists, and when we have arrived at that point, when we ask ourselves, what is He? where is He? our mind becomes confused, and wanders, and we no longer know what to think.'<sup>2</sup> That is exactly what is the case with you. 'The ideas of creation, annihilation, omnipresence, eternity, omnipotence, of the divine attributes, all those ideas which few men are able to see, so confused and obscure they are, present themselves to you with all their force, that is to say, with all their obscurity.'<sup>3</sup> Now it would be a cruel thing to be damned for having had more mind than other men: and could it be possible that there was safety only for fools. Granting what I have just stated, this is, however, what would result from the vulgar principle 'It is necessary to believe in God to be saved.' Philosophy defend me from setting myself obstinately to maintain this merciless axiom; I see too clearly the consequences. This misunderstood dogma is the origin of sanguinary intolerance, and the cause of all the empty teachings which strike a mortal blow at human reason by accustoming it to satisfy itself with words.'<sup>4</sup> Your cause is that of human reason and you need not fear that *I should strike a mortal blow at it*. 'It is clear that a man arrived at old age without believing in God, will not for that be deprived of His presence in the other life, if this blindness has not been voluntary, and I say that it is not so always.'<sup>5</sup> Grow old then in peace in your belief: *very differently* from those who are persuaded *that such and such an article must be believed*. 'I think on the contrary that the essential part of religion consists in practice; that not only is it necessary to be an

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. ii, p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 341.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 346.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 350.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 352.

honest man, merciful, humane, and charitable, but that whoever is really such, believes enough for his salvation.'<sup>1</sup>

'You have done what you could to attain the truth, but its source is too high, when power to go further is wanting, of what can you be guilty? it is for it to draw nearer to you.'<sup>2</sup>

What then is natural religion, but a chasm in which all dogmas are swallowed up, even that of the existence of God? And Bossuet defined it completely when he said *Deism is only atheism in disguise*. Among its followers one admits what the other denies, denies what the other asserts, and so on reciprocally. With great difficulty could two be found who professed the same doctrine. No one has the right of requiring another to submit to his teaching. Supreme judge of his faith, each one has the power of extending or restricting it at his will; and no belief is essential in the only religion *essential to man*. Strange religion whose creed can be reduced to atheism!

In the second place, exterior forms of public worship being only an empty *ceremony*, and *merely a matter of police*, are in themselves indifferent: nothing prevents their being dispensed with.

'The real duties of religion are independent of human institutions,<sup>3</sup> and the worship required by God is that of the heart.'<sup>4</sup> Now what God does not require, who would venture to exact it? Full liberty therefore in this respect, and a man may through his whole life give no single sign of religion, without offence to the *real duties of religion*. Of what use are ceremonies and temples? 'An upright heart is the true temple of the deity.'<sup>5</sup> That since the commencement of the world, no nation should have existed without public worship, is of little importance. 'We have set aside,' says Rousseau, 'all human authority'<sup>6</sup>. . . as for me, I have taken a decision only after many years of meditation, and I hold to it.'<sup>7</sup> This is unanswerable, and if his disciples had been able to take as rigid a decision, if they had carefully pruned away all *ceremonial* from natural religion we should not have seen estab-

<sup>1</sup> Lettre à M de Beaumont, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Emile. tom. iii, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 196.

Ibid, p. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 196.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 151.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 193.



lished in France in the eighteenth century the worship of reason, represented by a prostitute. But we will not lay too much stress upon this slight aberration, which after all, is *merely a matter of police*.

The only essential worship then, and Bolingbroke owns<sup>1</sup> it, as well as Rousseau, is internal worship. Now whatever may be thought of external worship, it is certain that the former depends on dogmas, and must be derived from them. Rousseau in combating revealed religion, speaks thus: 'This doctrine which comes from God, must carry with it the sacred character of the Deity, not only ought it to make clear to us the confused ideas which reasoning leaves of it in our mind, but, *it ought also to set before us a form of worship, a morality, and precepts suitable to attributes by which alone we conceive its essence.*'<sup>2</sup>

Either natural religion *does not come from God*, that is to say, it is false, or it ought to present the characteristics which Rousseau judges to be inseparable from a religion which *comes from God: it ought then to set before us a form of worship, suitable to the attributes by which alone we conceive the divine essence*. Now unfortunately it happens, that *the more we strive to contemplate that infinite essence, the less do we conceive it: that we have no positive idea of the attributes of God; that we affirm them without comprehending them*, which *in point of fact is to affirm nothing*.<sup>3</sup> So that, 'if natural religion is insufficient, it is on account of the obscurity which it leaves in the great truths which it teaches,'<sup>4</sup> obscurities which are the result of its being based upon *reason* alone, which *only traces in our minds confused ideas of the Deity*.

I will not draw attention to the strict logic, and perfect agreement of these ideas, or to the reasonableness with which Rousseau vaunts to us a religion which *leaves in obscurity the great truths which it teaches us, which only traces in our minds, confused ideas of the Deity*, and whose followers *in fact affirm nothing, because they comprehend nothing*. I own for my part, that however much *affected* the good Jean Jacques may have been whilst giving out this clear and sublime

<sup>1</sup> Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

doctrine, with whatever *vehemence he may have spoken*, I do not at all imagine myself 'to hear the divine Orpheus sing the earliest hymns and teach to men the worship of the Gods.'<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, my difficulty lies in understanding how any worship whatever is to emerge from these *obscurities and confused ideas*.

I perceive in fact, nothing but discordance and contradiction, in all that the deists tell us of this mysterious worship which they never define. If Blount makes it to consist of *prayer and praise*, Rousseau at once takes away half the precept. He says, 'I occupy myself with sublime contemplations. I meditate upon the order of the universe, not to explain it by vain systems, but in order to admire it unceasingly, and to adore the wise author whose presence there is felt. I converse with the author of the universe, I imbue all my faculties with His divine essence; I am moved by His benefits, I bless him for his gifts, *but I do not pray to him*; what is there that I should ask for?'<sup>2</sup> It will readily be conceived that man has nothing to ask of God: he is so rich in himself, his mind is so full of light, and his heart is so fruitful of good feelings!

After all I do not suppose that in the enumeration which has just been read, Rousseau intends making a duty to all men of each point of his personal practice. That he should *occupy himself with sublime contemplations, meditate on the order of the universe, and be affected*; nothing can be better; but men are not *affected* at will, and the poor labourer who arduously cultivates a little corner of this universe, the *order* of which is unknown to him, would be a strange object of compassion, if it were necessary for him to *meditate* upon this *order* which he knows not, or if *sublime contemplations* were absolutely required of him. It is then to be believed that at least *the sublime* is not a rigorous precept. I also imagine that the majority of mankind are not strictly obliged to *imbue all their faculties with the divine essence of the author of the universe*. It would be necessary first to explain to them what that means, and this would not be an easy task.

With so many writers who have treated of natural religion,

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

there is no certainty as yet, as to the nature and necessity of the inner worship which it recommends; and the uncertainty increases when it is remembered that according to Rousseau natural religion leaves an entire liberty of belief as to the dogmas from which this creed is to be derived. I should like to be informed, for instance, what motive to practise either an exterior or an inner worship, can those have who do not expect a future life, and what worship those can offer to God who do not believe in God?

It will be replied that the atheist is out of the pale of natural religion. Very good; but according to the principles of natural religion, no one could condemn the atheist; and if the atheist is dispensed from worship, worship is therefore not universally obligatory to men. It is at best only a duty relatively to belief, as belief itself is only a duty relatively to reason: *reason without principles, understanding without rule*, in the opinion of Rousseau, and which remains none the less, for the learned as for the ignorant, for the most stupid of mortals, as for Bossuet and Newton, the sovereign arbiter of worship and belief; for adds Rousseau, 'if you depart from this method, and give the slightest hold to human authority, that instant, you restore all to it.'<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, as the principles of natural religion do not allow of prescribing belief of any dogma, nor consequently of requiring the practice of any worship, it follows that it becomes reduced to the duties of morality: Jean Jacques also assures us that none but those are essential.'<sup>2</sup> Voltaire does not give it any greater extension:

Soyez juste, il suffit, le reste est arbitraire.

The *rest* is simply worship, doctrine, the immortality of the soul, future rewards and punishments, the existence of God, that is all.

Since dogmas are *arbitrary* and that moral duties are alone *essential*, they must needs subsist independently of dogmas. This conclusion is inevitable: Bolingbroke raises his voice against those who 'think that without God there could not

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 196.

exist any natural law, at least not an obligatory law;'<sup>1</sup> this proposition is indeed contradictory to his principles as it is to those of Voltaire and Rousseau.

If any one wish to know what the *natural law* is to the atheists, some idea of it will be formed from this passage of Voltaire: 'I should not like to have to treat with an atheistical prince who should find it to be his interest to have me pounded in a mortar; I am very sure that I should be pounded. I should not like if I were a sovereign to have to do with atheistical courtiers, whose interest it was to poison me; I should have to take counter poison on chance every day. It is therefore absolutely necessary for princes and peoples that the idea of a Supreme Being, creator, governor, recompenser, and avenger be deeply engraved on all minds.'<sup>2</sup> No doubt it is so: but how comes it that what was just now *arbitrary* should now be absolutely necessary? Does truth vary along with the fluctuating convenience of philosophy, and the needs of its systems? Let us open the *Emile*, and see if Rousseau will be more consistent.

After having described the influence which the doctrine, new to him, of the existence of God and a future life, is to have upon his pupil; he says: 'Leave that, I see naught but injustice, hypocrisy, and falsehood among men; private interest, which put into competition, triumphs over all things, teaches each one to deck out vice with the mask of virtue. That all other men should work for my advantage at the expense of their own, that everything should have reference to me, that all the human race may die if need be, in suffering and misery, to spare me a moment of pain or hunger; such is the inner language of every unbeliever who reasons. Yes, I will maintain it all my life; whoever has said in his heart: There is no God, and speaks differently, is but a liar or a fool.'<sup>3</sup>

The impossibility of imposing upon all men the obligation of believing any dogma whatever, even that of the existence of God, forced Rousseau to maintain that *the duties of*

<sup>1</sup> Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv, p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> Œuvres de Voltaire, tom. xxviii, p. 12, édition 8vo, art. Athéisme du Dictionnaire philosophique

<sup>3</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 206.

*morality were the only essentials*; and the no less complete impossibility of finding in atheism a foundation for the duties of morality, forced him to own that *without faith no real virtue exists, and that there are dogmas which every man is obliged to believe*. What is to be thought of a system out of which come inevitably so many and so great contradictions.

But granted the existence of God, by what means, and by what rules can the *essential duties* mentioned by Rousseau, be discovered with certainty? No one being dispensed from practising them, there is no one who ought not easily to recognise them: and as with regard to salvation, Jean Jacques says of morality what the Christian says of religion, the conclusions which he deduces from the doctrine of Christianity with respect to faith, we may deduce them from his theory with respect to duties.

True morality must then have the characteristics 'of all times and places, equally perceptible to all men, great and small, learned and ignorant, Europeans, Indians, Africans, savages. If there were one *morality* upon earth outside of which there were only eternal punishment,<sup>1</sup> and that in any part of the world a single mortal of good faith had not been struck by its evidence, God<sup>2</sup> would be the most unjust and cruel of tyrants.'<sup>3</sup>

All the deists admit this; and indeed, it would be absurd to reject revelation on the pretext of the obscurities contained in it, in order to substitute for them only obscurities of another kind. Bolingbroke felt this strongly, he maintains also that the law of nature, which, he says, is but the *law of reason*,<sup>4</sup> equally intelligible in all times and places, and proportioned to the weakest intellects,<sup>5</sup> has all the clearness and precision that God can give, or that man can desire.'<sup>6</sup>

Such is the law in itself, it remains only to know where it exists, and by what way man arrives at discovering it. Let us listen to Rousseau:

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau leaves in doubt the eternity of punishment; but even if he formally denied it, it is enough that he admits future chastisement, for our argument to preserve its full force.

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau says: *the God of that religion*.

<sup>3</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

'All that I feel to be good is good, all that I feel to be evil is evil; the best of all casuists is conscience, and it is only when bargaining with it that one has recourse to the subtleties of reasoning. . . <sup>1</sup> Too often reason deceives us; we have but too much acquired the right of rejecting it:<sup>2</sup> but conscience never deceives us, it is the true guide of man; it is to the soul what instinct is to the body; whoever follows it obeys Nature, and does not fear to lose himself. . . <sup>3</sup> Conscience, conscience! divine instinct; immortal and celestial voice; certain guide of a being finite or ignorant, but intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, which renders man like to God; it is you that make the excellence of his nature, and the morality of his actions; without you I feel nothing in me to raise me above the brutes except the sad privilege of wandering from error to error, by the aid of an understanding, without rule, and a reason without principle.'<sup>4</sup>

According to Rousseau, the natural law is not then the *law of reason*, since that *reason without principle which we have but too much acquired the right of rejecting, only raises us above the beasts by the sad privilege of misleading us from error to error*. Besides, it has been seen above, that *the greatest ideas that we have of the Divinity come to us by reason alone*, that is to say, by that noble faculty which *misleading us from error to error, does not raise us above the beasts* (for ignorance is less degrading than error), but lowers us below them. This is not without singularity; however, since it is so, let us pass on. We are seeking for the rule of duties, and Rousseau shows it to us in conscience, *certain guide of a finite and ignorant being, infallible judge of right and wrong*. *Too often reason deceives us, but conscience never misleads us; it is to the soul what instinct is to the body*.

This reassuring doctrine seems to give us a glimpse of the certainty that we were desiring. Unfortunately, I do not find that unanimity of opinion amongst the followers of natural

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> This is how Rousseau speaks a little further on of this *right which we have but too much acquired*: 'To tell me that my reason deceives me, is it not to refute what it may have said to me in your behalf? Whoever would reject reason, must convince without making use of it.' Emile, tom. iii, pp. 153, 154.

<sup>3</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 98

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 114.

religion, which was to be expected upon a point of such importance. Bolingbroke, for instance, treats as *enthusiasts* and people who render natural religion ridiculous, those who pretend that there exists 'an instinct or moral sense by means of which men distinguish that which is morally good from what is morally bad, so that there results from it an intellectual sensation, either agreeable or painful.'<sup>1</sup> 'This may,' he adds, 'be acquired, to a certain degree, by long habit, and by a sort of philosophical devoutness; but to make of it a natural faculty is a fantastic delusion.'<sup>2</sup>

Which is to be believed, Bolingbroke or Rousseau? and what line will the disciples take when the masters are so little agreed? What the one regards as an *innate principle*,<sup>3</sup> is for the other a chimera, a *fantastic delusion*. If the one tells us that natural law is *the law of reason*, the other assures us that *by reason alone no natural law can be established*.<sup>4</sup> And do not forget that morality, clear, *precise, and equally intelligible*, as they say, *in all times and places, and proportioned to the weakest intellects*, is to be found between these opposing assertions.

But here is something more extraordinary: Rousseau himself will destroy the consoling security with which he flattered us, by revealing to us that conscience, that *certain guide*, that *true guide of man*, only moves when leaning on reason. 'Reason *alone* teaches us to know good and evil. Conscience, which makes us love the one and hate the other, although independent of reason, cannot then be developed without it.'<sup>5</sup> And again: 'To know what is good is not to love it: man has not got an innate knowledge of it; but as soon as his reason makes him know it, his conscience inclines him to love it: it is this feeling which is innate.'<sup>6</sup>

The sole judge then of duties as of faith is finally reason, conscience only comes after it, *and cannot be developed without it*; it *loves* what reason shows it to be *good*, it *hates* what reason shows it to be *bad*: a passive slave of the understanding, its functions are confined to joining to each idea which is

<sup>1</sup> Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 479.

<sup>3</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 107.

<sup>4</sup> Emile, tom. ii, p. 263.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, tom. i, p. 112.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 75.

offered to it, a feeling whose nature is predetermined by the judgment of reason. *It alone knows good and evil*: it alone therefore can instruct us as to our duties, and Rousseau seems to admit this, since after having warned us that 'the acts of conscience are not *judgments*'<sup>1</sup> but feelings,'<sup>2</sup> he adds; 'all the morality of our actions consists in the *judgments* which we pass on them ourselves,'<sup>3</sup> and more explicitly: 'man chooses what is good according as he judges rightly; if he judge falsely, he chooses ill.'<sup>4</sup>

It is true that on another occasion he places the *morality of our actions* in the conscience; but he was then under the necessity of finding in it an infallible rule of duty. This rule after all, is so far from being universal, and sufficient for all men, great and small, learned and ignorant, that on the contrary, by the avowal of Rousseau, it is completely null for the poor, that is, for three-quarters of the human race. 'The inner voice,' they are his own words, 'cannot make itself heard by him who only thinks of providing his food.'<sup>5</sup>

What conclusion can be drawn, other than that in the system of natural religion, the duties being founded on reason only, which *often misleads us*, have no certain rule, and that the morality of deism is as vague, as undecisive, as little established as its dogmas? Each one will have his own, as each one has his creed, and a few of those sophisms so familiar to the passions, will be enough to make reason, deceiving itself as to its real duties, deceive in its turn the conscience, by *adorning vice with the mask of virtue*. Is a proof of this fact required? Bolingbroke, in arguing on the natural law, so *clear* and *precise* in his opinion, is led, I do not say to justify polygamy, licentiousness, adultery, and incest, but to put them, in certain cases, in the rank of duties.<sup>6</sup> If the Greeks, the Romans, and other nations forbade the plurality of wives, and encouraged monogamy, it was, he says in his cynical language, 'because by entering into single marriages nothing hindered them, nor their wives neither,

<sup>1</sup> So then conscience does not *judge*, and conscience is an *infallible judge*.

<sup>2</sup> *Emile*, tom. iii, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v, pp. 163, 172, 176.



except the want of opportunity, from indulging their lust with others in spite of their sacred bonds, and the legal property they had in one another's persons.'<sup>1</sup>

Rousseau, although he talks much about virtue, is not anywise more severe than Bolingbroke. He owns indeed, that continence is a *duty of morality*, but, he adds, moral duties have their modifications, their exceptions;<sup>2</sup> and he does not fail to find some to the *duty of continence*, on the ground that *human weakness* sometimes renders crime *inevitable*. Thus it is sufficient to be *weak* to have the right to give way; the duties being obligatory only in proportion to the facility of fulfilling them, there are as many different moralities as individuals; and everything is allowable to the consummate scoundrel, to whom crime has become an almost invincible need. I cast down my eyes, and should blush to be a man, did I not remember that I am a Christian.

I do not fear to assert it, deism which is represented to us as the *religion of nature*, the sole religion *essential to man*, is the destruction of all doctrine, of all worship, of all morality; and whatever may have been said of it by La Harpe, at that time a philosopher, Condorcet was right in denying the existence of a purely natural religion;<sup>3</sup> unless it be alleged that phrases are a religion, doubts a religion, or *disguised atheism* a religion.

A system then, into which everything enters, even atheism, on what is it founded, unless it be upon the most absolute indifference to truth? Such is the essence of deism, as the exclusion of all revelation is its distinguishing characteristic. I shall refute it therefore by proving the necessity and the existence of a revealed religion.

But before quitting this subject, may I be permitted to add one last observation to the considerations which have just been read. Who would credit it? deism founded on reason alone,

<sup>1</sup> Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> See his *Life of Voltaire*. In his *Plan of Education presented to the Legislative Assembly, the 21st and 22nd April, 1791*, Condorcet observing that 'the deist philosophers were not more agreed than the theologians upon the idea of God, and his moral relations with men,' concludes from thence that 'the proscription must be extended to that which is called natural religion.' He felt the impossibility of halting in that vague middle space, and to ensure the triumph of philosophy over Christianity, he saw no other means than to *proscribe* God.

brings reason to deny itself. The fact is that philosophy abject in its arrogance, has never known how to appreciate in what consisted the true grandeur of that noble faculty, which it sometimes lowers below the instinct of the brute, and sometimes elevates above God Himself. We have seen Rousseau alternately fall into these two excesses; almost envying the lot of *beasts*, from which he considered himself to be distinguished only *by the sad privilege of misleading himself from error to error, by the aid of an understanding without rule, and reason without a principle*; and at another time laying down that this same reason, without any extraneous support, guide, or teaching, deciding by itself the highest dogmas, should be the sole arbiter of faith. Now to take our own mind for the sole rule of belief, to reject with disdain the truths which it shall not have discovered immediately, to interdict to God the right of revealing to us by another channel some of the secrets of His being, what else is this but to fetter His wisdom and power, to subject them to laws which it pleases us to dictate to them, and to place the Eternal reason beneath our weak reason? Strange frenzy! What are we, to prescribe arrogantly a mode of action to God, from which He shall not depart; to dare to say: This is the sole means which we allow of employing for our enlightenment? And if this means is insufficient, if you yourself admit that our reason *without a principle* is only fit to *mislead us from error to error*, we must needs then either go astray in listening to it, or put it to silence, and perpetually languish in irremediable ignorance, and in the thick darkness of a voluntary imbecility? Such is the result of the only choice which you leave to man, and truth, for him, is no longer but an inexplicable enigma, a chimera, a delusion.

And who doubts that, answers Rousseau; did I tell you that man was made for knowing the truth? that he could discover it? that he ought to seek for it? No, no, understand my doctrine better; and remember that in my eyes the man who thinks is a depraved animal.<sup>1</sup> The best use of reason is to learn to make no use of it; it warns us itself to stifle its deceptive voice, to annihilate within ourselves, as much as may be, the faculty which conceives and judges, to

<sup>1</sup> Discours sur l'Origine et les Fondemens de l'Inégalité parmi les hommes.

extinguish with scrupulous care all the light of understanding. 'Since the more men know, the more they are misled, the only means of avoiding error is ignorance. Do not form any judgment, you will never go astray. This is the teaching of nature as well as of reason.'<sup>1</sup>

Was it worth while so much to reason, in order to conclude with this advice, compare systems with systems, and doctrine with doctrine. Christianity, in promulgating with authority and without hesitation truths necessary to man, does not exact that he should fully conceive them, for man conceives nothing of that kind; but it requires the motives of his faith to be evident to reason, *rationabile obsequium vestrum*. Philosophy, with diffidence puts forward doubts, opposing to them immediately other doubts, and despairing of arriving at anything certain, in order to avoid error which presses upon it from every side, renounces truth, and solemnly proclaims this axiom, which contains the epitome of all human wisdom: to destroy reasoning in oneself is *the lesson of reason*; and not to think, not to judge, to leave all in ignorance, is the perfection of a reasoning being.

The pen falls from the hand. What is to be said to men who have arrived at this point? Absolute scepticism is a sensible doctrine in comparison with such frenzy. What! God has given us intelligence to be a snare to us; and to think, is almost infallibly to err? That, however, is what philosophy promises to those who follow in her train; error, and nothing but error. It has been seen, clearly enough I think, that on this point she may be believed. Christianity, with no less assurance, promises the truth. Would there be then so much risk in listening to it in its turn? If it deceived us what should we have lost? a few of those hours the heaviness of which often wearies us: and will not there always remain time enough for us to devote to the sublime care of extinguishing reason within ourselves, and of raising ourselves to the ignorance and wise stupidity of the brutes.

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. ii, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. ad Rom. xii, 1.

## CHAPTER VI

Considerations upon the Third System of Indifference, or upon the doctrine of those who admit of a revealed religion, nevertheless so as to allow of the rejection of the truths which it teaches, with the exception of some fundamental articles.

SOME philosophers, brought up in the school of Protestantism, have been led, by obstinately working out one single error, to deny all religious, moral, and political truths. Constrained by a concatenation of inevitable consequences, to reject a First intelligent cause, they explained order by chance, the universe by chaos, society by anarchy, duties by force, even thought by the animated existence of a blind motion. Two facts, however, embarrassed them. Everywhere, in all ages, mankind has had an idea of God, and has rendered to Him public worship: everywhere, in all ages, mankind has acknowledged the essential distinction of good and evil, of just and unjust; and spite of divers mistakes in the appreciation of free acts, considered as virtuous or criminal, never did any nation confound the opposite notions of crime and virtue. These immutable notions are, along with the feelings and obligations which are derived from them, the basis of all society, in the same way that the existence of an Eternal Being, recompenser and avenger, is the sole foundation of those notions. What then did our philosophers do to put their system in accordance with the conscience of the human race? They agreed to the necessity of religion, and concluded from that very necessity, that religion was but a political institution. They said: in order that men should re-

nounce their natural independence, and should accept the yoke of laws, they must imagine that there is over above their heads an infinite power which imposes this heavy yoke upon them, and which some day will repair with strict equity, the injustice of governments, and even the wrongs of fortune ; without this belief, no society : lawgivers perceived this, and they invented God. There would still be no society, without reciprocal duties, from which results a general concurrence of individual wills for the maintenance of order, and the sacrifice of the interests of each to the interest of all : lawgivers perceived this, and they invented morality. Such is the doctrine of atheistical indifference.

Struck by the absurdities which it contains, and by the fatal consequences which it carries with it, the deists armed with irresistible arguments clearly demonstrated its extravagance and danger. We abandon to you, they say to their adversaries, all the positive religions ; even if one of them were true, we should have no means of discerning it. But to deny the existence of God, a future state, the essential difference between good and evil, is wilfully to blind oneself, it is to authorise every crime it is to overturn society from its foundations. Listen to the inner voice ; it will tell you that there exists a true, a necessary religion ; a religion which rests upon reason alone, and which we call *natural*, because nature teaches it to all men whose judgment has not been perverted by the passions. Thus do the deists speak ; but when their system comes to be closely examined, nothing but incoherence and contradiction is to be found in it. Nature holds to each one of them a different language. They would not be able to agree as to any worship, or any creed. Being compelled to concede everything to reason, or else to refuse everything to it, dogmas escape from them, morality escapes from them, and whatever they may do, they are pushed as far as the toleration of atheism, or absolute indifference.

Then a new class of indifferent persons presents itself, who, proving without difficulty the insufficiency, or rather the nullity of natural religion, establish irrefragably the necessity of a revelation and the truth of Christianity. But starting in reality from the same principle as the deists, that is to say,

the sovereignty of the human reason in matters of faith, they subject revelation itself to reason, and maintain that, provided certain revealed dogmas be believed, the rest may be rejected without a man's ceasing to be a Christian, or excluding himself from salvation.

I will show that this reducing Christianity to a few fundamental articles, which no one has ever been able to define, immediately leads to deism and the toleration of all errors, without exception ; and, as this system has become the basis of Protestant theology, I will show that the Reformation has been brought hither by the force of its principles, from which it will be concluded that it must necessarily end, according to the prediction of Bossuet,<sup>1</sup> in absolute indifference as to all religions.

It is too important to prove the intimate connection between Protestantism and modern philosophy, for me to yield to the fear of fatiguing the reader with a rather extensive analysis of the controversies which make this truth perceptible.

At the time when Luther commenced to dogmatise, there had existed for fifteen centuries a Church or religious society, governed under the authority of a supreme head, by a body of pastors who always, in conformity with the words of Jesus Christ, had believed themselves, and had been believed by the members of that society, to be invested with the power of judging supremely, or to express the same idea in other terms, of deciding infallibly questions relating to faith and morals ; not by creating new dogmas, for that would have been to create truths which is an impossibility ; not by summoning ancient dogmas to the tribunal of reason, to examine their nature, for that would have been to subject revelation or divine reason to human reason ; but by means of testimony, by establishing the universal tradition or faith by the tradition or faith of each particular Church. The doctrine which you announce is unheard of, it was said to the innovators ; mention of it had not been heard even yesterday : therefore it is not true doctrine. The truth is neither of yesterday nor to-day, it is of all ages, it existed at the beginning as it will

<sup>1</sup> See the Sixieme Avertissement aux Protestans, iii, partie No. 3.

exist until the end ; error on the contrary has no more sure characteristic than that of novelty. Either you do not teach what Jesus Christ taught, and you ought not even to be listened to ; or your teaching is in conformity with his, and then you must show that it is in conformity with that of the Church ; for the Church as a *teacher*, with which Jesus Christ promised to be *always even unto the end of the world*,<sup>1</sup> cannot for a *single day* have taught another doctrine than that which it received from Jesus Christ. Upon this immovable principle, without arguing, without dangerously discussing the grounds of dogmas, without getting lost in interminable disputes with heresiarchs, the Councils pronounced the irrevocable sentence, and the entire Church anathematised Arius, Nestorius, and Eutyches, and all the madmen who dared to put the imagination of their own minds in the place of the ancient belief.

Before the Reformation no sectary directly attacked the authority of the Church, no one contested its right of judging of faith, or cast any doubt upon the infallibility of its decisions. They cavilled at the form of judgments ; they denied that the councils which condemned them were true and legitimate councils, or that they had observed the indispensable rules ; but never did any one of them murmur, even in a whisper, the fatal word independence, or allege that he had no other judge than his reason ; so lively yet was the terror inspired by the awful words : 'If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.'<sup>2</sup>

Luther himself, at the beginning, protested with at least apparent sincerity, of his submission to the judgment of the Church ; he loudly solicited the convocation of a council, and that headstrong man, whose soul seemed only an assemblage of violent passions fed by a boundless pride, at first showed himself resolved to bow his proud head under the authority of the chief pastors and their head. The constant practice of all ages, founded on formal texts of Scripture, which no one had yet permitted himself to divert from their true sense, did not

<sup>1</sup> *Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes. . . . Et ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus, usque ad consummationem seculi.* Matt. xxviii, 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Si autem Ecclesiam non audierit, sit tibi sicut ethnicus et publicanus.* Matt xviii, 17.

let him even conceive the idea that the powerful barrier which Jesus Christ had set up against innovations, could be destroyed. But when his errors had been proscribed at Rome, when the rapid increase of his party had carried his audacity to the highest pitch, taking no longer counsel except from his gloomy resentment, he suddenly changed his language, and restraining himself no longer, launched in his rage, anathema against anathema, and set up the standard of rebellion.

There was then opened in Europe a kind of vast school of experimental religion; for in the space of three centuries there is not a single religious doctrine which has not been applied to some society or other. At first, however, the ancient faith was too deeply rooted in the heart of the nations, and even in the minds of the chiefs of the Reformation, to allow of the system of error, which they strove to substitute for it, developing itself to full vigour without impediment. A few far-seeing men, of a character to shrink from no consequences, perceived at a glance its furthest bounds, and attained to them. But the multitude, slowly dragging itself in their tracks, discovering from afar the fatal terminus which they pointed out to it, and while approaching it with regret saw itself outstripped by its guides with an anxious indignation. The primitive sects still held strongly to several leading truths of Christianity; and what was remarkable, the more of these truths they preserved the more inclination also did they show to retain the principle of authority, so necessary that without it, nothing subsists either in political, moral, or religious order. Rousseau, who excludes it in theory, as soon as he wishes to establish positive precepts, restores to it in practice all its potency, and even stretches it so far as entirely to destroy reason, by constraining each one *to follow*, without inquiry, *the religion of his country*, however absurd it might be. He does not annihilate authority, he displaces it, and it exists virtually everywhere, wherever are to be found any dogmas, any worship, or any moral law whatsoever. The difference only is between legitimate and usurped authority between either anarchy or despotism, and constituted monarchy. The Anglican Church in its essential organisation, is only a religious society governed despotically;



*One man alone carries everything before him by his will and caprice.*<sup>1</sup> The Reformation in general is from the very law of its existence, a republic, or rather a religious anarchy, in which the power, without rule or stability, belongs to the cleverest or the most audacious. But, in spite of the maxims which proscribe it, the principle of authority is lasting, and will last as long as there shall be belief in anything. It only perishes along with the last truth; and I doubt whether any man would firmly believe in God, if the testimony of his reason were not confirmed by the authority of the human race. That is why every religious system founded upon the exclusion of authority, carries atheism within its bosom, and soon or later brings it forth.

The theologians of the Reformation admitted, at the outset, the early œcumenical councils, and brought forward their decisions against the Arians and Socinians. For the most part, indeed, they spoke only with respect of the ancient fathers; they quoted them with honour, tried to support themselves with their authority, and attributed much weight to them in the decision of controversies.<sup>2</sup> It is in fact easy to feel that either the Christian religion is but a vain word, or that it is to be found such as Jesus Christ established it in the writings of the holy doctors who lived so near to the apostles; otherwise it would have to be said that the doctrine of salvation that celestial doctrine which the son of God came to announce to men, only began to be heard fifteen centuries after its promulgation. That Luther was the first Christian, but a Christian still in infancy, and prodigiously imperfect, since his disciples have so extraordinarily modified his creed.

<sup>1</sup> *Esprit des Lois*, liv. ii. chap. i.

<sup>2</sup> The effect of the absence of a general authority, according to a remark of Burke is that the personal authority of each pastor is much greater than among the Catholics. A Protestant does not believe in the Church, but he believes in his pastor.—See Edmund Burke's Letter to his son. *Orthodox Journal*, vol. iv, No. 37, June 1816.

Stillingfleet, although one of the defenders of the doctrine of private inspiration, owns that the fathers were admirable helps to interpret the Scriptures. *Vide Catholicon*, vol. iii, p. 100. *Vide etiam*, Dailé, *De vero, usu Patrum Lib. ii, c. vi*; and Cave, Grabe, Reeves, Blakwal, Pearson, Beveridge, Bullus, Hammond, Fell, etc., and Mosheim himself, *Vindic antiq. Christian, disciplinæ, adver. Tolandi Nazarenum*, Sect 1, chap. v, verses 3 and 4.—*Disc. sur l'Hist. Eccles.*, sect. ix, tom. i, p. 238.

Common sense shudders at such absurdities ; that however is what the Reformation found itself obliged to maintain, at least by implication, when weighed down by the testimony of the fathers, it was constrained to acknowledge that the faith of those illustrious defenders of Christianity differed in nothing from the faith which it was attacking ; that they had believed and taught all that it reproached the Church for teaching and believing, and that it could not open their immortal works, without reading its express condemnation in every page.

With regard to the councils, the difficulty of the innovators was no less great. They had to defend themselves at the same time against the Catholics, and against a crowd of theologians of their own party. Either, said the Catholics, you look upon the ancient councils as infallible, or you think that they may have erred; in the first case, their infallibility can have no other foundation than the promises of Jesus Christ, indefinite promises, and the effect of which it is not within your power to arrest at any given point of the Church's duration. If it was infallible during six centuries, it is yet so to-day, it will be so always; and in resisting its decisions, you resist Jesus Christ himself; for of the objections which you make against the later councils and especially against that which condemns you, there is not one but what it might be applied with as much plausibility to the councils which you receive. To shake a single one, is to upset them all; they stand or fall together. The disciples of Eutyches and Dioscorus spoke of the council of Chalcedon as you speak of the council of Trent; they said as you do that their enemies predominated, that truth had succumbed to intrigue and cabals. They were not listened to, and this was right, by your admission. What disputes would ever end, if the validity of the judgment required the approbation of both the parties interested? Faith being incompatible with the slightest uncertainty, either there exists no tribunal for terminating vexed questions of faith, or else that tribunal is infallible. You could not therefore admit the authority of a single œcumenical council, without acknowledging them all as infallible, and as an inevitable consequence, without declaring yourselves rebels against the Church and against God.

But if, to escape from these overwhelming difficulties, you deny the infallibility of the ancient general councils, what advantage will you derive from them against the Arians and Socinians? Will you impose upon them the duty of obeying human decisions? Will they not bring up against you your own principles and example? Where indeed, is the motive for deferring in matters of faith to the judgment of those who may err? Would it not evidently be abandoning salvation to chance, and believing from mere caprice, without certainty or rule? But say you, although subject to error, the early councils did not err. God permitted that they should preserve in its primitive integrity the deposit of sacred truth. That is precisely what we contest. Will answer the disciples of Socinus; you are laying down as a fact the question itself. Prove to us by reason and the Scriptures the dogmas which we reject, then it will be superfluous to allege the authority of the councils; whilst if you cannot prove them in that way, it is still more uselessly that to convince us, or to put us to silence, you bring forward councils which you admit may possibly have taught error. What will you answer, the Catholics went on to say, to the sectarians who hold this language to you? It will be necessary to return against your will to the discussion of doctrines from the beginning, irrespectively of what antiquity has believed and defined; and at the risk of going astray at each step, and to pursue, so to say one after another all the truths of Christianity through the gloomy labyrinth of reasoning: for take away authority, and that is all that remains; and in matters of faith, all fallible authority is void of effect.

On the other hand, the tolerants and the unitarians, more consistently with the principles of Protestant theology, complained with warmth, that in order to force them to accept dogmas repugnant to their reason, the foundations of the Reformation were overturned, and an advantage given to the Papists. Either, said they, the ancient Church was infallible, or it was not. If it was so, it still is; and the true faith must not be sought for elsewhere than in its decisions; to be silent and to submit, that is our unquestionable duty. But if the Church this day is not infallible, it has never been so; men

must always have been able, and bound to examine its doctrines : and it is to labour under too gross a delusion, to imagine that we shall be brought to fetter our judgment with the authority of some of its decrees, by those who have freed themselves from obedience to all the others, which are neither less clear, less important, nor less solemn. Did you then break with the Catholic Church only to put yourselves in its place? Did you accuse it of tyranny only for the sake of establishing a more revolting tyranny upon its ruins? For after all, it had at least in its favour a long and tranquil possession : and in making use of the power which you have the pretension to usurp, it did not like you contradict its own maxims. You accept certain councils, and you reject others ; on what principle is this choice founded? How do you know that among these councils, some having taught error, those which you accept have faithfully preserved the true doctrine? What other certainty have you of this, besides your private judgment, your opinion? To come to the point, it is to your private authority that you wish to subject us. But do not deceive yourselves, after having taught us to deny the infallibility of the bishops of all ages, and of the entire Church, you will not easily bring us to acknowledge your personal infallibility.

Doctrines never return back to their source, and it was in vain that the Reformation strove to arrest the current of the stream that was carrying it away. It came to this, that all its members, by common consent, proclaimed this great principle. The Scriptures are the sole rule of faith, independently of all separate interpretation, and to the exclusion of all visible authority. 'In order to know the religion of the Protestants, says Chillingworth, neither the doctrine of Luther nor that of Calvin or Melancthon is to be taken, nor the confession of Augsburg or Geneva, nor the catechism of Heidelberg, nor the articles of the Anglican Church, nor even the harmony of all the Protestant confessions, but that which they all subscribe to as the perfect rule of their faith and actions, that is to say, the Bible. Yes the Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of the Protestants.'

That is where the Reformation had arrived, in less than

<sup>1</sup> The Religion of the Protestants, a sure road to salvation. Chap. vi, 56.

two centuries after its birth. Ashamed and weary of wandering from creed to creed, it disavows them all, and their authors also. It is not, say the Protestants, by reading our numerous professions of faith, that our faith can be known. We do not care for Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, all our churches, our confessions, or even their *harmony*: the Bible, the Bible alone is our religion.

Yet the Bible, often dumb and obscure; does not explain itself:<sup>1</sup> who will explain it? All men being called to the knowledge of the true religion, it is necessary that all men should clearly discover in the Scriptures the truths which they must believe. The Protestants admit this; for how indeed could so evident a conclusion be denied? but they have not been able to admit it without throwing themselves into inextricable difficulties, and such strange contradictions as to cause a blush for the human mind. After having imagined the extravagant system of private inspiration, after having advanced that we recognise in the sacred books, the dogmas necessary to salvation, by *feeling*, by *taste*, as we *distinguish cold and heat, sweet and bitter*, becoming of themselves, ashamed of this grotesque *sensitive* religion, they ended by attributing the exclusive right of interpreting the divine Scriptures to reason, and declared it the sole judge and sole arbiter of faith. This is not the place for thoroughly examining this doctrine. Let us for the moment, confine ourselves to considering its effects.

Religion transformed into a science of mere reasoning, took as many forms as there were heads. Sects sprung from sects without end and without intermission. Never had such a fertility of extraordinary opinions been seen, or a similar profusion of opposite creeds, nevertheless all founded, it was said, on the simple word *of God*. For that matter examples were not wanting to justify innovations. There was in the reformation, as it were, a tradition of restlessness and doubt, and the personal variations of Luther, those of his disciples, and still more so their maxims, authorised all the variations.

Yet in spite of these maxims, the natural clinging of man to his own thoughts, and perhaps an expiring remains of

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire admitted this in his novel *l'Ingenu*.—*Note of Translator.*

respect for faith, and of love for the truth, led the Protestants, anathematised by the Roman Church, to anathematise one another. It is known to what a degree Luther abhorred the doctrine of Calvin; and the execution of Servet proves sufficiently that Calvin had no less horror of the doctrine of the Unitarians. After all, it is not easy to perceive what these two leaders of Protestantism could find mutually to reproach one another about in the matter of abominable dogmas; for if Luther annihilated morality by denying free will, and declaring good works to be *hurtful to salvation*, Calvin no less radically destroyed it by the unheard of dogma of the inamissibility of justice, according to which a man once justified, was so for all time, and whatever crimes he committed, remained fully assured of his salvation. The one and the other arrived again at the same goal, that is to say, the abolition of duties, by teaching that faith is the sole obligation of the Christian, freed from all ecclesiastical and divine law in virtue of the *liberty* which he acquires through baptism. They did not dare to exempt him equally from obedience to the civil laws, although their principles went as far as that. But the methodists, as good logicians, have crossed over this last step, and one of the articles of their creed is not to acknowledge, in religious and political order, any other superior than Jesus Christ. I do not fear to proclaim that this maxim will not remain sterile. Whenever, by a terrible permission of God, hell prepares heavy calamities for the human race, and the spectacle of some great crimes, it casts an error into the world, and leaves the completion to time.

My design is not to follow the Reformation in all its wanderings, or to recall all the wild opinions which it brought forth: it were more easy to count the clouds which, on a stormy day, obscure the sun in passing. Vain were the efforts made to arrest this overflow of new religions; the Scriptures, that *perfect rule of faith*, concluded nothing: they were silent, or else spoke to each sectarian a different language. Bible in hand, they taught pro and con, yes and no, with imperturbable confidence. Feeling all the Christian truths gliding away from them consecutively, the Reformers, following the example of the Catholics, tried to retain them by the

force of authority ; but this means, the employment of which undermined the basis of the Reformation, had no other effect than to show the despair to which it was reduced. Synods, their excommunications and their decrees, were turned into ridicule, and each one continued to dogmatise according to his caprice.

The voice of conciliation had not any more success. It only ended in a few apparent unions, or in partial treaties of toleration, which, under the pretext of charity, accustomed men's minds to hold all as indifferent. It was, besides, an unheard of scandal in Christianity, these religious negotiations, in which it was expected to arrive at peace by mutual concessions of dogmas, in which articles of faith were ceded by one side or the other, as when princes, wearied with a ruinous war cede to one another towns and territories, and in which impious indemnities were stipulated for the truths which were surrendered.

The Catholics however, witnesses of these continual changes which they had foreseen, challenged the innovators to declare at last clearly at what limit they would stop, and to point out in this multitude of contradictory professions of faith, the character of unity essential to the true faith, according to Saint Paul, *una fides*.<sup>1</sup> The Christian religion, they said, resting upon revelation, and revelation being unchangeable, every sect whose doctrine varies does not possess the religion of Jesus Christ. Bossuet developed this formidable argument with profound science and rare force of reasoning in the History of Variations, an inimitable model of analysis and eloquence. The Reformation, cast down, remained dumb, or rather owned to the evident changes that it was reproached for, and even seemed astonished at not having varied more ;<sup>2</sup> so vividly did it feel its own instability.

After a similar confession there was but one defence possible ; that was to maintain that the dogmas with respect to which it had varied were not in themselves essential, and that they could be accepted or rejected without effecting any

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Ephes. iv, 5.

<sup>2</sup> See Burnet, Crit. of Variat. pp. 7, 8. Jurieu Letters v, vi, vii, and viii, of the year 1686.—Basnage Rep. to the Variat. Pref.

injury to Christianity, and without excluding oneself from salvation. Thus arose the system of fundamental points which, reducing to a few undefined articles the requisite faith, and tolerating all the rest as indifferent, at the same time sanctions the liberty of believing anything, even the most execrable errors, and the liberty of denying anything, even God.

The Protestants were also necessarily led to this system by the controversy on the Church, a controversy the decision of which concluded everything, and which for that reason, the Catholics devoted themselves to clearing up with especial care. Having to speak further on of this important subject, I shall speak of it here only as much as may be necessary to make it understood how the Reformation became constrained to embrace the doctrine of fundamental articles.

The true religion being essentially *one* like the truth, the Church which professes that religion, that is to say, incon- testably the true Church, is in the same manner *one*: Unus Deus, una fides, unum baptisma.<sup>1</sup>

Religion is not a mere idea hid away in the recesses of the mind; it is a belief which manifests itself externally by acts, or by a worship, which preserves the dogmas of which it is the expression: the Church then, or the whole of the faithful who profess the true religion, is a *visible* body. Moreover, either religion has only a moral existence, and is a mere abstraction, or there are men who believe the truths which it teaches: now in order to believe, it is necessary to know them; to know them, they must be proclaimed. 'Faith,' says the apostle, 'comes by hearing: and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher.'<sup>2</sup>

The Church then is necessarily composed of pastors who teach, and of a people who believe what is taught them: now a people and pastors are visible beings; therefore the Church is visible, and the gospel supposes it to be so, when it represents it as 'a city set upon a hill,'<sup>3</sup> as a tribunal before which

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Ephes. iv, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Fides ex auditu . . . quomodo credent ei quem non audierunt? Quomodo autem audient sine praedicante? Ep. ad Rom. x, 17, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Matth. v, 14.



Christians are to bring their disputes.<sup>1</sup> Is a complaint carried for decision before an invisible tribunal? Besides, Jesus Christ promised to the pastors who *teach* to be with them *always*,<sup>4</sup> even to the end of time : therefore the Church always has been, and always will be visible.

God having established religion for all men, and not for a few only, the religion established by God will endure for ever, according to his promises, *omnibus diebus* : the Church, therefore, is *Catholic* or universal, as to time. Jesus ordered his apostles to announce the Gospel *to all nations, docete omnes gentes* :<sup>2</sup> therefore by its institution, the Church is Catholic or universal as to place.

As the true Religion cannot ever be extinguished, and the body of those who profess it must be ever visible, the pastors must succeed one another uninterruptedly, so as that at all periods of its duration, there may be an ascent by an unbroken succession from the actual pastors up to the apostles : therefore the Church is apostolic.

These notions, founded on good sense and formal texts of Scripture, are also confirmed by a unanimous tradition, by the authority of the councils, the fathers, the ecclesiastical writers of all ages, by the liturgies and whole history of the Church since its origin : so that reason, the sacred books, the consent of centuries, all concur in presenting to us as distinctive marks of the true Church, those characteristics which I have just indicated.

These principles being admitted, and they could not be denied without completely overturning Christianity, the Protestants who attacked a Church established since such a long succession of years, were obliged to prove two things ; that the Catholic Church did not possess the essential characteristics of the true Church, and that those characteristics belonged exclusively to the Reformation.

As soon as the question had been reduced to these simple and precise terms, the anxiety of the innovators could hardly be described, convinced as they were that it was not less impossible to attribute to themselves with any appearance of

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xviii, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, xxviii, 20.

truth, any one of the marks of the true Church, than it was to refuse to acknowledge them in the ancient Church from which they had separated themselves.

What indeed could they answer, when supported by incontrovertible arguments and facts as glaring as the sun, the Catholics spoke thus to them: faith is *one*, and you have never been able to be agreed upon the faith by admitting a common creed, nor to content yourselves with any one of the particular creeds which each of you have adopted successively, but tossed to and fro *like children* left to their own weakness and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*,<sup>1</sup> you have only been able to wander perpetually from dogma to dogma, from one opinion to another, eternally incapable of fixing the inconstancy of your mind, and the instability of your faith: therefore you are not that holy Church which Jesus Christ built upon a rock that cannot be moved.<sup>2</sup>

The true Church is *one*, and you are divided into a thousand essentially opposite sects, which at one time tolerate, at another mutually anathematise one another: therefore you are not the true Church.

The true Church has always been *visible*; tell us, then, where was your Church before Luther? Show us, before that apostate monk, a society in which your doctrine was professed? You are silent? Think well of it; to be silent when faith is in question is to own that there is no answer, and to condemn oneself irrevocably. Then they search with anxious haste through the annals of heresy, to pick up from that mud scattered shreds of error; to collect throughout all ages, and at long intervals, the impure rags of a few forgotten sectarians, in order to make therewith a robe of honour, without succeeding, however, in concealing their nakedness. If they find in the fifth century a Vigilance, an enemy of holy relics; in the tenth century, a Berenger who denied the real presence; it happens that these heresiarchs, condemned by the whole Church as soon as they appeared, had hardly any disciples, and that one of them publicly abjured his impiety. Not having even any error in common, they differed in opinion with the Reformers on points of the highest importance. It is there-

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Ephes. iv, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xvi, 18.

fore in vain for these to try to awaken them in their graves in order to get themselves adopted by their proscribed shades. The first ten centuries slip away from them, and their sole resource is to look for ancestors amongst the Albigenses, an infamous colony of Manicheans, who crossed from the East into Italy, and from Italy into Gaul, whose inhabitants they terrified by unheard of crimes; amongst the Waldenses, a handful of obscure fanatics, imbued with many of the opinions rejected by the Reformation, the greater part of the doctrine of which they in their turn rejected. At length, blushing for the ancestry which they had assumed, the innovators renounced an affiliation equally false and disgraceful, and content themselves with maintaining that there always has been within the bosom of the Catholic Church, a certain number of unknown just persons, who secretly professed the principles of the Reformation. But, retorted the Catholics, if these alleged just persons were so hidden that no trace of them has remained, how did you discover their existence? How do you know so exactly the *secret* opinions of men, who themselves have never been known to anybody? It is a fine invention these just persons unknown to the whole world, and who are created by a stroke of the pen, in order to elude a troublesome argument! But even granting your absurd supposition, it answers nothing, and remedies nothing; for *concealed* just persons do not form a visible Church, and it is a visible Church, a Church composed of a congregation and teaching pastors, that we challenge you to show us. You have not done so, and you will never do it: therefore you are not the true Church.

The true Church is universal, and you are but of yesterday, and each of your sects, taken separately, is hardly known in a corner of the globe: for count, if it is possible, in France, in England, in Germany, the multitude of various doctrines comprised under the general name of Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism, etc.; each family almost will offer you a different religion. So little do you aspire to universality, that you have indeed abandoned to the antient Church that glorious title of Catholic or universal, which distinguishes it exclusively and causes it to be recognised throughout the whole earth.

What belongs to you in particular, is that individual spirit, that spirit which separates and divides to infinity; that is your ineffaceable characteristic: therefore you are not the true Church.

Lastly, the true Church is apostolic, and far from being able to reascend to the apostles by an unbroken succession of pastors who have taught the same faith in all times; by your own avowal you succeed to no one, for you cannot name, during fifteen centuries, we do not say a single pastor, but a single man, whoever he might be, who had the same religion as you: therefore, once more, you are not the true Church.

Ignorance and folly are afraid of no objection; they talk, and think that they are replying. But there were among the Protestant theologians men really clever, and of great penetration. These soon understood that it was necessary to renounce the defence of the Reformation, or to change all the ideas which Christians had hitherto had of the Church.

Mestrezat<sup>1</sup> and James I<sup>2</sup> sketched out the new system. Claude, after them, attempted to maintain it, as a last effort, to strengthen his tottering brethren. He spoke to them of 'a body of Christians divided into several special communions, to whom one can still in some manner give the name of the Church, because all Christians are in some respects yet within the general enclosure of the Gospel calling.'<sup>3</sup> It seems as though the pastor's conscience held back his pen at each word. He speaks only with fear and hesitation; in *some respects*, in *some manner*; as if there existed a middle term, as if Jesus Christ, having established one true Church, any other association could be in *some manner*, in *some respects*, that Church established by Jesus!

More boldly absurd, but also more consistent, Jurieu, by turns a sophist, and an impetuous controversial declaimer, and the terror of his own party, who dreaded the roughness of his character, and his violent outbursts, Jurieu took upon himself to develop without reserve this system, which as yet had been put forward with caution.

He maintained therefore that the true Church, far from

<sup>1</sup> *Traité de l'Eglise*, pp. 186 and 371. <sup>2</sup> *Vide Replique du Cardinal du Perron*, c. lx

<sup>3</sup> *Defense de la Reforme*, p. 200.

forming a society distinct and separate from all the others, is on the contrary composed of the totality of Christian sects professing to believe certain truths which he calls *fundamental*. 'We require,' he says, 'that the Catholic and Universal Church be spread over all the sects, and that it should have true members in all those bodies which have not overturned the foundation of the Christian religion, even though they were disunited among one another, so far as to excommunicate each other mutually.'<sup>1</sup>

It was not a light necessity that forced the Reformation to cast itself into this doctrine. It was reduced to being unable to claim to form a part of the true Church, the Church established by Christ, except by introducing all the errors along with itself, and destroying Christianity. Moreover, the true Religion only consisting, according to this strange hypothesis, in a small number of dogmas common to most of the sects, and as an immediate consequence, these sects forming but one body or a single Church, the objections of the Catholics would naturally fall to the ground.

You maintain that the true Church is *one*; and we also, said the Reformers; but this unity is the result of the belief in the same fundamental truths. *All that is believed beyond them being a matter of opinion and not of faith,*<sup>2</sup> does not break the necessary unity.

You maintain that the true Church has always been *visible*; and we also; 'It is true that there is always in the world a visible Church; but it is false that this Church is a certain communion distinct from all other communions. The Church has remained visible during centuries amongst communions which, in spite of their dissidence and the anathemas which they mutually pronounced against each other, have always preserved the principal truths.'<sup>3</sup>

You maintain that the true Church is *universal*; and we also; this quality we take pleasure in avowing it, *is essential to it.*<sup>4</sup> But what more complete universality, is there than

<sup>1</sup> Le vrai système de l'Eglise, p. 79. First mention of Common Christianity. *Note of Translator.* July 1895.

<sup>2</sup> The Religion of the Protestants, a sure road to salvation, chap. vi, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Le vrai système de l'Eglise, p. 226

<sup>4</sup> Accomplissement des Prophéties par Jurieu, p. 82.

that which has no other limits than the extent, not of a single communion, but of all the communions, which in all times have preserved the principal truths ?

You maintain that the true Church is apostolic ; and we also do so ; for<sup>1</sup> it is an evident consequence of its being perpetually visible. But observe that at the present time we do not accuse you of rejecting any fundamental truth ; you are then members of the Church ; sickly members it is true, living members however ; and in default of other continuous succession, you provide us with one, the legitimacy of which you will apparently not deny.

It must be admitted that these consequences are clearly deduced from the system of Jurieu. But I will show in the following chapter, that this system is indefensible, and that the doctrine of fundamental points is a doctrine subversive of religion, and of all reason.

Observe, however, the immense space which the Reformers had already overrun at the period at which we have arrived. The mind shudders in measuring it. How terrific is the march of error ! Luther, shocked at some real abuses, instead of recognising in them the inevitable effect of human passions, finds fault with the doctrine itself. He attacks a point apparently of little importance in the Catholic faith : weak mind, not to perceive the strict connection between all the truths of Christianity ? No sooner has he detached one link from the chain, than the whole chain slips away from him. One error calls up another error. He no longer contests a few isolated dogmas only ; with one blow he shakes the foundations of all dogmas. Tradition embarrasses him, he rejects tradition : the Church proscribes his principles, he denies the authority of the Church, and declares that he accepts no other rule of faith than the Scriptures : lastly, the Scriptures themselves condemn him, he audaciously cuts out of

<sup>1</sup> It is necessary, it is said, to receive the priesthood from the hands of that Church outside of which the Holy Spirit is not given. I own it. But that Church which gives the right of exercising the ministry, is neither the Roman, nor the Greek, nor the Protestant Church, it is the universal Church, which does not give this right of itself; it gives it through the various Christian bodies, which live in various associations, and which each have the power of establishing the ministry for the edification of their people.' *Le vrai système de l'Eglise.*

the sacred books an entire Epistle,<sup>1</sup> and when asked by what right, he replies arrogantly: *I, Martin Luther, will it so, I so order it, let my will stand in the stead of a reason.*<sup>2</sup> Thus Martin Luther was not only the founder, the chief of the Reformation, he was also its divinity, since his will, without other reason, prevailed against the divine revelation deposited in an authentic and sacred monument.

For all that, several of his disciples shake off the iron yoke which he thought to impose upon them. Setting their opinions against his opinion, their pride against his pride, they dare his rage, and divide his empire. New sects spring up, are as soon divided, and subdivided to infinity. Every doctrine is taught, and every doctrine denied: the confusion of hell is not greater, nor its disorder more awful. Then in despair of establishing peace within its bosom, and of sustaining itself by its own strength, the Reformation calls to its assistance the ancient Church which it had repudiated; it calls together the heretics of all ages, it summons its numerous progeny, it assembles them around itself, with their implacable hatreds, their ardent animosities, their conflicting creeds; and out of this incoherent mass of truth and error, it attempts to form one religion; from out of this monstrous anarchy of sects which mutually repel one another, of irreconcilable parties, it attempts to compose a single Church. Oh, everlasting disgrace to human reason! Yes, that is true religion, as the wavering thoughts of man are the unchangeable designs of God; there is the Church, as the divided empire of Satan is the kingdom of Jesus Christ. But finally these ideas prevailed throughout the Reformation. It gave way, in spite of itself, to the insurmountable ascendancy of its principles, and holding out offers of peace to all errors, tolerating everything, even the truth, it advanced with huge strides towards absolute religious indifference, whither, as we shall see, the system of fundamental articles inevitably leads.

<sup>1</sup> The Epistle of St James.

<sup>2</sup> *Ego Martinus Luther, sic volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas.*

## CHAPTER VII

Continuation of the same subject. Examination of the system of Fundamental Points.

IF we had not shown how the Reformation, after having exhausted all other means of defence, was compelled by its own nature, to take refuge in the system of fundamental points this system would have appeared only in the light of an arbitrary opinion, and it would have been with difficulty understood what motives had influenced the Protestants to embrace a doctrine, not only absurd in itself, but also incompatible with their own maxims; a doctrine, in short, which cannot be true, unless Christianity is false, and which ends inevitably in the toleration of atheism.

And in the first place, to justify the charge of inconsistency which I make against the Reformers, let us recollect that the Scriptures are, according to them, the sole rule of faith.<sup>1</sup> They ought then to prove that the Scriptures clearly establish the distinction of fundamental and non-fundamental points, and that they no less clearly specify what is fundamental and what is not so. Now this is what they have never been able to do, although they have often been invited to do it. Never have they produced a single text which in its natural and true sense, even in-

<sup>1</sup> On the 21st June, 1870, in the debate on the Education Act, Mr Vernon Harcourt quoted from Dr Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, published that year, the following passage: 'Bible religion is both the recognised title, and the best description of English religion. It consists not in rites or creeds, but mainly in having the Bible read in Church, in the family, and in private. Now I am far indeed from undervaluing that mere knowledge of Scripture which is imparted to the population thus promiscuously.' Mr Vernon Harcourt went on to say, 'That was a description of what, from a long and accurate observation of the English people, the writer believed to be the unsectarian religion of the English people, though he was himself dissatisfied with it. The great mass of the English people were, he believed, satisfied with it; and it was upon this religion, if it was upon any religion at all they could found a national system of education.' *Hansard* ccii, p. 643. Since 1870 there has been progress in both directions—for and against creeds. *Note of Translator*, June 1895.



directly favoured their strange doctrine. On the contrary, the Scriptures are full of passages which condemn it. When Jesus Christ sends His disciples to announce Christianity to the nations, does he say to them: Teach men to discriminate carefully the fundamental doctrines from those which are not so, not to confound the articles of faith which they are absolutely obliged to believe, with the articles which they may deny without excluding themselves from salvation? No, Jesus Christ nowhere says anything of the sort. And what does he say? 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations. . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,'<sup>1</sup> all, without exception, *omnia quæcumque*, or as another sacred writer expresses it: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.'<sup>2</sup> Therefore men must believe, at least implicitly, all the revealed truths, since the Gospel, or the word of Jesus Christ comprises them all; it is necessary to believe them or to be *condemned*, which makes St Paul say that the heretic *condemned himself*,<sup>3</sup> because he acknowledges the authority of the divine books in which his condemnation is written. Now, a system of faith to which the Scriptures are opposed, or even which is not clearly laid down in the Scriptures, is incompatible with the principle by which no other rule of faith than the Scriptures is to be admitted. The Protestants cannot therefore adopt the system of fundamental points without renouncing their principles, or grossly contradicting themselves.

I add that this system could not be true unless Christianity were false. For firstly, as has just been seen, Jesus Christ taught a contrary doctrine, from which it follows that he was mistaken; or that he misled us, consequently that he was either a fanatic or an impostor.

Secondly, his disciples, faithful executors of the commands they had received from him, never suffered the slightest

<sup>1</sup> Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes . . . docentes eos servare omnia quæcumque mandavi vobis. Matth. xxviii, 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Euntes in mundum universum prædicate Evangelium omni creaturæ. Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit salvus erit: qui vero non crediderit, condemnabitur. Marc. xvi, 15, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. ad Tit. iii, 11.

tampering with the revealed dogmas. St Paul declares that the faith is *one* as God Himself is *one*;<sup>1</sup> that thus nothing can be added to them, nothing be retrenched without destroying them, and in consequence he inflicts an anathema on whoever dares to preach another gospel, or another faith than himself;<sup>2</sup> orders to *avoid the heretic*, teaches that all innovators boasting of a false science, are *fallen from the faith*,<sup>3</sup> and formally includes among the crimes which exclude from the kingdom of God, schisms and heresies, *sectæ*.<sup>4</sup> St Peter calls them all in general, *sects of perdition*, and regards those who introduce them as *blasphemers*.<sup>5</sup> 'Whosoever transgresseth,' says St John, 'and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.' . . .<sup>6</sup>

This is plain: the apostle makes no difference between denying God, and denying a single article of the doctrine of Jesus Christ; for it would be vain to seek in his words for any distinction or restriction. 'If anyone,' he continues, 'come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, what is he going to say?' You will examine if the truths which he rejects are fundamental or not; and if he does not attack the foundation you will grant him toleration, you will admit him into your communion, as a member of the true Church? That is the answer of the Protestants, and here is that of the apostle: 'Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.'<sup>7</sup> Such is the tolerance of the apostles, such is their doctrine. This doctrine then is false, if the system of fundamental points is true; therefore this system and Christianity as taught by the apostles cannot subsist side by side.

Thirdly, all the Fathers, all the councils, all Christians, whether Catholics or heretics, have been unaware of the distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental dogmas, up to the birth of the Reformation; they had believed that there was but one faith by which one might be saved, but one Church which professed that faith,<sup>8</sup> excluding from salvation all the sects separated from this one and true Church. Now, if an error of this importance can have

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Ephes. iv, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. ad Galat. i, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. ii, ad Timoth. ii, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ep. ad Galat. v, 20.

<sup>5</sup> ii Ep. Pet. ii, 1, 10.

<sup>6</sup> ii Ep. St John, 9.

<sup>7</sup> ii. Ep. St John, x, 11.

<sup>8</sup> See the *Traité de l'Unité de l'Eglise*, by Nicole; the *V. Avertissement de Bossuet aux Protestants*; Wallembourg, de contro. Tract 3.

reigned universally during sixteen centuries ; if during sixteen centuries, no one knew what the Church meant ; if, in reciting the apostles creed, the Christians of the whole world have professed an *absurd* error which Jurieu describes as, *a prodigy of cruelty, the most senseless imagination that ever arose in the human mind* ;<sup>1</sup> if all these Christians and all the separate Churches have constantly regulated their conduct upon this *absurd and cruel* error, Christianity is evidently false, since a divine envoy could not have taught an error the consequences of which are so terrible ; men really inspired could not have consecrated it in their writings, have authorised its application by their example ; or, in any case, God would never have permitted that it should have prevailed for so long without protestation, in a Church which He had established in order to receive worship worthy of Him, worthy of His holiness and truth.

We leave to the Protestants to examine upon what grounds they remain at rest in their anti-Christian principles. It is not the Scriptures, nor the authority of the earlier centuries, we have proved it ; it is not reason either, as we are going to demonstrate by the consideration of the system of fundamental points from a more philosophical or general point of view.

What do the partisans of this system do in order to demonstrate, against the deists, the necessity of a revelation ? Supporting themselves by the admissions of the deists, they prove that a religion is necessary, and that consequently there exists a true religion. The annals of philosophy in hand they then show that no certainty can be acquired as to any dogma by reason alone ; that those who take it for their sole guide only wander from doubt to doubt, from uncertainty to uncertainty, and that far from arriving at a fixed belief, they are forced to tolerate atheism itself, or the negation of every dogma, the exclusion of all worship, the destruction of all morality. If then, they conclude, a true religion is necessary, it is also necessary that God should reveal that true religion.

But here is something extraordinary : God shall reveal truths necessary to man, and men shall not be obliged to believe God, and they shall remain at liberty to reject the truths

<sup>1</sup> Le vrai Système de l'Eglise, pp. 79, 92.

which God reveals to them! Then of what use is a revelation? It had been better that God had been silent, if men are free to contradict, to reform His teaching, to say to Him: 'We know Thee better than Thou knowest Thyself.' Now such is the liberty sanctioned by tolerance. For to prop oneself up with the pretext of obscurity, in order to suspend the authority of revelation, or of a part of revelation, the object of which is to dissipate the doubts of the human mind as to the truths which it is to believe, is visibly a self-contradiction, and a mockery of men and their Author.

I hear the disciples of Jurieu answer me: 'We do not urge the possibility of denying, without exclusion from salvation all the revealed dogmas, but only those among them which are not fundamental.' It will be seen shortly that this distinction is entirely delusive. But I agree to admit of it for this moment, and to take the system as it is offered to us, with the arbitrary restrictions which a sort of Christian modesty strives to bring with it. It remains, however, that our objections preserve their full force with respect to the non-fundamental dogmas, that is to say, with respect to the greater part of revealed dogmas. Moreover I will ask these persons, indifferent in a second degree: How do you know that God has revealed unnecessary truths? This gratuitous hypothesis is repugnant to the wisdom of God, and overthrows the principle upon which you have established the necessity of a revelation. But this is not all, and I maintain that it is infinitely more absurd to allege that it is allowable to deny a part only of revelation, than the whole revelation; or in other terms, that the system of fundamental points is more unreasonable, more inconsistent, more outraging to the Deity, and more a cause of despair to man than deism.

The deist rejects revelations, because he does not believe that God has spoken: Jurieu's Christian allows the rejection of a part of the revelation which he believes to be divine. The one, persuading himself that Christianity is founded on purely human authority, accepts it only so far as he judges it to be in conformity with reason: the other convinced that Christianity rests on the authority of God, denies the obligation of submitting in everything and always to that authority.

He attributes the right to man, of preferring in numerous circumstances, his own reason to that of the Sovereign Being, and of disobeying His laws. Lastly, the deist, feeling in himself the insufficiency of reason to firmly establish any dogma whatever, does not make salvation depend on the belief in any dogma. Jurieu, on the contrary, declares that faith in the fundamental dogmas is an indispensable necessity; and as neither he nor his disciples have ever been able to define precisely which are these fundamental dogmas, as there is no point of doctrine upon which the Protestants are less agreed, neither is there one among them who can be certain of believing all that it is necessary to believe to be saved: uncertainty so frightful, supposing there is belief in revelation, that it would be impossible to imagine a more despairing state.

Now, that is the point inevitably arrived at, directly an attempt is made to force Christianity to capitulate with human reason, with its inconstant caprices, and contemptuous dislikes. What may be ceded, and what must be retained, is unknown. Principles are wanting for making this distinction, I do not fear to say, sacrilegious: for to imagine that God speaks in vain, that He reveals superfluous dogmas, is to outrage His wisdom, and to prove one's own folly, in censuring the decrees of His impenetrable designs. Who, besides, does not see that all the points of the Christian faith are closely linked together? Now where everything holds together, everything is essential. The object of religion is to show to man his place in the order of beings, and to maintain him in it, by regulating his thoughts, his affections, his actions, by the two great laws of truth and justice, of which dogmas and precept are the expression. What then can there be indifferent in those laws? and on what grounds should truth be less inviolable than justice? They are mingled together in their source, and to separate is to destroy them; for justice is but truth itself made perceptible in action, according to these profound words of an apostle: 'He that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.'<sup>1</sup> God cannot therefore more tolerate error, than tolerate

<sup>1</sup> Qui facit veritatem, venit ad lucem, ut manifestentur opera ejus, quia in Deo sunt facta. St John, iii, 21.

crime; and the toleration of crime is the necessary result of every doctrine which sanctions the tolerance of error. The system which we are discussing will give proofs of this.

Observe, however, the inconsistency of its partisans. To admit revelation, is to believe the truths revealed on the authority of God, who reveals them to us: now this authority being the same, whatever may be the relative importance of the truths revealed, the obligation to believe is also the same; and to reject a single one of these divine truths, is to deny the authority upon which they are all founded, it is to overthrow the basis of revelation, and to deliver it up defenceless to the deists.

But in order to make still plainer the intimate connection between the doctrine of Jurieu and deism, let us examine the system of fundamental points, as we did natural religion, under the three heads of dogmas, worship, and morality. The identity of principles will be manifested by the identity of consequences and results.

Since there are dogmas which a man may deny without excluding himself from salvation, and others which he is absolutely obliged to believe in order to be saved, the first thing which the Protestants ought to do is to give 'a sure rule for judging which are the fundamental points, and for distinguishing them from those which are not; a question, Jurieu naively adds, very intricate and difficult to decide.<sup>1</sup> Thus, from the outset, he sees himself arrested by a terrible difficulty; for after all salvation depends, at least for a great number of men, on the solution of this question so *intricate and difficult to decide*. The fundamental articles are to be found in the Scriptures, I agree; but 'besides the fundamental truths, the Scriptures contain a hundred and a hundred truths of rule and of fact, the ignorance of which could not entail damnation;'<sup>2</sup> and no where does it specify what is fundamental and what is not, no where does it give a rule for making this discrimination. The Protestants must then make arbitrary ones for themselves, and they are then

<sup>1</sup> Le vrai Système de l'Eglise, p. 337.

<sup>2</sup> Jurieu Axis tr. i, art i, p. 19. Tabl. Lett. iii.

masters of their faith, since they are masters of the rules by which they determine it.

Jurieu proposes three entirely inadmissible rules, and which the Reformation has a long time ago thrown aside. The first may be called a rule of feeling. According to Claude and Jurieu, the fundamental truths are *felt* 'as light is perceived when seen, as heat when one is near the fire, as sweet and bitter when eaten.'<sup>1</sup> The deists say as much; listen to Rousseau,<sup>2</sup> 'It is the inner sentiment which ought to guide me.'<sup>3</sup> My rule is to give myself up more to sentiment than to reason.<sup>4</sup> I perceive God everywhere in His works; *I feel it in me*, I see it all around me:<sup>5</sup> *I feel* my soul, I know it by *sentiment*, and by thought.<sup>6</sup> The difference is that the deists *feel* only natural religion, and that Jurieu felt revealed religion besides. The atheist, who feels nothing at all, may be a subject of pity; but he could not be condemned under this rule, for no one is capable of giving himself a *feeling* which he has not got. In the bosom of the Reformation itself, in which each one had his own way of *feeling*, the Arminian, for instance, not *feeling* the necessity of grace, the Socinian not *feeling* the Trinity or the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Lutheran *feeling* the real presence, which the Calvinist did not *feel*, it soon became necessary to abandon this extravagant rule, only fit for encouraging a senseless fanaticism.

The second rule of Jurieu for discerning the fundamental articles, is based on their connection with the foundations of Christianity. Now, the Protestants have never been able to agree amongst themselves as to what constitutes the foundations of Christianity. So this rule becomes useless; for who can judge of the connection of one dogma with another

<sup>1</sup> *Le vrai Système de l'Eglise*, liv. ii, chap. xxv, p. 453.

<sup>2</sup> There is no error but what it contains some truth, and it is for that very cause that error so easily introduces itself into the mind of man; he receives the false on account of the true, which is mixed with it. It will be seen in the second part of this work that there do exist truths of feeling, that is to say, truths which pass from the intellect to the heart, where they are preserved; and all social truths are of this nature. But it does not follow that feeling is the means given us to know the truth with certainty; and the contrary conclusion erroneously deduced from an indisputable fact, and beyond measure exaggerated by Claude and Jurieu, and even by Rousseau, leads at first to an absurd fanaticism, and lastly to the destruction of all truth.

<sup>3</sup> *Emile*, tom. iii, p. 129.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

dogma which he does not know? Besides, it is evident that Jurieu was labouring under a palpable delusion, or that he wishes to delude others. What, indeed, is the foundation of Christianity unless it be certain truths of faith, which it is necessary to believe in order to be a Christian? The foundation or fundamental truths are then but one and the same thing, and the pastor's rule reduces itself to this aphorism: the foundation is recognised by its connection with the foundation.

This rule not having appeared even to Jurieu of any great assistance in practice, he proposes a third, in these terms: 'All that the Christians have unanimously believed, and still believe everywhere, is fundamental and necessary to salvation.' I think, he says, that this is the most sure rule.<sup>1</sup> The surest course then would be to believe nothing or only to believe what one pleases; for as there is not a single dogma which has not been denied by some heretic, it follows that there do not exist any fundamental truths, and that it is losing time to seek for them. The *surest way* is to think that salvation may be found in every sect, even in Mahomedanism; for since, according to Jurieu, the Mahomedans are but *a sect of Christianity*,<sup>2</sup> nothing that they deny can be fundamental, and the deist, Chubb, is right in maintaining that to pass from Mahomedanism to Christianity, or from Christianity to Mahomedanism, is solely to abandon one external form of religion for another form.<sup>3</sup>

Even were not these consequences alarming, the rule from which they are derived would not the less be inadmissible according to Protestant principles. Their principal axiom is to recognise no human authority in matters of faith. Now the consent of all Christians, in whatever way it be understood, only forms a human authority, consequently subject to error, and from that moment insufficient to determine with certainty what is and what is not fundamental, or to serve as a basis for faith.

There is in all minds a natural rectitude, which, so soon as they go astray, forces them to go astray conscientiously, so

<sup>1</sup> Le vrai Système de l'Eglise, p. 337.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. ii, p. 40.



to speak. It was not therefore possible for the Reformation continuing to be what it was, to adopt the arbitrary rules of Jurieu. It formed different rules, which have universally prevailed because they arose entirely out of its own doctrine. Jurieu saw them laid down, and Bossuet proved to him that he could not contest any one of them.<sup>1</sup>

The first is, that *no other authority is to be acknowledged than the Scriptures, interpreted by reason.* This rule being the very foundation of Protestantism, no one can reject it without ceasing to be a Protestant.

The second is, that the Scriptures, to be obligatory must be clear. Good sense favours this rule, for otherwise one would believe without knowing what is believed, which is absurd, or without being certain that the Scriptures require this belief, that is to say without reason, against the first rule.

The third is, that *when the Scripture seems to teach unintelligible things, and to which the reason cannot reach, it must be twisted to the sense which reason can admit of, even though it seem to do violence to the text.* This rule is another consequence or development of the first. From the moment that reason is the sole interpreter of Scripture, it could not interpret it contrarily to its own lights, and attribute to it a sense at which the mind would be shocked. In a word, the interpretations of reason ought evidently to be reasonable; for, if they were at the same time clear according to the second rule, and absurd by supposition, there would result the obligation of believing a clear absurdity.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental principle of Protestantism having been admitted, the rules which indifferent persons deduce from it must be admitted also. But who does not see that the authority of the Scriptures then becomes the authority of reason alone, so that in point of fact these rules reduce themselves to this: each one must believe what his reason clearly shows him to be true; which is the principle of the deist and

<sup>1</sup> Sixième Avertiss aux, Prot. iii, partie, No. 17, et seq.

<sup>2</sup> The deists acknowledge without difficulty the authority of the Scriptures with the restriction laid down by this third rule: 'Unless,' says Chubb, 'it be interpreted in a manner conformable to the rules of strict reason, which sometimes requires some violence to be done to it, the Bible could not be a sure guide for the human race.' Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. ii, p. 326.

the atheist as I have shown. But I will return to the subject shortly.

In the meantime, to avoid being suspected of exaggerating the consequences of the system which I am combating, I will add to the authority of argument, the incontestable authority of facts.

Jurieu, by character the least tolerant of men, and the most tolerant in his principles, refused to admit the Socinians into the number of sects which have preserved the foundations of Christianity. But he was asked immediately by what right he excluded from salvation men who, like himself, accepted the Scriptures? by what right he put his reason above their reason? lastly, by what right he decided what the Scriptures did not decide, by taking upon himself to determine what dogmas it was necessary to believe to be saved? It was not easy to answer these questions. The Reformation felt it, and the Socinians were admitted to toleration.<sup>1</sup> It became permissible to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, the eternity of punishment, everything at will.

From that time, of what other use were professions of faith than to hinder reason and the liberty which all men have of using it to interpret the Scriptures? Instruction, even of the simplest kind, by preoccupying the minds of the people, tended to substitute the authority of the clergy in the stead of private examination held absolutely indispensable, according to Protestant axioms. Struck by these inconveniences, the Brownists or independants rejected all formulas, catechisms, creeds, even that of the apostle, to keep, as they said, to the Word of God alone. They were, without contradiction, the most consistent of the reformed body.

Fanaticism, however, misusing the sacred text, multiplied religions at the bidding of its wild dreams, and the Reformation became peopled with a thousand strange sects, which however absurd, however contradictory they might be, had all an equal right to toleration. Thus by degrees the most extreme *latitu-*

<sup>1</sup> 'Mr d'Huisseau, minister at Saumur, published 15 or 20 years ago a *Christian Union*, on the footing of universal toleration, without excluding any heretics, not even Socinians,' Bossuet, 6th Avert. aux Protest. iii, part No. 5. These sentiments since then became very common, by the admission of Jurieu, among the Calvinists of France, England, and the Netherlands.

*dinarianism* became established. Its progress was moreover singularly favoured by a disposition of mind which had become common among those Protestants whose character removed them from the excesses of fanaticism. The heat with which certain sectarians maintained dogmas, evidently impious or mad, inspired them with a secret disgust for all dogmas. Incapable of alone enduring the burden of mysteries, reason lowered all the heights of Christianity, and by dint of digging to discover the foundation, it ended by not leaving one stone upon another. By continually retrenching and simplifying, the Reformation arrived at that *ground floor* religion which Jurieu accused the indifferent of wishing to introduce, and which under another name, is but a timid and ill-disguised deism. Such is the state to which Hoadly and his disciples have reduced Christianity in England. Constrained by their principles to tolerate even Mahomedans,<sup>1</sup> even deists,<sup>2</sup> even pagans,<sup>3</sup> they have opened an abyss into which all religions come to unite, or rather to lose themselves; for no religion can last except by repelling all others: they expire by allying themselves. Also in upsetting the barrier which separates Christianity from the forms of worship invented by man, even the distinctive sign of a Christian has

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Milner's letter to a Prebendary.

<sup>2</sup> Doctor Watson, who lately died, Bishop of St Asaph, without difficulty saves sincere deists whose conduct is morally good. 'We Christians,' he says, 'we hope and believe that the great Judge will have regard to our habits of study and reflection, by reason of divers circumstances which influence the minds of men with an efficacy which we can neither calculate nor comprehend. I have not had so little intercourse with mankind, nor shunned so much the delightful freedom of social converse, as to be ignorant, that there are many men of upright morals and good understandings, to whom, as you express it, a latent and even involuntary scepticism adheres, and who would be glad to be persuaded to be Christians: and how severe soever some men may be in their judgments concerning one another, yet we Christians, at least, hope and believe that the great Judge of all will make allowance for our habits of study and reflection, for various circumstances, the efficacy of which, in giving a particular bent to the understandings of men, we can neither comprehend nor estimate.' Dr Watson is not wrong, as has been seen, in vaunting 'the moderation of the English Church, which causes it to allow each individual *et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat dicere.*' An apology for Christianity, in a series of letters addressed to Edward Gibbon, by R. Watson, professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge.

<sup>3</sup> The author of a refutation of Gibbon, entitled 'Remarks on the last two chapters of Mr Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' in a letter to a friend, says: 'I cannot but presume to enter a protest against our author's judgment, at least in the name of our Church of England; and am bold to affirm that her mild decisions are not stained with so foul a blot, as the condemnation of the wisest and most virtuous pagans.'

been destroyed. Baptism, of which the Gospel so clearly teaches the necessity,<sup>1</sup> is, in the eyes of Hoadly but a vain rite, a puerile ceremony; and in some Protestant States, the civil authority has been forced to interfere to prevent its entire abolition. If a child in those States is still a sacred being, if religion still surrounds its cradle with its powerful protection, gratitude for this is owing to politics, which have defended humanity against the inexorable indifference of a barbarous theology.

These anti-Christian doctrines have passed from England into America. The youth imbibe them at the University of Cambridge, from whence it carries them back to all the provinces of that vast continent. There they germinate and develop themselves with such readiness, that already the old Reformation seems almost to be suffocated beneath their shade. There, as in Europe, the clergy of differing sects avoid coming into collision by preaching disputed dogmas, and as all dogmas are disputed, dogmas are no longer taught: they remain satisfied with vague dissertations on morality, which, similarly to the deists, they regard as alone essential. The Bible, free from all explanation is, with great outlay, put into the hands of the people, the last judge of controversies, which have worn out the sagacity and wearied the patience of its teachers; and in giving it a book which it does not read, or which it reads without understanding, they think that they have bestowed on it a religion.

Protestant Germany offers perhaps a still more deplorable spectacle. There they seem to have especially devoted themselves to destroying all the Scriptures, nevertheless without ceasing apparently to recognise them as the sole rule of faith. They maintained that Jesus Christ never designed to establish a religion distinct from Judaism; that the Church, the work of chance, at first was but a fortuitous aggregation of individuals, or small private societies, out of which a few ambitious men seconded by circumstances, formed a general confederation.<sup>2</sup> By the help of what is called a biblical

<sup>1</sup> St John. iii, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Geschichte der Christlich. Kirchen etc., von D. Plauck, tom. i, chap. i. Kirchenstaat der drei Jahrhunderte von J. H. Bohmer, p. 8. Overthür Idea Biblica Ecclesiae Dei, tom. i, pp. 1, 6, 100, 104.

exegesis, that is to say, an unbridled criticism, they deny the prophesies, the miracles, the truth of the account given by Moses ; and Genesis, according to these learned interpreters, becomes a tissue of allegories, or to speak their language, *myths*, or mere fables.

Now, who will prove that these convenient interpretations, now almost universally accepted, injure the foundation of Christianity ? They appear to be opposed to the Scriptures, it is true : but if they were rejected on that account, it would be necessary at the same time to reject the rule which prescribes in certain cases, *to do violence to the sacred text*. They could not therefore be refused toleration, and even, to be consistent, acceptation as more *clear* and satisfying to the reason.

It is thus that *rational Christianity*, so praised in England and Germany, is arrived at. Everything is pruned off religion which reason does not conceive, consequently all the mysteries, and all the dogmas ; for there is not a single dogma which does not contain some mystery, because there is no one which does not touch infinity on some side or other. Then what remains but deism ? But even that is no halting place, the principle conducts beyond that ; it constrains *to do violence* not only to the Scriptures, but to reason, to conscience, to the unanimous testimony of the human race, it compels man to deny God, since he is obliged to own that *inconceivable mysteries surround Him*.<sup>1</sup> This point once reached, divisions cease, not by the agreement of doctrines, but by their annihilation. Discordance of opinion, and an infinite diversity of belief, fill up all the space which separates the Catholic religion from Atheism ; unity is only to be met with at those two extremities ; *unity of faith* in the Catholic religion because it contains the fulness of truth, and in atheism *unity of indifference*, because atheism in point of fact is but the fulness of error.

In vain do the Protestants strive to maintain an equal distance between these extreme terms : reason does not allow of halting between them. In the matter of dogma, to tolerate a single error is to take the engagement of tolerating them all. The problem to be resolved, may then be thus

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 133.

stated : how to preserve Christianity without requiring special faith in any dogma. There never has been, and never will be found any other solution than that of Chillingworth, who reduces the fundamental articles to 'implicit faith in Jesus Christ and His word.'<sup>1</sup> But Bossuet forced the English pastor into abridging even this brief creed ; and drove him, without his being able to resist, as far as the toleration of atheism. 'This faith with which he is satisfied,' said the bishop of Meaux, '*I believe that which Jesus wills, or, what the Scriptures teach* is nothing else than to say : I believe what I choose, and whatever I please to attribute to Jesus Christ or to his word, without excluding from this faith any religion, or any of those sects which receive the holy Scriptures, not even the Jews, since they can say like us : We believe all that God wills, and all that He has put into the mouth of His prophets about the Messiah ; and this as much includes all truth, and in particular, faith in Jesus Christ, as the proposition with which our Protestant has contented himself. Another implicit faith might be formed upon this model, in which the Mahomedans and deists could join as well as the Jew or the Christian : I believe all that God knows ; or if it wished to advance a little further, and to lend to the atheist even, so to speak, a formula of express belief ; I believe all that is true, all that is conformable to reason ; which implicitly comprehends everything, even the Christian faith, since doubtless it is conformable to truth, and that *our creed*, as says St Paul, is *reasonable*.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Religion of the Protestants, a sure road to salvation. Rep. to the pref. of his advers., No. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Sixième Avertissement aux Protestans, iii, partie No. 109. Feeling the force of these objections, Chillingworth tries to retort them against the Catholics; a very vicious mode of argumentation in the present case. For were he to succeed, he would only prove the Catholic religion to be false, and would not prove as he is bound to do, that Protestantism is true. According to what rules of law does a man justify himself of a crime, by accusing another of complicity? But in addition, the accusation of the clergyman is palpably false. 'Why,' he asks of a Catholic, 'should not an implicit faith in Jesus Christ and in his word be as sufficient as implicit faith in your Church? Let us leave Bossuet to reply to him. 'There is no one who does not understand the difference that there is between a Catholic who says: "*I believe what the Church believes*," and our Protestant who says: "*I believe what Jesus Christ wills me to believe, and what He intended to teach by His word*:" for it is easy to find out what the Church believes, as its express decisions upon each error are in the hands of everybody; and if any obscurities remain, it is always living to give further explanations: so

Bayle, although interested as a Protestant in justifying the system of fundamental points, did not judge it otherwise than Bossuet. He proves<sup>1</sup> that, according to the principles of Jurieu, no heretic can be excluded from salvation, nor the Jews, nor the Mahomedans, nor the Pagans: that is to say, that by abolishing the truth, as a law of the intellect, absolute freedom of belief is proclaimed, and so many religions are established, as there are ideas that can arise in the mind of man. For the premises at the outset admitting of no limitation, it would be in vain to attempt to impose limits to the consequences: at whatever point these may be arrested, the principle from which they proceed, protests, so to speak, against the violence done to it, and triumphs over conscience itself before the tribunal of inflexible logic.

I have already said it, all errors hold together, as all truths hold together; thus, to tolerate some errors, and not to tolerate others derived from them, would be, in a religious system founded on reasoning alone, to absolve a certain class of men by reason of their inconsistency; and to condemn another class because they had reasoned more correctly. It is no good setting one's face against good sense, it will carry the day, and universal tolerance, the general and necessary law of error will establish its reign upon the ruins of all truths.

Let us take, to begin with, the principle which serves as the basis of Protestantism, and especially of the system of the fundamental points. The Scriptures being the sole rule of faith, and Jesus Christ not having left upon earth any living authority for the interpretation of the Scriptures, each one is obliged to interpret them for himself and to search them for the religion in which he ought to live.<sup>2</sup> His duty is limited

that to be disposed to believe what the Church believes, is expressly to subject oneself to the renunciation of one's own sentiments, if they are contrary to those of the Church, which can easily be learned: this carries with it a renunciation of all error which it has condemned. But the Protestant who falls into error is far removed from this disposition, since although he may say: I believe all that Jesus Christ wills, and all that is in his word: Jesus Christ will not come to disabuse him of his error, neither will the Scripture take any other form than that which it has, to draw him out of it: so much so that that implicit faith, which he boasts of having in Jesus Christ and his word, is practically only indifference for all the meanings which may be given to the Scripture; and to rest content with such a profession of faith, is expressly to approve all kinds of religions.' Bossuet, *ut supra*.

<sup>1</sup> *Janua Cælorum omnibus reserata.* Oeuvres de Bayle, tom. ii.

<sup>2</sup> 'Every man, says Dr. Middleton, 'has the right of judging for himself, and

to believing that which it seems to him that the Scripture teaches clearly, and which is not in opposition to his reason ; and as no man has the right of saying to other men : ' my reason is better than yours, my judgment is more sure than yours,' it follows that each man must abstain from condemning the interpretation of his neighbour, and must consider all religions as being as sure and as good as his own. Moreover, were any one convinced that he was alone infallibly in the right, as no one has it in his power to give himself this infallibility, still those could not be excluded from salvation who, by hypothesis, were mistaken whilst making the best possible use of the reason they have received.

For the same cause, neither can those be excluded from salvation, who, reason not having clearly shown them that the Scriptures are inspired, doubt of revelation, or even formally deny it, because that after a sound examination they conceive that there are peremptory objections against it. Reason, the interpreter and judge of the Scriptures being, as a last resource, the foundation of faith, it would be absurd, contradictory, and impious to oblige them to believe that which is repugnant to their reason.

Here then are the Protestants, or indifferent persons of a second degree, already compelled to tolerate not only all the sects which accept the Scriptures, the Arians, Socinians, and independents, but even the deists who reject them, or rather who reject the *human* interpretations of the Protestants, for virtually they accept the Scriptures on the same footing as do the Protestants, interpret them by the same method, and like them only refuse to believe that which appears to them obscure and contrary to reason. Rousseau bestows magnificent praise on the holy books ; it is known that he read them continually, and the *holiness of the Gospel spoke*, he said, *to his heart*.<sup>1</sup> Lord Herbert of Cherbury calls Christianity *the most beautiful of religions*.<sup>2</sup> All the deists hold the same language, and, whilst denying revelation like the Socinians, whilst denying the divinity of its author, allege that they understand the

adversity of opinions is as natural as diversity of tastes.' Introductory discourse to a free inquiry into the miraculous powers, p. 38.

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Relig. Laici, p. 28.



Scriptures better than the Protestants do, and that they more faithfully obey Jesus Christ, who, according to them, only preached natural religion.

The atheist comes forward in his turn, and says :—Like you I acknowledge no other authority than that of reason ; like you I believe what I clearly comprehend, and nothing else. The Calvinist does not understand the real presence, he rejects it, and does well ; the Socinian does not understand the Trinity, he rejects it, and he is right ; the deist comprehending no mystery, rejects them all, and he too is right. Now, the Deity is, in my eyes, the greatest, the most impenetrable mystery. My reason, not being capable of comprehending the idea of God, cannot admit it. I claim therefore the same toleration as the Calvinist, the Socinian, and the deist. We have all the same rule of belief, we all equally exclude authority ; by what authority then would any dare to condemn me ? And if I must renounce my reason, if you hold me guilty for listening to its dictates, do you then renounce your own reason, which is not more infallible than mine, abjure your rule of faith, and declare frankly that all that you have taught by this rule hitherto, does not rest upon any base, and that if the truth exists, you have yet to learn by what means it can be discovered.

Unless they abandoned their axioms, the Protestants could not therefore refuse toleration to the atheist. Will they say that he makes a bad use of his reason, that he is not of good faith ? As much may be said of the deist, of the Socinian, and of all heretics without exception. This reproach is without weight in the mouth of sectarians, because they have all an equal right to address it to one another. What the Lutheran says of the atheist, the atheist will say it of the Lutheran. Who will be judge between them ? Is it reason ? But it is its decision that is disputed : each one alleges that it decides in their favour. To call it in to decide this difference, is to decide the question by means of the question itself ; it is clearly to deride common sense.

In striving to fix limits to indifference, in requiring belief in certain truths which he calls fundamental, the Protestant only succeeds in exposing his own inconsistency. For, in the first

place, he does not determine what those truths are, and secondly, it is impossible to determine it. How, indeed, can that which is essentially united be separated? Nothing in religion is isolated; each truth rests upon another truth, which is, as it were, its foundation: they flow one from another, they are enchained, and intertwined; so that without ever finding the slightest point of division, there is an ascent from one to another, up to God, the Eternal living source of all truths. One of them could not be denied without entailing the obligation of denying them all, and atheism is but the last consequence of the system of the reformed body, its necessary complement; until it is reached, there is a contradiction of ideas.

It seems as if Jurieu had felt this; for he sees no other resource for the preservation of religion, than to deliver it up to the Prince, or to transform it into a political institution, which is the degree of indifference, nearest neighbour to atheism, or rather pure atheism, as I have already demonstrated.<sup>1</sup> The pastor does not even suffer this doctrine to be put in doubt one moment, so pressing is its want to the Reformation. 'It is *certain*,' he says, 'that princes are born heads of the Christian Church, as well as of civil society, *equally masters of the religion as of the State*.'<sup>2</sup> Hobbes and Shaftesbury do not maintain anything more than this. But as soon as princes have the right to prescribe creeds at their pleasure, whenever their will is the whole of religion, there must be no further mention of Scriptures, of revelation, of truth; abased belief becomes as a kind of impost which the sovereign levies upon public reason, for the good of the State, and which he sometimes lightens, sometimes increases, according to circumstances, or his mere caprice.

Revolutions in public worship have followed upon revolutions in dogmas amongst the Protestants; for in every religion, worship is the expression of the doctrine.

From a meagre doctrine arises a worship meagre like itself. Thus the more dogmas a sect preserves, the more its worship possesses of life, grandeur and pomp. This is seen clearly by comparing the worship of the Lutherans with that of the

<sup>1</sup> See chapters ii and iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Tabl. Lett.* viii, pp. 478, 482.

Calvinists, and still better with the worship of the Socinians. The Independents who reject all exclusive formulas of belief, reject also all exclusive forms of worship, and in this they are consistent; for liturgies are to creeds, pretty nearly what words are to ideas; when ideas are lost, the words disappear, or at most, remain like inscriptions in an unknown tongue, mysterious monuments of some ancient people that has vanished.

Nevertheless, it is not enough to acknowledge certain speculative truths, in order to have a worship properly so called. The deist acknowledges God, and offers Him no worship, or does not know what worship to offer. Why is this? It is because deism is not a religion, but an *opinion*. *Faith* tends to manifest itself without by actions, because it resides principally in the heart, in which resides the principle of action. *Opinions* on the contrary exist only in the mind; speech is their natural mode of expression. So the Protestants whose axioms overturn the foundations of faith, showed from the outset a profound repugnance to religious ceremonies, or external worship. Their cold liturgies, almost solely composed of emphatic and dry prayers, exclude all perceptible signs, which are the language of the heart; and the reproaches of idolatry which the Reformation formerly addressed to Catholics, was caused, much less by the difference of doctrines, than by the total change which it had effected in the nature of belief. All the rites of a majestic worship, sublime expression of a sublime faith, must have appeared to it opposed to the essence of Christianity, when Christianity had become for it simply an *opinion*.

It is after all manifest that the system of fundamental points, whilst compelling the toleration of every doctrine, compels the toleration of every form of worship, and that it leads naturally to the abolition of all worship, by leading to the negation of all dogma.

But will morality at least escape from this shipwreck of all the truths? Alas! this is asking whether man will be inconsistent for the pleasure of vexing that which is dearest to him, his passions. Duty is dependent on belief; so many creeds so many moralities. All moralities therefore, as well as all

creeds, will have to be tolerated. The rule of morals is perfect among the Christians, and the precepts of justice complete, because every truth is contained in Christianity, and is there preserved by means of a rule of perfect faith. Mahomedanism mixing error with truth, in part corrupts the ideas of that which is true and just, joins precepts of vice to precepts of virtue. Deism, an uncertain and limited belief, affords only limited and uncertain precepts. The atheist has but one duty, which is to acknowledge none. 'There is properly,' says a celebrated philosopher, 'but one duty, which is to make oneself happy.'<sup>1</sup> In sanctioning absolute indifference as to dogmas, the system of Jurieu at the same time sanctions absolute indifference as to duties. Man will be free to do everything, as he is free to believe everything or to deny everything. These two faculties are inseparable.

The Reformation, which at its birth saw itself forced to add the toleration of crime to that of error, is not ignorant of this. That famous conference is well known in which Luther, Melancthon, and some other doctors of the same school, formally authorised polygamy, by permitting the landgrave of Hesse to marry a second wife, whilst he continued to live with the first.

Who is there that does not perceive that so soon as all living authority is rejected, the rule of morality becomes as variable, as uncertain as the rule of faith. Distinction must first be made in the gospel between what is precept and what is only counsel; this is the first important question which the gospel leaves undecided. The fundamental precepts must then be distinguished from those not fundamental, and in order to do that, the Scriptures must be explained according to the general rules of Protestant interpretation, which as it allows in certain cases of *doing violence* to the sacred text, reduces itself, as has been seen, to the judgment of reason, and in consequence leaves each man equally master of his conduct and of his belief.

The Reformation goes even further, and as the gospel pronounces certain precepts so clearly that it is impossible to misunderstand or to misrepresent them, it finds *exceptions* to

<sup>1</sup> Hist. philosoph. des Etabl. des Europ. dans les deux Indes liv. xix.

the gospel, a last excess beyond which nothing more can be imagined. 'The good faith and the laws of the Prince,' says Jurieu, 'are the interpreters of exceptions which may be made in the law of the gospel which forbids divorce, and they are sufficient to set the conscience at rest.'<sup>1</sup> It was natural that the pastor, after having made the prince sovereign-arbiter of belief, should make him equally sovereign-arbiter of morals. The Bishop of Meaux remarks on this subject, that 'consciences are so put to sleep, and hearts so weighed down by the Reformation, that they remain *at rest*, in spite of the decisions of the gospel with regard to exceptions made by human laws and authority. This is not a case of the opinion of a private clergyman; it is the opinion of Geneva where the *canon law* of the Reformation sprung up; it is that of the Anglican Church which is the principal portion of it, as our minister calls it; and M. Legrand has just shown to Mr Burnet that according to the laws of that Church, a divorce is given, for desertion, for a too long absence, for great enmity, for ill treatment, and that in all these cases the parties can be re-married. There are four exceptions to the gospel, taken from the code of ecclesiastical law of England, resolved on and passed into law by an assembly in which *preached Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury*, the great reformer of that kingdom.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Reformation equally feeble against vice and against error, sacrifices the Scriptures themselves to the passions, and upraises itself to open to them a freer and a wider field. Let us continue to listen to Bossuet.

'These indifferent persons, ashamed of the divisions induced by the method they propose for understanding this divine Book, think to have found a remedy when they give little heed to abstract and speculative dogmas, as they style them, and laud only the doctrine of morality. It is the maxim of those latitudinarians of whom we have just spoken, who say that it is with regard to morals that the voice of heaven should be narrowed, whilst it is expanded in the matter of dogma . . . . They talk of nothing but living well, as if believing well were not the foundation of it. But restricting ourselves

<sup>1</sup> Tabl. Lett. vi p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> Sixieme Avertissement aux Prot. iii, part. No. 80.

simply to what they call morals, in which they seem to wish to shut up the whole of religion, were not the Socinians and others who boast so much about morals, the first to censure the beginnings of the Reformation, in which so much had been done to chill the practice of good morals, by teaching clearly that they were not necessary for justification or salvation; not even the love of God, but solely faith in His promises, as we have often proved it? Did not these same Socinians prove indisputably, as well as the Catholics, that nothing is more pernicious to good morals than the inadmissibility of justification, the certainty of salvation, and lastly the imputation of the justification by Jesus Christ, in the manner in which the Reformation taught it? It is enough to convince them that there may be found in the Scriptures, upon morals as upon dogmas, some of those generalities in which so many different opinions and errors are hidden, and if people take to reasoning (and they do so too much already) on the doctrine of morals, upon enmities, usury, mortification, upon lies, chastity, marriages, with the principle that the holy Scriptures must be brought down to rigid reason, to what point will they not go? <sup>1</sup> Have we not seen polygamy taught by the Protestants in theory and in practice? <sup>1</sup> and will it not be as easy to persuade men that God has not intended to extend their obligations beyond the rules of good sense, as to persuade them that their belief was not to be carried beyond good reasoning? But when this point has been reached, what effect will good sense have on morals, other than what good reasoning has had on belief, that is to say, to establish the

<sup>1</sup> They have indeed gone very far. Theologians have not blushed to make apologies for vice with such revolting openness, that I should not dare to transcribe their words. The virtues which the Gospel most formally recommends have been held up to public contempt, as *remains of monarchy*, and it has been stated without fear that the doctrine of morality *reposes only on blind faith*. (See Nos. 1 and 3 of the second part of the magazine of the late M. Heuke de Helmstadt, and No. 3 of his *Eusebia*; and the *Critique de la doctrine Chrétienne pratique*, p. 185, by Superintendent Cannabich.) Lastly, as if to overthrow morality with a single blow, it has been maintained 'that religion has nothing to do with the duties.' (*Investigation biblique* by M. Scherer, No. 1): from which it follows that a man might habitually commit every crime without being the less religious. Such are the principles at the present day taught within the reformed body; and yet they will still be heard to talk of Christianity! I invite those who wish to know the actual state of Protestantism more in detail, to consult the work entitled '*Entretiens philosophiques sur la réunion des différentes communions chrétiennes, par M. le baron Stark, ministre protestant.*'

good pleasure of each individual? Thus we shall lose all the benefit of Jesus Christ's decisions; the authority of his Word, subjected to arbitrary decisions, will no more settle our agitations, than would the natural freedom of our reason, and we shall see ourselves plunged again into those interminable disputes which have turned the heads of the philosophers. In this way we shall have to tolerate those who err in morality, the same as those who may err upon the holy mysteries, and to reduce Christianity, as many do, to the generality of love of God and of one's neighbour, in whatever manner that may be applied and twisted later. How much have the anabaptists, and other enthusiasts or so-called inspired persons, dogmatised upon oaths, chastisements, the manner of prayer, marriage, the magistracy, and upon the whole ecclesiastical and secular government, things so essential in Christian life. The Socinians who with the indifferent praise only a good life, and the strait path in morals, how wide a course they take in subjecting habits of vice only to damnation and deprivation of eternal life? So much so that Socinus himself has not shrunk from saying that the *murderer or homicide who is judged worthy of death, and who can have no part in eternal life, is not he who has killed one man, or has committed an act of homicide, but he who has contracted a habit of so great a crime.* There is nothing more strongly inculcated in his works than this doctrine. It is also the opinion of most of his disciples; amongst others of Crellius, one of the most celebrated, and who is considered by them as one of the most regular in the teaching of morality; nevertheless, he clearly makes the nature of the sin which excludes from eternal life to consist in its being *habitual*. There is no question here of saving oneself from damnation by true and sincere repentance for sins; this is not mentioned in these discourses: and we know that all sins, even the most enormous, as well as the most deliberate and frequent, are pardonable in this manner; the object is to find an excuse for sin in the sin itself, and that is what those of the Protestants who most pride themselves on preserving a strict rule of morals have thought of it. How relaxed they are in this respect clearly appears: otherwise they are rigid to

excess, since they agree with the anabaptists in condemning amongst Christians, the taking of oaths, the magistracy, capital punishment, and war even when undertaken by public authority, and however just it may be in other respects.<sup>1</sup>

It has been shown that one hundred and fifty years ago, the Reformation had already arrived at viewing all dogmas with indifference, and that carried away by its principles, at the same time that it was vaunting morality as alone essential, it fell, with regard to morals, into an unheard of laxity, even so far as to tolerate murder, provided that it did not become an abominable habit.<sup>2</sup>

It remains proved, by reason and by experience, that Protestantism, or the system of fundamental points which is its basis, inevitably leads to universal toleration, or to absolute religious indifference. Doctrine, worship, morality, all crumble away, and atheism remains alone amidst the ruins of understanding.

Now that it has been seen how the systems of indifference, mingling one with another, all end in absolute indifference, it will be admitted, that by refuting the general doctrine of indifference, these various systems will be refuted, and particularly that of the Protestants, against whom, moreover, I will prove that in the same manner as there is but one true religion, so there exists but one society professing that religion : consequently a society outside of which salvation is impossible.

Let it not be forgotten besides, that this work is not, properly speaking, an apology for Christianity, so that even if after reading it anyone should not be persuaded of the truth of the Christian religion, provided he were convinced of the necessity of making it the subject of serious study, I should fully have attained my object. I only desire, in short, to awaken doubt in the minds of the indifferent, to make them feel that a blind disdain, disavowed by good sense, is as

<sup>1</sup> Sixième Avert. aux Prot. iii, part. No. 114.

<sup>2</sup> It is sufficiently plain without my saying it, that doctrines only are in question here; as to practice, that is another affair. There are everywhere to be found, and in great numbers, men who are inconsistent for good as well as for evil.



sad a pledge of security, as it is a feeble claim to mental superiority ; and to show them, that unless they abjure reason, they must examine and compare with all the care that they are capable of, both the foundations of faith, and the foundations of incredulity. Let us proceed to the subject.

## CHAPTER VIII

Reflections on the folly of those who, without reasoning, are indifferent only from carelessness and idleness. Exposition of the sole principles upon which can rest the indifference of those that reason.

IN reverting from age to age up to the origin of the human race, we find the belief in God and a future state established among all nations. Upon that belief, sole sanction of duty, sole guarantee of law and order, reposes society which is shaken as soon as this belief is infringed upon. Sooner or later, however, there arrives a period at which luxury depraves the morals, and philosophy the reason. Among the Greeks this period arrived at the time of Pericles ; among the Romans a little before the age of Augustus, a crowd of sophists made their appearance, who, striving to subject wisdom to the passions, had the effrontery to substitute for primeval tradition the dreams of their disordered minds. By dint of subtleties and false reasoning, they confused all ideas, obscured all notions, and enervated all belief. The world was in extremities, when suddenly the ancient faith developing itself at the command of God, in the midst of the people specially charged with the preservation of this trust, brilliantly retakes possession of the universe. New dogmas are promulgated, but these dogmas derived from the primitive dogmas belonged, at the least implicitly, to the primitive faith. Profound mysteries were accomplished ; but these mysteries announced to the first man, more clearly revealed to his descendants, were looked for and expected by the whole human race. Christianity was not at its birth, it was growing. Everything

is bound together and connected in history as in the dogmas of religion. Nations begin and end, they pass away with their customs, their laws, their opinions, their sciences; one sole doctrine remains, ever believed in, notwithstanding the interest the passions have in not believing it; ever immutable in the midst of this rapid and perpetual movement; always attacked and always justified; always sheltered from the vicissitudes which ages bring to the most solid institutions, and to the most respected systems; ever more astonishing and more admired the further it is examined into; the consolation of the poor, and the most encouraging hope of the rich; the ægis of the people and the curb of kings, the rule of government which it moderates, and of obedience which it sanctifies; the great charter of humanity, by which eternal justice, not choosing that even crime should remain without hope and without protection, promises mercy for the sake of repentance; a doctrine as humble as it is profound, as simple as it is lofty and magnificent; a doctrine which subjugates the most powerful intellects by its sublimity, and apporions its splendour to the weakest minds; lastly, an indestructible doctrine which resists everything, triumphs over all, over violence as over contempt, over sophistry and over scaffolds, and strong in its antiquity, in its victorious proofs and benefits, seems to rule over the human mind by right of birth, of conquest, and of love.

Such is the religion which certain men have chosen to make the object of their indifference. That which Bossuet, Pascal, Fenelon, Descartes, Newton, Leibnitz, and Euler, have believed, after the most attentive examination, that which formed the continual subject of their meditations, is not judged worthy to occupy thought even for a moment. By thus despising Christianity without knowing it, they think to raise themselves above what during eighteen centuries has most shone upon earth by its genius and virtue; and ridiculously vain of a heedless disdain for the truth wherever it be, they take a pride in preserving the neutrality of ignorance between the doctrine which produced Vincent de Paul and that which produced Marat.

Whether God exist or not, whether this brief life is followed

by a lasting life, whether the sole duty is to obey the inclinations, or whether they should be regulated by a divine and fixed law, all knowledge is sought except this. Men are to be met with whom everything interests except their eternal fate. They have not, say they, the time to think of it ; but they have a superfluity of it whenever the satisfaction of the most frivolous fancy is in question. They have time for business, time for pleasure, and they have none for the inquiry whether there be a heaven or a hell. They have time to inform themselves upon the emptiest futilities of this world, in which they will pass but a day, and they have it not for assuring themselves whether there exist another world, in which they must, happy or miserable, eternally dwell. They have time for the care of a body which is nigh to its dissolution, and they have none for ascertaining whether it contains an immortal soul. They can find time to go a long way to bring conviction to their eyes of the existence of a rare animal, or of a curious plant, and they have no time to convince their reason of the existence of God. Inconceivable self-blindness ! Who would not exclaim with Bossuet : 'What ! is the charm of the senses so strong, that we can foresee nothing.'

In truth, this absolute want of foresight, this stupid security with which men precipitate themselves into a boundless and unknown future, are they not evidently the signs of an alienation of mind ? The whole human race testifies to the existence of a law which cannot be violated with impunity, and without believing its testimony, and without denying it, on the faith of a wretched *perhaps*, men accept all the consequences of formal opposition to this law, and create for themselves, from carelessness, the two-fold fatality of crime and misfortune.

Victims have been seen to laugh, to dance on the scaffold, but the death which they defied was unavoidable, nothing could snatch them from it. Under the invincible necessity of dying, they brazened themselves against nature, and found a kind of stern consolation in astounding the looks of the populace by a gaiety more fearful than the anguish of terror, and the agony of despair. But that a man, uncertain whether his head shall not fall in a few hours under the axe of the

executioner, and certain of saving himself if only he were convinced of the reality of the impending peril; that such a man should remain at rest under this horrible doubt, and prefer to life a few moments of pleasure, or even of weariness, which a fearful and dishonouring execution will shortly terminate; this is what has never been seen, and never will be seen. Whatever contempt may be affected for a fleeting existence, burdened with so many sorrows, a man does not detach himself from it in this manner; there is no apathy so profound as not to be awakened by the warning, by the very idea of an approaching death. What do I say? everything that concerns us, whether in our health, our goods, our enjoyments, our opinions, or our habits, excites, alarms, and transports us beside ourselves, and inspires us with indefatigable activity; and men are indifferent to nothing except to heaven, to hell, and to eternity.

Let those who tranquilly wrap themselves up in this monstrous indifference, or who are even vain of it, learn at least what was thought of it by one of those men who by the prodigious superiority of their genius, seem to have been born to roll back the bounds of the human intellect.

'The immortality of the soul is a matter of so great importance to us, and one which moves us so deeply, that a man must have lost all feeling to be indifferent to the knowledge of what it is. All our actions, and all our thoughts must take such different paths, according as there shall be eternal advantages to be hoped for, or not, that it is impossible to take any step with sense or judgment, except by regulating it with that point in view, which ought to be our ultimate object.

'Thus our first interest, and our first duty is to enlighten ourselves upon that subject, upon which all our conduct depends. And that is why amongst those who are not persuaded of this, I make an extreme difference between those who labour with all their might to inform themselves concerning it, and those who live without taking any pains or thought about it.

'I can only feel compassion for those who groan sincerely under this doubt, who look upon it as the last misfortune,

and who sparing nothing to escape from it, make this research their chief and most serious occupation. But as for those who pass their lives without thinking of the latter end of life and who, from the single reason that they do not find in themselves lights which convince them, neglect to seek for them elsewhere, and to examine thoroughly whether that opinion is one of those which the common people accepts from credulous simplicity, or of those, which though in themselves obscure, have nevertheless a very solid foundation, I consider them in a totally different manner. This negligence in a matter in which they themselves, their eternity, their all is at stake, irritates more than it touches me; it astonishes and awes me; it is monstrous to me. I do not say this from the pious zeal of spiritual devotion; I assert on the contrary that self love, that human interest, that the most simple light of reason ought to give us these sentiments. For that purpose it is necessary only to see what the least enlightened persons see.

‘It needs not to have a very lofty soul in order to understand that there is not here any real or durable satisfaction; that all our pleasures are but vanity, that our ills are infinite; and lastly, that death, which threatens us at every instant, must place us in a few years, perhaps in a few days, in an eternal state of happiness or unhappiness, or of annihilation. Between us and heaven, hell, or nothingness, there is therefore only life, which is of all worldly things the most fragile; and heaven being certainly not for those who doubt if their soul be immortal, they can only expect hell or annihilation.

‘There is nothing more real than this, nor more terrible. Let us be as brave as we may, that is the end which awaits the fairest life in this world.

‘It is in vain that they turn aside their thoughts from this eternity which awaits them, as if they could blot it out by not thinking of it. It subsists in spite of them, it advances, and death which must open it, will infallibly put them, in a short time, in the dreadful necessity of being for eternity annihilated or miserable.

‘That is a doubt of a terrible importance; and assuredly it is already a very great evil to be in this doubt, but it is at

least an indispensable duty to inquire when in it. So then he who doubts and does not inquire, is at once both very unjust and very unhappy : but if along with that he is tranquil and satisfied, if he make a profession of it, and boast of it, and if it should be of this state itself that he makes the subject of joy and vanity, I have no terms for describing so extravagant a creature.

‘Where are we to look for his feelings? What subject of joy can be found in expecting only misery without resource? What subject of vanity can there be in finding oneself in the midst of impenetrable darkness? What consolation is it never to expect a consoler?’

‘This repose within this ignorance is a monstrous thing, the extravagance and stupidity of which must be made perceptible to those who pass their lives in it, by representing to them what is passing in themselves, so as to confound them with the sight of their madness. For this is how men reason when they choose to live in this ignorance of what they are, without seeking to have it made clear to them.

‘I do not know who put me into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I am. I am in terrible ignorance as to all things. I do not know what my body is, what my senses or what my soul, and that part of myself which thinks what I say, and which reflects upon all things and upon itself, does not know itself any more than the rest. I see these dreadful spaces of the universe which enclose me, and I find myself attached to a corner of this vast expanse without knowing why I am placed in this spot rather than in another, nor why this brief time which is given me to live is assigned to me at this point, rather than at another ; in the whole eternity which has preceded, and the whole of that which follows me, I see nothing but infinities on all sides, which swallow me up like an atom, and like a shadow which lasts but a moment without returning. All that I know is, that I must soon die ; but what I am most in ignorance of, is this very death which I cannot avoid.

‘Like as I know not whence I come, so also I do not know whither I am going; and I know only that in going out of this world, I fall for ever either into the void, or into the hands

of an angered God, without knowing to which of these two conditions I am to belong to for eternity.

‘This is my state, full of misery, weakness, and obscurity; and from all that I conclude that I must therefore pass all the days of my life without thinking of what is to happen to me, and that I have only to follow my inclinations without reflection and without anxiety, doing everything needful for falling into eternal misery, in case that what is said of it is true. Perhaps I might find something to enlighten my doubts; but I will not take that trouble, nor make one step to seek it; and while treating with contempt those who harass themselves with this care, I will go on without looking forward or fearing, towards an experiment of the great event, and will let myself be gently led on to death, in uncertainty of the eternity of my future state.

‘In truth it is a proud thing for religion to have for adversaries such unreasoning men; and their opposition to it is so little dangerous, that it serves, on the contrary, for the establishment of the principle truths which it teaches us. For the Christian faith goes chiefly to establish but these two things, the corruption of nature, and the redemption of Jesus Christ. Now, if they do not serve to show the truth of the redemption by the holiness of their morals, at least they serve admirably to show the corruption of nature, by such unnatural sentiments.

‘Nothing is so important to man as his state; nothing is so much to be dreaded by him as eternity. And thus that there should be men indifferent to the loss of their being, and to the peril of an eternity of misery, is not a natural thing. They are quite otherwise with regard to all other things; they fear even the smallest, they foresee them, and feel them; and that same man who passes days and nights in fury and despair at the loss of an office, or on account of some imaginary offence to his honour, is the very same man who knows that he is going to lose everything by death, and who notwithstanding remains without anxiety, undisturbed, and without emotion. This strange insensibility to the most terrible things in a heart so sensible of the lightest matters, is a monstrous thing;



it is an incomprehensible enchantment, and supernatural lethargy.

‘A man, being in a dungeon, not knowing whether his sentence is passed, and having only an hour to learn it, and that hour being sufficient, if he knows that it is given, to get it revoked; it is against nature that he should employ that hour, not in informing himself whether that sentence is passed, but in playing and diverting himself. This is the state in which are these persons, with this difference, that the evils with which they are threatened are far other than the simple loss of life, or a passing punishment such as this prisoner might be apprehensive of. Yet they run carelessly to the precipice, after putting something before their eyes to prevent their seeing it, and they laugh at those who warn them of it.

‘Thus, not only does the zeal of those who seek God prove the true religion, but also the blindness of those who do not seek Him, and who live in this horrible neglect. There must needs be a strange overturning of the nature of man to live in this state, and yet more to take pride in it. For had they even an entire certainty of having nothing else to fear after death than falling into the void, would it not be rather a subject of despair than of vanity? Is it not therefore an inconceivable madness, whilst in this uncertainty, to make a boast of being in this doubt?

‘And, nevertheless, it is certain that man’s nature is so corrupted, that there is in his heart a germ of joy in this. This brutal repose between the fear of hell and of annihilation seems so fine a thing, that not only those who are really in this unfortunate doubt boast of it, but those even who are not in it think that it is to their credit to feign to be in it. For experience shows us that the greater number of those who partake of it are of the latter sort; that they are people who play a part, and who are not such as they wish to appear. They are persons who have heard say that in the world good manners consist in thus passing for wild. It is what they call having shaken off the yoke; and the greater number only do it to imitate others.

‘But if they yet have ever so little common sense, it is

not difficult to make them to understand how mistaken they are in seeking esteem by that means. . . . If they gave it serious thought, they would see . . . that nothing is more capable of drawing upon them the contempt and aversion of men, and to make them pass for persons without wit or judgment. And indeed, if they are induced to give account of their opinions, and of the reasons for which they doubt of religion, they will say things so weak and so base, as rather to lead to a contrary conviction. This is what a person once said to them very opportunely: If you continue to discourse in that wise, he said, in truth you will convert me. And he was right, for who would not be horrified at seeing himself of an opinion in which he would have as companions such contemptible persons.

‘Thus, those who only feign these sentiments, are very unfortunate in having to constrain their nature in order to make themselves the most impertinent of men. If they are sorry in the depths of their heart, to have no lights, let them not dissemble it. Such a declaration would not be shameful. There is no shame except in the not having any. Nothing more discovers a strange weakness of mind, than the not knowing what is the misfortune of a man without God. Let them leave then these impieties to those who are sufficiently ill-born to be really capable of them: let them at least be honest men, if they cannot yet be Christians: and let them acknowledge at length, that there are but two sorts of people who can be called reasonable: either those who serve God with all their heart, because they know Him, or those who seek Him with all their heart, because they do not yet know Him.’<sup>1</sup>

Most indifferent persons only remain so because they fancy that they show a glorious superiority of intellect by an off-hand contempt of common feelings. They would be ashamed of having anything in common with the people, even hope; and that is what turns them aside from examining the foundations of their faith. But it must be owned, that it is a wretched vanity which feeds itself upon ignorance. The enemies of religion and its defenders are agreed as to its

<sup>1</sup> *Pensées de Pascal.*

importance. This point is so evident, that no one that is incredulous on principle contests it. Now, the man whose knowledge is confined to a stupid, *what is that to me?* in what would he be superior to the Christian whose belief, established by positive proofs, rests upon a body of facts and considerations which in order to be seized, require at least mental application and a labour of reflection?

However that may be, an indifferent person, equally incapable of denying or affirming anything, falls asleep between these two doubts; it is possible that religion is true; it is possible that it is false. After producing these contradictory propositions, instead of deducing the conclusion, his powerful mind stops, and rests in the easy contemplation of its greatness and strength.

It might in the first place be observed, even before entering upon the discussion, that these two general propositions do not at all offer the same degree of plausibility. For there is no one who does not feel that if the Christian religion were false its prolonged existence during eighteen centuries, the victory it has obtained over the opinions, customs, laws, passions and habits of so many various and rival nations, the dominion which it has never ceased to exercise over the most acute minds, and the most meditative dispositions, would be the most extraordinary and inexplicable moral phenomenon ever heard of. Wonderful error indeed, to have no less attraction for cold and rigid reason, than for sensitive feelings and ardent imaginations; which takes possession of a man, and of all men, by continually thwarting their desires; an error which fosters and hastens the progress of truth in all branches of human knowledge; an error from which spring unnumbered virtues, till then unknown; lastly, an error which, following upon the so much vaunted, yet sterile speculations of ancient philosophy, and suddenly propagating itself throughout the world, in the most enlightened age, rectifies all received ideas, purifies principles, perfects the modes of reasoning, creates, it is not too much to say, the intellectual and physical sciences, abolishes the prejudices hostile to humanity, sanctifies morals, and softens the laws, unites nations by sacred bonds, puts love where hatred only had existed, protects at the same

time the mighty and the feeble, the government and the subjects, temperates domination, strengthens obedience, and by its own especial and necessary effects, produces the perfection of social order.

I will, however, consent to the truth or falseness of the Christian religion being held to be equally doubtful. In order to demonstrate clearly the folly of the indifferent, I require their own maxims only, and it is sufficient to develop this proposition which they accept: It is possible that religion may be true; for this single proposition comprises all the following ones:

It is possible that there is a God who recompenses and avenges.

It is possible that my soul is immortal.

It is possible that the Sovereign Being may have revealed truths to men which they cannot here below comprehend perfectly, and may have imposed duties upon them, the reason of which they do not clearly perceive.

It is possible that I may be rigorously obliged to believe these truths and to practise these duties.

It is possible that if I believe and practise, I may enjoy an infinite and eternal felicity as the reward of my obedience.

It is possible also, that if I refuse to believe and practise, I may be eternally punished for it by fearful torments.

No, I do not hesitate to assert, that to dwell willingly in this terrible doubt, to be at ease in it, to thrust back the hope of infinite felicity, and to devote oneself freely, if religion is true, as they own that it may perhaps be, to torments, the sole idea of which freezes the imagination with horror: it is an inexplicable madness, a frenzy, a mania for which there is no name. For supposing even that our present interests were opposed to our future interests, and that there were a necessity to sacrifice the one to the other, still in wisdom there should be no hesitation as to the choice. Let it be observed that here is eternity on the one side, and on the other an instant that can hardly be seized upon, a shadow, less even, the *dream of a shadow* Pindar calls it.

If therefore this fugitive life were for the religious man only a continuous suffering, if to the indifferent it were but an

unmixed pleasure, this passing suffering, this pleasure which flies, would not weigh in the balance for a moment, in the eyes of reason, against the powerful consideration of eternity. Whoever, rather than lose an ephemeral pleasure, exposes himself to be unhappy for ever, deserves to be so, and has no claim except to the contempt which all blind and brutal passion inspires.

When the objects upon which the activity of the human mind usually exercises itself are considered from a certain height, it is astonishing how small is the circle in which it voluntarily confines itself, and that so little should suffice to amuse its curiosity, and to turn it aside from the infinite desire of knowledge which possesses it. I know of nothing which more marks the wretchedness of man than this surprising facility of contenting himself with a few frivolous distractions, with his immense capacity for the truth. He naturally loves it, an irrepressible instinct leads him to seek it perpetually, it is his object, his rest, his felicity; and yet there is nothing but what it can satisfy him in its stead. I speak neither of the poor taken up with labours of the body, nor of the rich who agitate themselves in the hollowness of pleasure; I speak of those who have received from Heaven elevated sentiments together with an independent position. What, think you, habitually fills their thoughts? The Eternal Being, the immutable laws which He has established? Oh no! they will spend their lives in making combinations of words, in studying the relations of numbers, the properties of matter; no more is required to satisfy those powerful intellects. Why do you speak of God to that learned man who fills the world with the sound of his name? How can you expect him to listen to you? Do you not see that at this moment his mind is thoroughly taken up with the decomposition of a salt hitherto rebellious to analysis? Wait till he has made known to the world a new acid: then perhaps you will be allowed to discourse to him on the subject of the Infinite Being, who has created, without an effort, the universe and all that it contains. Another man is composing a history, a poem, a play, a novel, on which he fancies that his glory depends: do not disturb him, he must hasten for death approaches; and what an in-

consolable grief, if it arrived before he had given the last touch to his reputation! It is true that he is ignorant of his own nature, of the place which he occupies in the order of beings, of his future destiny, of what he may hope, and what he must fear; he does not know whether there exists a God, a true religion, a heaven, a hell: but he has long since made up his mind as to all those things; he gives no heed to them, does not think of them; they are not clear, he says, and thereupon he acts as if it was clear that they are only fancies.

If anyone could avoid hell by not thinking of it, I should see a motive for this prodigious carelessness. But not thinking of it is, on the contrary, the most sure way of arriving there. To turn aside the mind from the truth, to be indifferent to it, is the very crime which God punishes, and very justly; for if this be well considered, it will be understood that this pretended indifference is at bottom only enmity.

Here I boldly appeal to general experience, I appeal to the conscience itself of the indifferent man. Is it not true that he feels an extreme repugnance to everything which reminds him of religion, its menaces and its promises? Is it not true that inwardly he would wish that it were false? Is it not true that he has always fled from the opportunity of instructing himself therein from a secret apprehension of being convinced, or at least shaken, by the numerous proofs upon which it leans? Is it not true that he becomes sad and irritated every time that in one of those discussions, which cannot always be avoided, an argument is put forward in favour of Christianity, against which he has nothing plausible to reply? Is it not true that on the contrary the objections brought against it cause him to rejoice, and with a joy the more lively, as these objections may appear stronger or more embarrassing? Now what is all this but hatred of truth, and consequently enmity towards God, the supreme truth? Is there any room for astonishment that those should be rejected who hate Him; and what other fate should those unfortunate people expect?

The cause of so deplorable a disposition must not be sought for elsewhere than in pride, and in the corruption of the heart. Man hates restraint, and religion restrains all his

inclinations. Weary of its austere yoke, he attempts to shatter it, or to evade it. He surrounds himself with distractions, he makes himself giddy and intoxicated with pleasures, and false reasons, so as to stifle the importunate truth with less remorse ; as an assassin who is still a novice, gets drunk before committing a murder. His indifference to the dogmas arises out of his aversion to the duties ; if he were not afraid of these, he would willingly agree to the former ; but knowing that the rule of faith cannot be separated from the rule of morals, he seeks for independence for actions in independence of thought. He wishes to doubt and he doubts ; he wishes, at any cost, not to believe, and his reason ceaselessly labours at self-annihilation, a veritable moral suicide a thousand times more criminal than that which only destroys the body.

If the brute, deprived of reflection, lives and dies without disquieting itself about the future, this carelessness is its natural and necessary condition. But when man, endowed with incomparably nobler faculties, capable of raising himself to the idea of God, and of embracing the infinite in his thoughts, desires, and hopes, precipitates himself from that height into the vile condition of the beasts, and desires only to know, like them, wants and inclinations, and disgusted with the immortal lot which the Creator has assigned to him, envies them even annihilation ; such a thing confounds and terrifies, and no words remain to express the horror inspired by so profound a degradation.

Blind indifference is then the most degrading state into which a reasonable creature can fall. The only case in which a wise man could remain indifferent to religion, would be that in which we should have no interest in knowing whether it is true or false, or any means of ascertaining it. In other terms, as observes M. de Bonald, the indifferent must needs suppose 'That there is neither truth nor falseness in religion whether considered in general, or in all its diversities ; or that if there be truth and falsehood in religion as in all other things, man has no means of distinguishing them ; or lastly that religion whether true or false is equally an indifferent matter to man.'

'The supposition,' continues the same writer, 'that all religions are indifferent, cannot be upheld in good philosophy.'

There is no more a philosophy without a first principle, cause of all effects in morals and in physics, than there can be arithmetic without a first *unity*, mother of all the numbers; or geometry without a first *point*, generator of lines, surfaces, and solids. And how can it be supposed that there is not a true and a false in religions opposed to one another, but which are, however, in all places the true or false relations of man towards God, of man to his fellow creature, the reason of government, the rule of duty, the sanction of laws, the base of society; when there is a true and a false in everything to which men bring their reason or their passions: a true and a false everywhere, even at the *opera*, and in the most frivolous objects of our pursuits and pleasures? But if there is a true and a false, order and disorder, in the various religions considered in general, can it be supposed in good philosophy, that the Being who is Supreme intelligence and truth, has refused to men, who are also intelligent beings, capable of knowing and choosing, of loving or hating, all means of distinguishing between the true and the false in their relation towards Him? And to what end would he have given them that boundless ardour to know, and permitted them to discover the relations which they have even with material things? And if man can distinguish good and evil in the various religions, how can it be supposed that he should remain indifferent to truth and error, he who does not remain indifferent to anything, and with whom indifference is indeed the most signal characteristic of stupidity?''<sup>1</sup>

These brief observations of the most profound philosopher that has appeared in Europe since Malebranche, show clearly enough the absurdity of the sole principles upon which religious indifference can be founded. In again subjecting these principles to a rigid and detailed examination, we hope to leave no excuse either to the credulity which adopts them, nor to the bad faith which feigns to do so. We shall not indeed need talent to do that: art is sometimes necessary in order to clothe error with the appearance of truth; but if it is desired to restore to truth its splendour, it is sufficient to pull

<sup>1</sup> Sur la Tolérance des Opinions, by M. de Bonald, Spectateur français an XIVe siècle tom. iv, pp. 72, 73.



down the veil with which it had been sought to conceal it.

So that the reader may easily follow the argument, it is fit that he should have a clear idea of it beforehand, that he should know the object to which he is bound, and by what road he is to arrive at it. Here then, in a few words, is what we propose to ourselves to establish, and the order in which we will establish it.

It is maintained that religion, true or false, is indifferent to man, and we will prove that given the existence of a true religion, that religion is of infinite importance to man, whether considered individually, or in his relations to his fellowmen and to his Creator; from which it follows that he has an infinite interest in ascertaining whether there exist indeed a true religion, and that there is, consequently, infinite folly in remaining in indifference on that subject. To make our principles clear, by applying them to a known religion, we will besides suppose that Christianity is that true religion, the importance of which is to be demonstrated.

It is alleged that all religions are in themselves indifferent; and we will prove that no religion is indifferent in itself, or that in every religion there is good or evil, truth or error; that there exists necessarily a true religion, that is to say, a religion of absolute truth and goodness, and that there exists but one alone, from which is deduced the obligation of embracing it, if it is possible to recognise it.

It is urged that if a true religion did exist, man has no means of distinguishing it from the false religions; and we will prove that in all times, men have had an easy and certain means for ascertaining the true religion: from which it results that indifference is not only an unreasonable state, but also a criminal state.

Each one no doubt will remain judge for himself, of the force of the proofs which we are going to develop. We do not dispute this natural right in the case of anyone. But whoever should refuse to examine the foundations of indifference, could not be reckoned amongst those who are indifferent on principle. He would place himself, by that

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alone, in the number of those senseless persons, who, desirous of confounding the terrors of conscience with the repugnance of reason, at whatever cost, fear to confront the truth, and raise up against it a sorry rampart of darkness, a weak defence against remorse.

## CHAPTER IX

Importance of Religion, with respect to man.

HAPPINESS is the natural object of man : his unconquerable desire is to be happy ; but too often the uncertainty of the reason, and the blindness of the passions lead him astray from the object to which he aspires with such eager anxiety. Being subject to invariable laws, the brute attains surely its appointed end. No error, no disordered affection turns it aside from the end for which nature has marked it out ; and death, of which it has neither dread nor forethought, happening at the moment when the decay of the organs would not allow it to feel any but painful sensations, is yet another benefit to it.

It is not so with man ; being intelligent and free, in order to enjoy happiness, it is necessary that he should search for it, that he should apply himself to discriminate it from that which is only its reflection, and that his will should choose it freely : and man never turns more aside from happiness than when, like the animals, he obeys only his inclinations. The noble faculties which he degrades, in vindicating their outraged rights, soon make him feel, by the bitterness which they spread over his pleasures, that there exists another law for him than the law of the senses.

The happiness of beings is in their perfection, and the more they draw near to perfection, the more closely do they approach to happiness. Until they have reached it, they will be seen to be agitated and restless because every being which

has not attained the perfection which belongs to it, or which is not all that it may or ought to become, is in a state of transition, and seeks for its resting-place, as the traveller, delayed in foreign countries, seeks eagerly for his home. And it is remarkable that all men, influenced unawares by the feeling of this truth, join constantly to the idea of happiness, the idea of repose, which is itself but that profound unalterable peace, enjoyed of necessity by any being that has attained to its perfection, and which St Augustin excellently well calls the *tranquillity of order*; and when the Scriptures wish to paint the horrible abode of sovereign evil, they speak to us of a desolate region, 'a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.'<sup>1</sup>

As the perfection of beings is relative to their nature, it follows that no being, more especially man, could be happy otherwise than by a perfect conformity to the laws which result from his nature. In a word, there is no happiness but in the bosom of order; and order is the source of good, as disorder is the source of evil, in the moral as in the physical world, for peoples as well as for individuals; and when they shut their eyes against this eternal truth, the chastisement follows close at hand, ever in proportion to the gravity of the disorder; and if the disorder is extreme, if an individual or a people becomes, so to say, guilty of a capital crime, by violating the fundamental laws of its being, inexorable nature punishes it with death.

But in order to conform to the laws of order, it is necessary to know them. Therefore there is no happiness for man, unless he know himself, and that he know the beings with whom he has necessary relations, that is to say, beings similar to himself; for there are only necessary relations, or society between similar beings. And indeed man may know God, and may know himself, and in consequence he may know the necessary relations which unite him to God, and to other men, and which derive from the nature of man and from the nature of God. Otherwise man would be in a 'state of con-

<sup>1</sup> Terram miseræ et tenebrarum, ubi umbra mortis et nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror inhabitat. Job x, 22.

tradiction,' since having an end, which is perfection or happiness, he would have no means of arriving at it.

And this shows clearly the absurdity of the doctrine of fatalism. For if human actions were necessitated, they would all necessarily tend to the perfection of man, and he would always be as happy as it is possible for him to be. None but a free being can act against the laws of his own nature ; and misery, the same as disorder, can only be explained by liberty.

Nature which is immutable, because it is the order immutably willed by God, imposes on man laws immutable like itself ; necessary laws, because they are the expression of necessary relations ; laws outside of which neither peace nor felicity are to be found, because outside of them there is only disorder. No one could assign their origin, or name their inventor. They are recognised without difficulty by their antiquity, their universality, and an indescribable character of simplicity, of grandeur, and of power which essentially distinguishes them, and preserves them undestroyed amidst the revolutions of custom, and the vicissitudes of opinion.

Man, however, led away by a false science, or carried away by the passions, often strives to substitute factitious laws for this natural legislation, and this is as though he tried to change his nature, and the nature of beings similar to himself. Moreover, whether in attempting to establish arbitrary bonds between himself and God, he combines dogmas and invents religions, or whether in seeking to establish himself in an arbitrary society with other men, he combines forms of government and invents constitutions ; his vain wisdom only ends in putting opinions in the place of beliefs, passions in the stead of duties, and in the State, in like manner as in families, and in individuals, the agitation of disorder and the fever of license in the stead of the tranquillity of order : and it may be observed that the greatest evils which have afflicted the human race at any period have sprung from arbitrary constitutions and arbitrary religions.

Religion, morality, society, are common facts like gravity : common laws independent of our ideas, like the laws of equilibrium. From the moment they are considered as pure abstractions, everything is lost. It is then that a

delirious philosophy would invent everything in politics, in morals, in religion; in some measure like a physiologist, who seeing nothing in life and its phenomena but an arbitrary system, should have the pretension to invent a new mode of existence: and the Stoics have reached to that excess of madness, when, in the incapacity of escaping from the distress of the soul and the sufferings of the body they made happiness to consist in insensibility to physical and moral pains, an insensibility which is incompatible with the mode of existence essential to man.

The other theories of supreme good, which were imagined in such numbers by the sages of antiquity,<sup>1</sup> do not rest on a less fragile basis; void of hope, they consider man only in his present state, without regard to his future destinies; a sad and empty philosophy, which is shattered on reaching the barrier of death.

To know, to love, to act, that is the whole of man. From the agreement of his faculties, and from their perfect development, results the happiness of the individual; because it is eminently conformable to order, or to the nature of beings, that their faculties should be developed; and because any being deprived of one of his natural faculties, or in whom this faculty remains idle for want of a corresponding object to which it may be applied, is in a state against nature, consequently in a state of suffering.

The special end belonging to intelligence, or the faculty of knowing, is the truth: therefore ignorance, which is a state of imperfection, and error, which is a state of disorder, are contrary to the nature of an intelligent being, and incompatible with happiness.

In the same way that the True is the end of the intellect, good is the end of love; and love is derived from the intelligence because it is necessary to know good before loving it, and because love is only the intimate enjoyment of truth when known.

Intelligence is therefore the principle of love; and love the principle of action, tends to carry into external action its

<sup>1</sup> Varro reckons two hundred and eighty eight.

object, that is to say good or the truth : and it is said of Supreme truth, invested with our nature by an effect of Infinite love, that 'He went about doing good, *transiit benefaciendo*.<sup>1</sup>

But man, active through his senses, and through them inclined towards material objects, divided thus between two loves, or two wills which drive him violently in contrary directions, would be able to obtain no peace until he had established order between his faculties, by subjecting his senses to the law of intelligence or of truth, which in its relations to the actions of free beings, is but immutable justice : therefore there is no happiness without virtue, and no virtue without a predominating love of intellectual good, or of justice and truth.

Take away this harmony and mutual dependence of our faculties, suffering immediately springs from disorder, and ceases only with it. Man, in a state of ignorance, lives and acts at hazard ; he knows neither what he should love, nor what he may allow himself, nor what order requires that he should forbid himself ; and if ignorance is complete, as in absolute idiotcy, all love is destroyed, all action is destroyed, and the individual perishes unless another intelligence preserve it. Error by corrupting love, disorders the actions, and places man in a false condition, consequently in a painful relation to beings similar to himself. But if love goes astray, the truth remaining in the intellect, there arises betwixt reason and the inclination a terrible war which upsets and devastates the soul ; this is remorse with its intolerable terrors and anguish. If the senses or organs, intended to serve,<sup>2</sup> should seize upon the power, the disorder is at its height ; all perishes, both intellect and love, nay even the body. 'For when we were in the flesh the motions of sins . . . did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.'

That man's divers faculties should be fittingly co-ordinated together, and that each one should enjoy its special object, such then is the first condition of happiness. The second is,

<sup>1</sup> Acts x, 38.

<sup>2</sup> The beautiful definition of man by M de Bonald is well known. *Man is an intellect served by organs.*

<sup>3</sup> Cum enim essemus in carne, passiones peccatorum. . . operabantur in membris nostris, ut fructificarent morti. Ep. ad Rom. vii, 5.

that each faculty should attain its perfect development, or enjoy the object which corresponds to it, to the full extent of its capacity : Now, the desires are a certain indication of that capacity, and indeed, the man who feels within himself an infinite desire to know and to love, because he may and ought to know infinite truth, and love infinite good, is not tormented by an infinite desire to act, because his action as a physical being is naturally and necessarily limited. The sage who wishes to know the laws of the celestial revolutions, and watches and labours in order to discover them, never thinks of subjecting them to his will ; and the reason is that his power of action is limited, and his intelligence is without limits.

These principles being laid down, let us consider philosophy and religion in their relations to happiness : and to begin with philosophy, what are the truths which it discloses to us ? what are the benefits which it offers to us, the duties which it prescribes to us ? What does it teach us about the place which we occupy in the order of beings, about our origin, our nature, our destiny ? Alas ! yet more powerless than presumptuous it deceives or degrades all our faculties. Our mind asks of it infinite truth, alone in proportion to its desires, and philosophy presents to it only doubts, vain conjectures, and palpable absurdities. All beliefs fly before it ; and passing like a waterspout over the human mind, it overthrows all principles, uproots all ideas, shatters all hopes. So many philosophers, so many systems, as vague, as fugitive as the dreams of night. Let us imagine a man whom the desire of truth, natural to all intelligent beings, excites to seek for it, and who, aided by sound reason, undertakes with that object to examine the systems of philosophy. What obscurities ! what uncertainties ! what contradictions ! what an immense sea of which no one has yet been able to lay down the shores ! Ye who may be misled by the hope of at length discovering the happy port to which ye aspire, believe the experience of undeceived voyagers, and listen to the voice of Rousseau :— ‘ I consulted the philosophers, I opened their books, I examined their divers opinions, I found them all proud, positive, and dogmatic, even in their assumed scepticism, acknowledging ignorance of nothing, proving nothing, deriding one



another ; and this point, common to all of them, seemed to me the only one upon which they were all in the right. Triumphant when they attack, they are without vigour in defending themselves. If you weigh the arguments, they only have them for destruction, if you reckon the number of opinions, each one is reduced to his own ; they only agree in disputing.<sup>1</sup>

But man is not thrown upon this earth for a few moments for the purpose of disputing : he is here in order to know and to act, consequently to believe ; and woe to whom doubt opens the gates of the tomb.

'I conceived,' adds Rousseau, 'that the insufficiency of the human mind was the first cause of this prodigious diversity of sentiments, and that pride was the second. We have not got the measure of this immense machine, we cannot calculate its effects, we know neither its first laws, nor its final cause ; we are ignorant of ourselves ; we know neither our nature, nor the principle of our action ; hardly do we know whether man is a simple or a compound being ; impenetrable mysteries surround us on all sides ; they are above the region of perception ; in order to pierce them, we think that we have intelligence, and we have only got imagination. Each one clears out for himself, through this imaginary world, a road which he believes to be the right one ; no one can know if his leads to the desired end.'<sup>2</sup>

Strange condition this of man aspiring, with inexpressible ardour, to the enjoyment of truth, and never being sure of whether he is not fastening upon a lie in its stead ! Incapable by nature of attaining to certainty, doubt is torture to him. And yet, observes Pascal, 'each one must take a decision, and must needs take sides either with dogmatism or doubt ; for whoever should intend to remain neuter would be a thorough doubter : this neutrality is the essence of doubt ; whoever is not against them is eminently for them. What then will man do in this state ? will he doubt of everything ? will he doubt whether he is awake, whether he is pinched or burned ? will he doubt whether he doubts ? will he doubt

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

whether he exists? It is not possible to arrive at that stage, and I advance that there never has been an effective and perfect doubter. Nature sustains impotent reason, and prevents it from being extravagant to such a pitch. Will he on the contrary say that he certainly possesses the truth, he, who if he is ever so little pressed, can show no proof of it, and is forced to give up?

‘Who will unravel this confusion? Nature confounds the Pyrrhonists,<sup>1</sup> and reason confounds the dogmatists. What will become of you then. Oh man, who seek your real condition by your natural reason? you cannot escape from one of these sects, nor exist within any of them.’<sup>2</sup>

Created to obey the laws of order, to live in society with God, the author and the bond of all beings, to possess infinite truth through the intellect, and to enjoy it through love, the man from whom this truth escapes, and who then sees nothing greater or more perfect than himself, begins to love himself beyond measure in that which he possesses, that is most intimate and most lively, his thoughts and feelings: and consistent in disorder, after having chosen himself as the object of infinite love, he makes himself the centre of all things, he makes himself into a god; and philosophy is but the idolatry of man, the most fatal idolatry, because by infinitely exalting selfishness, it breaks all the social bonds.

If there be a spectacle worthy of pity it assuredly is that of a feeble, ignorant creature, subject to calamity, which, having lost sight of its true end, stirs up with stubborn ardour this immense slough of misery to find in it its good and its repose. This unfortunate creature will be seen wandering through the arid desert of life, and thrilling with delight on meeting with the vilest pleasures, as the first men uttered cries of joy, when, wandering famished in the midst of the forests, they discovered a few wild berries, or the disgusting remains of some abandoned prey.

All the philosophical theories of happiness are reduced to the systems of Epicurus and Zeno, with various combinations or modifications; and in the actions and desires of man

<sup>1</sup> Doubters

<sup>2</sup> *Pensées de Pascal*, ch. xxi, edit de Paris, in 12.

separated from God, all, at the last, must be referred to pride or the love of pleasure, for the reasons mentioned above : he loves himself with an infinite love in what he has that is greatest and most peculiarly his own, namely, his thoughts and his intellect. But this love, far from rendering him happy, torments him, because being evidently disproportioned to its object, and ceaselessly requiring fresh nutriment, which it rarely obtains, and which never satisfies it, it constrains man to confess to himself his profound indigence, and in spite of his unwillingness, forces him to dwell in the painful feeling of his imperfection. The desire of glory, of office, of honours, the passion for study, the love of riches, when it has not physical enjoyment for its ulterior object, the transports and delicate susceptibilities of sentiment, even the purely moral virtues, are only, if I may so express it, the efforts of pride to set aside this painful feeling. It strives to supply the place of absolute perfection by a relative superiority. Led away by this vain hope, man labours to raise himself above his fellows, in power, in renown, in science, or in riches, and there is no advantage, however trifling, or even physical, from which vanity does not seek to extract some enjoyment.

But were anyone to possess all these advantages together, it would never be other than the possession of weak and imperfect man, and the heart would not be slow to ask for other goods. *I have been all*, said the Emperor Severus, who had reached from the lowest ranks of the army to the throne of the Cæsars, *I have been all, and I have seen that all avails nothing*.<sup>1</sup> That is the speech which concludes thirty years of labour and successful ambition. Go over the other fields of glory, question the philosophers and the favourites of the muses, from Homer and Pliny the elder, to Voltaire and Diderot, you will hear only bitter complaints, and cries of woe. Like those gods of paganism eaten into by worms upon their altars, so weariness, care, and disgust, secretly gnaw those proud souls, whose felicity is envied by the silly herd.

So also with other conditions ; for pride is everywhere. The populace and the great, the learned and the ignorant, all

<sup>1</sup> *Omnia fui, et nihil expedit.*

weary themselves in order to be admired, and to raise themselves in the minds of others, and in their own imagination. Almost all the vain occupations of men have no other object than this ; and it is solely to increase his own idea of himself, that the one ravages the earth, and that the other passes his life in studying its products ; that the one shuts himself up in his study to write a book, and that another goes and gets killed a thousand leagues from home for a bit of ribband, which by exalting him in his self-esteem, will, he fancies, distract him from the importunate recollection of his nothingness and his misery. Our opinions, and even our most frivolous amusements have no other motive. We eagerly seek therein for some feeling or other of superiority, which may hide from us that of our real imperfection ; and our pride is at once so disordered, and so indigent, that there is nothing which will not serve to nourish it : the hazard of a die, the favourable chances of a card, and horrible to contemplate, even the separation from God, and the loss of all hope.

That is what we come to, when, attempting to seek for our good within ourselves, we flatter ourselves with the hope of finding it in the sorry contemplation of our own excellence. And as all is excess and disorder there where no rule or truth exists, this kind of intellectual worship or adoration which man renders to himself, leads him to an excessive contempt of himself. Wearied of a labour without result, he lowers himself as much as he had wished to raise himself. He disdains his intellect, and degrades it so far as to prefer to it the instinct of the brutes. He reproaches it with having deceived him with mendacious promises, and seeking thenceforth a well-being independent of the soul, he loves himself in what he possesses that is most blind, namely, his sensations, according to the profound remark of St Paul : ‘ Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Tenebris obscuratum habentes intellectum, alienati a vita Dei, per ignorantiam quæ est in illis, propter cæcitatem cordis ipsorum, qui desperantes, semetipsos tradiderunt impudicitiae in operationem immunditiae omnis. Ep. ad Ephes. iv, 18, 19.*

But the disproportion between love and its object, between faculties and desires, being much greater in this case, man is never so wretched as when he allows himself to fall under the dominion of his senses. The whole moral being is then in a state of suffering, and the brief intoxication of pleasure is at once followed by disturbance, by gnawing remorse, and long and painful torture.

I have said it already, physical enjoyments, when man seeks them on their own account, and trusts to them for his happiness, destroy the intellect, love, and even the body; because by requiring from the organs infinite happiness, or infinite action, man upsets the fundamental laws of his being, and shatters the feeble instrument which was given to him for another end.

The materialist philosophers, who see in man nothing but his senses, all show an insurmountable aversion to chastity; and this alone would prove how false and pernicious their doctrines are, even when taken into consideration only with respect to the present life. For, before being a moral duty, chastity is a law of preservation which nature imposes on all living beings; and if it is indeed a duty for the moral being, it is partly because it is a law for the physical being. Excepting a few brief moments intended for reproduction, the animals are chaste by instinct, without which the species would have perished long since. When the union of the sexes has pleasure for its end, the desired pleasure sought for as an end, directly opposes the intentions of nature in that union, and even tends to create a disinclination between the two sexes, by introducing infamous customs, too common among the ancients, and which were justified, and recommended even by the philosophers. 'Oh, the vile and abject creature man is, if he does not feel himself raised up by somewhat celestial!'<sup>1</sup>

If ever so little has been preserved, I do not say of conscience, of taste for virtue, or of self respect, but of foresight and reason, it is incomprehensible that anyone should so deceive himself as to place happiness in a brutal passion, which leads sooner or later to the last excess of misery and

<sup>1</sup> Montaigne.

degradation. Let impetuous youth, whilst contemplating the dreadful consequences of disorder of the senses, learn to repress fatal inclinations, ever easily mastered by a strong will.

The first, the inevitable effect of voluptuous habits is to fetter the powers of the soul, and to exclude from it all other thoughts than those concerning the vile pleasures of which it has made itself the slave. Occupied by desires ceaselessly renewing themselves, besieged by impure images, the mind loses its vigour and fecundity. Everything deteriorates and wanes; memory fades, the character grows weak, the heart dries up. It becomes no longer possible to love, to feel compassion, or to be moved to shed precious tears. The countenance even puts on a hard and repulsive expression. Features blunted and deadened announce that the source of soft sentiments, of pure emotions, of innocent joys is dried up. It might be said that life had wholly betaken itself to the organs. But the organs themselves soon becoming exhausted, infirmities, maladies, and sufferings, hasten in crowds. I have seen, and the recollection of it will be ever present to me, I have seen some of those unhappy victims of devouring passion, offering at the flower of their age the disgusting appearance of complete decrepitude; with denuded forehead, sallow and hollow cheeks, the look full of dull sadness, the body tottering and as if bent under the weight of vice, having spent their all of life, of thought, of love, already hideously falling into decomposition; at the sight of them it seemed that the footsteps of the grave-digger might be heard, hastening to come and carry away the corpse.

To what a point, however, can philosophy degrade man, and how well it justifies by its effect what it has not blushed to advance as an indisputable principle, namely, that between man and the animals *there is no real difference but the clothing!*<sup>1</sup> But this is still putting him too high, and to be consistent, it should place man lower than the animals, since these more fortunate after all than man, are not like him tormented by useless desires, but obey unchanging laws

<sup>1</sup> Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron, tom. ii, page 140.

which preserve them and lead them to the perfection which belongs to them. Oh men, who speak with such pride of your dignity and grandeur, come down from the throne which you raise to yourselves in thought, come down, philosophy bids you do so : come and take rank behind the unreasoning animals, more enlightened, more noble than you ; and satiate, with the impure enjoyments which they abandon to you without regret, your desires turned aside from God !

The two positive systems of happiness, the one founded on pride, the other on pleasure, may be combined and modified to infinity, according to the character, the temperament, the prejudices, and position of each individual ; and it may be observed as a fresh proof of the necessary influence of doctrines over actions, that the philosophers do not vary less in their rules of conduct than in their speculative principles, and there is constantly an exact relation between these principles and these rules. And whilst the most general principle of philosophy, is, that there exists no principle perfectly certain, nor any truth absolutely indisputable, its most general rule of conduct is, that there does not exist any rule certainly true, or absolutely obligatory ; so that everything being arbitrary, and truth itself being no longer the eternally subsisting object of the intellect, but an operation, an abstract production of the mind, and so to say, an individual property, the individual wills take the place of the unchanging laws of order ; and man independent of all, isolated from his fellows, isolated from his author, king of the nothingness which he has created around himself, remains free to believe, to love and act as he pleases.

But do what he may, he could not change the nature of things, nor find peace within the bosom of disorder. The sole duty, they say, is to make oneself happy ; and on the contrary the sole happiness is to bind oneself to the rigid practice of duty. Let all the enjoyments be assembled together, let them be diversified, and multiplied without end, their emptiness and insufficiency will not be slow to make itself felt. Incapable of satisfying the hunger of the heart, these fruits of earth though alluring without, all conceal a secret and corroding bitterness. Pleasures, even the affections

wear out, sadly and very fast; it is well known what lamentable complaints were torn from the great Bossuet by the inconstancy of our fugitive friendships, *which leave us along with years and interests*. It is the same with the eagerness which leads us towards the sciences, as also with those sweet dreams, those charming illusions in which we wrap ourselves in our young years. Everything passes and leaves behind it only disgust, anxiety, and *that inexorable weariness which is at the bottom of human life*.<sup>1</sup> It is that everything that we have not yet tried, everything that is unknown to us, becomes a sort of infinite which the soul seizes on eagerly, as on an object in proportion to the extent of its desires. But when it soon comes to perceive its error, when it has discovered the limits and felt the nothingness of the object which charmed it, then the enchantment ceases, it falls into profound despondency thrusting away even hope, it feeds on its own anguish with sad complacency, and seeks a semblance of repose in the stupor which follows after long sufferings. Vain resource; the malady goes on increasing, arrived at its last term, it leads those unfortunates that are afflicted with it to an execrable crime, the only one without remission, because it is the only crime without repentance. Dismissed far from the source of truth and love, they deliver themselves from an existence become intolerable to them; and the soul deprived of all good, attempts to bury itself under the ruins of the body, as a king stripped of his possessions buries himself under the ruins of his palace.

And it must not be imagined that by skilfully graduating and varying enjoyments, by perpetually flitting from one to another, anyone could prevent distaste, or fully satisfy his desires. For besides that no one could avoid the unnumbered evils attached to the present life, such as sickness, vexation, the infirmities of age, the loss of friends, and relations, injustice and ingratitude; besides that the advantages of condition, of mind, of body, of fortune are in nowise at the bidding of the will, there exists, between the good things here below, and the needs of our heart. a disproportion which no art could do

<sup>1</sup> Bossuet



away with. And moreover, if these good things were as real as they are empty, they would not be any the more fitted, supposing that all ended for us with death, to procure for us the happiness to which we aspire. Finite beings, and from that moment limited by nature, incapable of at once embracing all the truths which we would know, all the perfections which we would love, it is only by an endless series of successive acts that we can attain to the end to which we are tending, and arrive at the end for which we are made: from which it follows that a duration without limit being necessary for the accomplishment of our desires, or the development of our faculties, philosophy, which announces only annihilation to man, is as contrary to his nature, as Religion is in conformity to it, which promises him immortality, and certainly, if ever there was a cruel and despairing doctrine, it is that which tells men, condemned, for the most part, to hard and continuous labour, to indigence, to privations, to abasement, to griefs of all kinds; suffer and die, such is your lot, do not hope for any other.

Rousseau, in spite of his aberrations, at least had ever a horror of this desolating philosophy. 'I tremble,' he wrote to a disciple of Diderot, 'I tremble at seeing you darken religion in your writings. Dear Deleyre, be on your guard against your spirit of satire. Above all learn to respect religion; humanity alone requires that respect. The great, the rich, the successful in their century, would be delighted if there were no God; but the expectation of another life consoles the poor and the wretched for this one. What a cruelty to take also from them this hope.'

For that matter, we have seen what it is at bottom, this fancied happiness of the great, the rich, the successful in their century. It resembles at a distance those magic palaces which seem to rise on the horizon of the seas which bathe the shores of Naples; draw near, and what do you find? stagnant vapours, and clouds charged with storms.

And let it not be forgotten that the value of good things does not depend only on their nature, but on their duration.

<sup>1</sup> Œuvres de Rousseau, édition de Paris, 1788, tom. xxxi, p. 202.

There is little enjoyment in that which escapes or may escape every moment ; thence that distant looking forward, by which man in imagination prolongs his existence into an undefined future. Philosophy itself, astonished at the desire of all men to perpetuate their being, and despairing of overcoming it has thought itself obliged in deference to so general a weakness, to promise us an immortality<sup>1</sup> here below, dismissing, however, to future centuries the execution of its consoling promises.

Meantime the universal law is carried out. Time which nothing stops, brings to each his last hour ; the atheist is told that he must die. At that moment what is passing within him ? I will admit, which is almost impossible, that he has stifled remorse, and that no doubt alarms his incredulity : is he on that account free from terror and anguish ? Question whomsoever has seen upon his death-bed, the atheist, not in the grasp of one of those maladies whose effect is to suspend the functions of the soul, but still in the full enjoyment of his moral faculties, and knowing that he is going soon to expire. The lively image of what he loses fills the whole mind of the dying man. He had attachments, habits, he clung to life by a thousand bonds which are broken all at once : a frightful rupture, which suddenly separating the soul from all that was dear to it, leaves it alone and wounded in an infinite void. That bottomless abyss into which it is about to descend, that mournful solitude, that eternal silence, that icy sleep, that night which shall have no dawn, that deprivation of all good, along with an unconquerable desire for well-being, all these ideas, and a mass of others no less distressing, weigh upon that wretched soul, and tear and upset it, and commence its dreadful torture. But what is to be said of its condition, if it have retained ever so little doubt as to the principles which it

<sup>1</sup> See the work of Condorcet entitled : 'Esquisse d'un Tableau historique des Progrès de l'Esprit humain.' He there develops the famous system of the indefinite perfectibility of man ; and in announcing to future generations, when there should no longer be kings or priests, virtues and enlightenment, *and a happiness of which no idea can be formed*, he promises to man the *indefinite* prolongation of his life here below. In the midst of these follies it is consoling to Faith to see an atheistical philosophy constrained to own that the happiness of beings is in their perfection, and that man is called to an *infinite* perfection, which he could only attain to by the aid of an *indefinite* lapse of time. This one principle, well understood, must lead towards religion every unbeliever who reasons.

had laid down for itself? How shall we paint its anxieties, its regrets half suffocated by despair, and that look of consternation which meets on all sides only a past without consolation, and a future without hope? It is then no longer annihilation that it dreads; it calls for it, on the contrary, with the most fervent wishes, and calls for it in vain: Eternity alone gives an answer. Let us draw the curtain on the rest of this awful scene, and leave to hell its secrets.

Yet it must be said to the glory of the faith, there are few cases of incredulity which death does not shake. In whatever manner men may have lived, they wish at least to die in the arms of Religion, and in the bosom of its hopes; reason, until then wavering, becomes decided on the approach of eternity, whose formidable gleams, dissipating all illusions, double the splendour of truth, which a long and fatal habit of unbelief, joined to unmeasured pride, can then alone refuse to recognise, and that by an awful permission of God, which is the commencement of his punishments.<sup>1</sup> The sceptic Bayle himself makes the same remark: 'Almost all who live in irreligion do nothing but doubt: they do not arrive at certainty. When they find themselves upon the sick bed, where irreligion is of no more use to them, they take the safest side, that which promises eternal happiness, in case of its being true, and which causes no risk to be run in case it were false.'<sup>2</sup> Vanity then gives way before a higher interest. 'If they are mad enough,' says Montaigne, 'they are not strong enough; they will not fail to join their hands towards heaven, if you accommodate them with a sword-thrust in the breast; and when illness shall have weighed down the licentious fervour of their fickle imaginations, they will not fail to return, and to allow

<sup>1</sup> A long list might be made of unbelievers who at the moment of death have rendered homage to religion. I will only quote a few of those whose names are most known: Boulanger, Toussaint, Boulainvilliers, the Marquis d'Argens, Montesquieu, Maupertuis, Buffon, Dumarsais, Fontenelle, Damilaville, Thomas, Bouguer, de Langle, Tressan, Mercier, Palissot, Soulavie, Larcher. Diderot wished to confess himself, but the means were taken from him. *Without me*, said Condorcet, speaking of d'Alembert, *without me he would have ducked*. It seems that precautions were taken equally against the weakness of Voltaire, who died, according to Tronchin, in convulsions of rage, crying out this sinister exclamation: '*I am abandoned by God and men.*' Jean Jacques, according to all probability, put an end to his own life. He had written in favour of suicide, he had written against it, and he ended by giving it the authority of his example.

<sup>2</sup> Dictionnaire Critique, art. Bion.

themselves to be discreetly brought back to the public example and belief. One thing is a dogma seriously digested, and another thing, are those superficial impressions, which sprung from the licentiousness of an unsettled mind, rashly and without certainty; float upon fancy; those men are very wretched and crazed who try to be worse than they can be.'

It is, however, but too true, that by dint of labour and perseverance, a man may arrive at perverting his reason sufficiently to make it almost impossible to return to religion upon his death-bed. Doubt, at first voluntary, grows rooted in the soul, grows there and gets strong, and cannot again be plucked out without enduring effort. Then there is no greater prodigy of divine power than sudden conversions: to bring them about nothing less is wanted than a suspension of the laws of moral nature. Not to believe when belief is desired, and its need and advantages are felt, is the punishment of having disbelieved through a criminal resistance of the will, when reason was drawing us with its whole weight towards manifest truth. The perverted understanding refusing itself to all conviction, absolute scepticism is the only doctrine remaining.<sup>1</sup>

'That is what man can do of himself, and by his own efforts, with regard to truth and good. We have a powerlessness of proof invincible by all dogmatism. We

<sup>1</sup> The example of this which I am going to quote is so striking, that alone it would dispense from further proof. The celebrated doctor Barthez being near his end [he died in 1806], a very respectable person, who was intimate with him, went to see him, in the hope of inducing him to accept the consolations of religion, which his position must have made so desirable to him. This person found him such as he had expected to find him, sad, morose, and anxious. His disturbed feelings and anguish, which he in vain attempted to dissemble, disclosed themselves each moment. Touched by his sufferings, his friend speaks to him of religion, alone capable of alleviating them. But doubt had for too long a time taken possession of that soul for any belief to be able thenceforward to enter in. 'Believe!' said Barthez, 'only fools believe in anything.' 'And matter, and bodies?' 'I do not know what they are, or what is meant by that—and conscience? It is the fruit of prejudices: if others had been instilled into me in my childhood, it would believe that to be good which it believes to be evil, and would now cause me no anxiety.' 'What! is nothing then certain? For instance, is it not better not to assassinate one's father than to assassinate him?' 'Sir,' replied the sick man, 'to speak to you openly, I do not see in good philosophy upon what principle to lean to decide that question: I know nothing about it.' 'Mathematics, however, have they no more any certainty in your eyes?' 'I see in mathematics a succession of consequences perfectly connected; but as to their base, I do not know what it is.' 'Are you then assured of having nothing to fear?' 'I do not know anything about it.' A few days later Barthez was no more.

have an idea of the truth unconquerable by the whole of pyrrhonism. We desire truth and find only uncertainty in ourselves. We seek for happiness, and only find wretchedness. We are incapable of not desiring truth and happiness, and we are incapable of truth and happiness. . . . The will never takes any step except towards that object. It is the motive of all the actions of all men, even of those who kill themselves, and hang themselves. And yet since so many years, never anyone, without faith, has arrived at that point to which all tend continually. All complain, princes, subjects, nobles, common people, old and young, strong and weak, learned and ignorant, healthy and sick, men of all countries, times, age, and condition.

‘So long, so continuous, and so uniform a trial ought fully to convince us of the impossibility in which we are of arriving at good by our own efforts. But experience does not teach us. . . . man being fallen from his natural state, there is nothing to which he has not been capable of betaking himself. Since he has lost the true good, everything may equally appear to him as such, even his own destruction, however contrary that is both to reason and nature. Manifestly wandering from the right way, he feels in himself the remains of a happy condition from which he has fallen, and which he cannot find again. He seeks for it everywhere, anxiously and without success, amidst impenetrable obscurity.’<sup>1</sup>

It must needs be, then, that man should seek happiness and that he should seek for it, either in God, or within himself, and the objects which surround him. If docile to the teaching of religion, he sees in God his real good, then virtue, which is but the love of order, or the preference of others before oneself for the sake of God, becomes identified to him with the love of well-being.

But if he should seek for happiness within himself, being obliged to place it either in the intellect or in the body, he infallibly becomes the slave of pride or of pleasure; for pride is but the feeling of a soul which takes pleasure in itself, and loves itself as its sole object. The most extreme selfishness is then the inevitable effect of all irreligious philosophy: all

<sup>1</sup> *Pensées de Pascal*, ch. xxi.

irreligious philosophy is therefore, from its essence, destructive of order and virtue ; and in like manner that irreligion leads to all the vices, the habit of vice leads to irreligion, because it is in nature that man should try to persuade himself that happiness is there, where it is sought, and when disorder has gained possession of the affections, the will itself puts disorder into the thoughts, in order to terminate the painful strife between reason and the inclinations. Certainly whoever having believed ceases to believe, yields to a motive of pride or voluptuousness, and on this point I appeal fearlessly to the conscience of all unbelievers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This double character of pride and pleasure appears in a striking manner, in the doctrines, in the works, in the conduct, and even in the haughty, arrogant, positive, and bitterly disdainful tone of the philosophers of all ages, so well named by St Jerome *vain glorious brutes*. A mild and humble-hearted philosopher, and a chaste philosopher, would indeed be a most inexplicable moral phenomenon ; but no one will ever be at the difficulty of explaining it ; faith begins where pride ends. The authority of Rousseau being here of great weight, I will support these observations both with his admissions and his example. 'If the philosophers,' says he, 'were in a condition to discover the truth, who amongst them would take interest in it ? Each one well knows that his system is no better founded than the others ; but he supports it because it is his. There is not one of them who happening to become acquainted with the true and the false, would not prefer the lie which he had found to the truth discovered by another. Where is the philosopher, who for his own glory would not willingly deceive the human race ? Where is he, who, in the secret of his heart, proposes to himself any other object than to distinguish himself ? Provided that he raise himself above the herd, provided that he eclipse the glitter of his rivals, what more does he ask ? The essential is to think otherwise than the others. Amongst believers he is atheistical ; amongst the atheists he would be a believer.' (Emile, tom. iii, p. 30.) Seneca does not hesitate to place his imaginary sage above God. Horace asks of the divinity only health and riches ; apart from that he will very well be able of himself to attain to moral perfection: *Det vitam, det opes, æquum mihi met animum ipse parabo* ; and he gives a proof of it in licentious poetry. The morals of the Greek philosophers, not excepting the gravest, are well known ; and if their pride were doubted, let Lucian be referred to, who ridicules it with so much wit, and who, a philosopher himself, laughs at everything, according to the favourite maxim of d'Alembert, and pushes immorality to the last degree of cynicism. We possess but a few fragments of the monuments of antiquity, but what remains is enough to justify the observation of Montaigne : 'In all departments of antient philosophy, this will be found, that in them one same workman publishes rules of temperance, and at the same time publishes writings on love and debauchery.' (*Essais*, liv. iii, chap. 9.) Let us pass on for brevity to the modern philosophers. The sceptic Bayle abounds in disgusting obscenities. Helvetius, no less licentious, over and above, makes, like Mandeville, a direct apology for vice. Both have been surpassed by La Mettrie, who seems only to be at ease in the mire of the most dissolute maxims. Voltaire had arrived at such an incomprehensible excess of pride, as to be jealous of God Himself. 'Do you think,' he said, and it pains me to repeat his sacrilegious words, 'Do you think that Jesus Christ had more wit than I ?' This same man, besides a mass of tales and filthy pamphlets, wrote an infamous poem, which Condorcet justifies, praises, and eulogises, exclaiming against the affectation of austerity in morals, and against the excessive value attached to purity. (Life of Voltaire.) The author of the *Histoire des Etabl. des Europ. dans les deux Indes* complains no less

'Oh my child!' exclaims the author of *Emile*, 'after having established the consolatory dogmas of the existence of God, and a future state, may you one day feel what a weight is removed, when, after having exhausted the vanity of human opinions, and tasted the bitterness of the passions, a man finds at length near to him, the path of wisdom, the prize for the labours of this life, and the source of that happiness which had been despaired of. All the duties of the law of Nature, almost effaced from my heart by the injustice of men, are again traced there in the name of eternal justice, which imposes them on me, and which sees me fulfil them. I no longer feel in myself aught but the work and instrument of the Great Being, who wills good, and does it, and who will do mine, by the concurrence of my will with His, and by the good use of my freedom: I acquiesce in the order which He establishes, certain some day of enjoying that order myself, and of finding in it my happiness; for what happiness is sweeter than to feel oneself ordained in a system in which all is good? Whilst suffering from pain, I endure it with patience, reflecting that it passes away, and that it comes from a body which is not mine. If I do a good action without a witness, I know that it is seen, and

bitterly of the importance which we have attached to licentiousness, that fault so pardonable in itself, so indifferent from its nature, so little a matter of choice from its attractions. (Livre xix.) Diderot decisively rejects the distinction between good and evil, vice and virtue. 'It seems to me,' he says, 'that if up to this day silence had been kept as to morals, we should have yet to learn what virtue is and what vice.' (*Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron*, tom. ii, p. 84.) 'To reproach others for nothing, and to repent of nothing: that,' he wrote to a friend, 'is the first step towards wisdom.' (Letter to M. L.—, correspondence of Grimm and Diderot, tom. ii, p. 62). It would be difficult to put crime more at its ease, joining practice to theory, this patriarch of modern atheists, whom the very name of God excited to rage, used to consecrate part of his leisure to giving in obscene novels, infamous lessons of debauchery to his contemporaries and to future generations. Everyone knows that Rousseau was in reality mad with pride. To take him at his word statues should have been erected to him. (*Letter to M. de Beaumont*.) And in the very book, in which with shameless cynicism, he discloses the numerous base acts of a dishonourable life, summoning all men before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge, he defies any one of them to dare to say: '*I was better than that man*.' (*Confess.* liv. i.) This phrase, placed at the head of the book in which Providence seems to have compelled Rousseau to set down his shame, and to brand himself with his own hand, is the sublimity of pride. After having quoted the masters, it would be superfluous to speak of the disciples, and to spread out a mournful list of odious or despised names, from the hideously immoral author of the *Guerre des Dieux*, down to that grotesque astronomer, who possessed he said, *all the virtues*. What good besides is there in exhuming from the cemetery of oblivion, those corrupt and rotten names; and who could bring himself to stir up that mire?

I make a note for the other life of my conduct in this one. When suffering from injustice, I say to myself: the Just Being who rules everything will know how to indemnify me; the wants of my body, the wretchedness of my life, make the idea of death more endurable to me. There will be so many the less bonds to break, when everything must be left behind.<sup>1</sup> That which it behoves man is to fulfil his duties on earth, and it is in forgetting himself that a man labours for himself. My child, private interest misleads us; there is only the hope of the just which does not deceive.<sup>2</sup>

It has been seen, that philosophy itself in its moments of good faith, warns us, that even here below there is no happiness out of the pale of Religion, because apart from it there is neither certainty nor hope. 'If I wish,' says Maupertuis 'to instruct myself as to the nature of God, my own nature, the origin of the world, and its object, my reason is confounded. In this profound darkness, if I should meet with the system which is the only one which can fulfil the desire of happiness which I feel, must I not on that account recognise it as the true one? Must I not believe that that which would 'lead me to happiness is that which could not deceive me?'<sup>3</sup> But man depraved by pride, is so strangely his own enemy, that he takes an aversion to the only doctrine which gives a value to his existence; he would look upon it as a triumph to establish upon the ruins of that heavenly doctrine, errors equally absurd and destructive, and if he could, even at the expense of his own reason, he would feel a desperate kind of joy in ensuring for himself misery without remedy and without end. And that is why it was necessary that Christianity should humiliate, should crush human pride, in order to reconcile man to happiness. 'If any man,' says an apostle . . . 'consent not to wholesome words . . . of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 119.      <sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> Essai de Philosophie Morale.



disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth,'<sup>1</sup> because they are destitute of God.

All truth, indeed, emanates from God, who is the Infinite truth, and 'where God is not, there exists no truth,' says Tertullian.<sup>2</sup> God is not in the intelligence of the atheist; and the atheist if he is consistent, rejects all truths, even those that are physical, and falls into a universal pyrrhonism. God exists only imperfectly in the intelligence of the deist; and the deist, in his indecision, possesses only imperfect truths, obscure, drifting before the wind of opinion, and constantly carried away by the torrent of doubt.

And yet there is no happiness but in the possession of the infinite truth, or the infinite good; for good and truth are but the same thing: therefore no happiness but in the possession of God; 'And eternal life,' say the Scriptures, 'is to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.'<sup>3</sup>

God is the supreme good of man: therefore atheism, which by rejecting God, separates man from infinite truth and from all truth, is but the absolute privation of all good, or supreme evil.

Deism, which admits God without knowing Him, since it rejects Jesus Christ or the mediator through whom alone we can know God; deism, which, refusing to acknowledge the necessary relations which unite man to God, and to other men, establishes arbitrary relations, or does not establish any; deism, which offers to the mind only probabilities without certainty; deism, merely an opinion, leaves man absolute master of his thoughts, of his love, of his actions, and independent of all law of truth and justice; a state against nature, a state of disorder, and the most wretched after atheism, to which it leads.

If happiness be not then an empty delusion, if our desires

<sup>1</sup> Si quis . . . non acquiescit sanis sermonibus Domini nostri Jesu-Christi, et ei quæ secundum pietatem est doctrinæ, superbus est, nihil sciens, sed languens circa quæstiones et pugnas verborum, ex quibus oriuntur invidiæ, contentiones, blasphemiæ, suspiciones malæ, conlictationes hominum mente corruptorum, et qui veritate privati sunt. Ep. i, ad Tim. cap. vi, 3, 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ubi Deus non est, nec veritas ulla est. De præscrip. adv. hæretic cap. xliiii.

<sup>3</sup> Hæc est autem vita æterna, ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum, et quem misisti Jesum-Christum. John. cap. xvii, 3.

are not deceptive, if we did not at our birth receive faculties without an object, if our existence has an object, an end, like that of all other beings, we evidently cannot arrive at that end except through religion, which alone dares affirm that it will inform us with certainty of our nature, our origin, our destinies, and which alone promises us the possession of supreme truth and supreme good. And certainly, previously to all examination, after having fruitlessly exhausted philosophical systems great joy must be felt at learning that hope yet remains to us.

In religion all is infinite, because all in it is full of God. There is then a perfect harmony between it and our faculties; and that is why in all times, and all climates, man naturally drawn towards it, has felt the need of being enlightened by its dogmas, consoled and revived by its hopes, and guided by its precepts: and the more religion is pure, holy, and, so to say, rigid as to truth and justice, so much the more has it power over man, or conformity to his nature; and search need not be made elsewhere for the cause of the inclination towards Christianity shown by all nations, as soon as it is announced to them. We do not cease to be touched by this divine harmony, until pride or the senses leading us far astray, corrupt and deprave our nature, as St Augustin observes from his own experience. 'Reflecting within myself' he says, 'on the supreme order and beauty, I attempted in vain, oh delightful truth, to raise myself up to thee, in order to rejoice in thy inward entrancing melody. Surrounded by material phantoms, the voice of error dragged me outwards, and I went on sinking under the weight of pride in a bottomless abyss.'

Man wishes to enjoy the truth, he desires an unmeasured enjoyment of it; he is never satiated with learning and loving. Yet our mind, abandoned to itself, gets weary and dazzled, and loses itself in its own thoughts. It embraces nothing in its whole extent, it seizes upon nothing with a sufficiently firm grasp, to be assured that doubt will not come to snatch it away. Who will unravel this contradiction? Who will give back rest to man by restoring the balance

<sup>1</sup> Confess. lib. iv, cap. iv, No 4.

between his faculties and desires? Philosophy attempts to do so, and how? At one time by telling man that his intellect can attain to everything by its own strength: at another time by persuading him that it can attain to nothing, and by interdicting him to make use of it; that is to say by making of him either a god or a brute, by denying his nature without being able however to annihilate it.

Oh how differently from this does religion set about to resolve this great problem. It commences by opening eternity before us, of which time is only the porch of entrance, and shows to us in its depths, something like an infinite succession of steps, by which our intellect ever rising, must ever draw nearer, by aid of an unlimited duration of time, to the ineffable source of eternal truth.<sup>1</sup> And it already bestows this infinite truth, it yields it to our soul of which it is the sustenance and the life; and our soul even here below possesses it entirely through faith, love, and hope: for hope, which is a transitory modification, relatively to our actual condition, of a natural and indestructible sentiment, is but an increasing love.

And the reason of the dogma may be seen, which makes of faith, hope, and love so many virtues, and parent virtues, or *divine* and infinite virtues. The law which commands to believe in the infinite truth, the sole means of possessing it perfectly here below, to hope for and to love infinite good, the sole means of fully enjoying it upon earth, is the essential law of order, and in consequence, the law of happiness. All other laws are derived from that, as action is derived from love; and without that fundamental law, the others are null, chimerical, and contradictory; morality is but a vain word, and there exists neither crime nor virtue.

Wonderful provision of religion! Whilst all philosophy, beginning with ignorance, requires that human reason, limited and uncertain, should build without any assistance the edifice of truth and happiness upon that ruinous foundation; Christianity, invested with divine authority, and proving it

<sup>1</sup> Nos vero omnes, revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes, in eadem imaginem transformamur, a claritate in claritatem, tanquam a Domini Spiritu. Ep. ii, ad Corinth. cap. iii, 18.

even to the senses by incontestable evidence, speaks to men with that confidence which perfect certainty inspires, and places in their minds at the first moment of their opening, the whole truth, in order that it may be their light, their good, their rule : and although all do not equally comprehend it, all equally possess it, and can love it equally. Faith effaces all intellectual differences, whether they be original, or whether they proceed from education, condition or other accidental circumstances ; and whilst it lends infinite strength to the child's own reason, because it establishes it in communion with the infinite reason, which is God, it fixes its decision irrevocably upon all the great questions which turn the heads of philosophers, and raises the child to a height from which in the happy calm of an unassailable conviction, it sees human wisdom anxiously agitating itself amidst desolating uncertainties and everlasting doubt. Thus, while all aspire to the same happiness, the same happiness is offered to all ; and what cannot be too much pointed out, happiness, men's ultimate object, is also their first duty, since love is the first precept and that all the others are derived from that one.<sup>1</sup>

Thenceforward man has nothing more to seek ; he knows his place in the order of beings ; he knows God, he knows, himself, and finds without effort, in contemplating unchangeable truth, the peace of intelligence and love. Informed of his duties as of his destiny, and tranquil as to the rest, he is ignorant of nothing that is needful or really useful for him to know. From thence a deep repose, an inexpressible well-being, independent of the sensations, and which nothing could disturb, because it has its source in the innermost depth of the soul, abandoned without reserve into the hands of the Great Being essentially good and almighty, who reveals and unites Himself, by ineffable means, to hearts docile to His impressions. Guided by a new light, and estimating all things at their true value, man ceases to be the sport of the passions. The unvarying rule of order determines and

<sup>1</sup> 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' Matt. xxii, 37-40

moderates his attachments and desires, and in the vicissitudes inseparable from this transitory life, he sees only brief trials, of which an immortal felicity will be the term and the recompense. Little affected by the base interests of this world, an inexhaustible abundance of pure and affectionate sentiments unites him to his fellow men, makes him compassionate their misfortunes, and leads him to relieve them with all the devotedness of a tender and unwearying charity : and in sacrificing himself for his brethren, it is still for himself that he makes a sacrifice : so close is the union which Christianity establishes between men ; so powerful is the sacred charm of pity ! If the duties of religion appear rigorous and hard to some, alas, it is that they do not know the unction which softens them ; it is that they have never tasted the consolations, the loveable attraction, and the delightful joys of virtue.

Some speak of pleasures : are there any to be compared with those which accompany innocence ? Is it nothing to be always satisfied with oneself and others ? Is it nothing to be free from repentance and remorse, or to find in repentance a certain asylum from remorse ? For even the tears of penitence have more sweetness than had the faults which caused them to flow. The heart of the true Christian is a continual rejoicing. He has more enjoyment from that which he refuses himself, than the unbeliever has from that which he allows himself. Happy in prosperity, more happy in sufferings, because they offer him a means of increasing the happiness which awaits him, he advances with quiet steps, through the plains of life, towards the mountain crowned by the *everlasting city*, heavenly abode of peace, of eternal delights, and of all good.

The foretaste alone of this peace fills the soul with inexhaustible felicity. Whoever does not know it has felt nothing ; he may know what pleasures are, but he is unacquainted with happiness. Yes, I maintain it. Yes, I maintain that the humble believer, praying in the simplicity of his heart, at the foot of a solitary altar, experiences feelings a thousand times more delightful than the most vivid enjoyments of the passions. Even the philosopher no sooner forgets the pride of his empty systems, and yields himself docilely to the attraction

of faith, but he immediately receives the reward promised to those that believe. One day Jean Jacques, and the author of 'Etudes de la Nature,' happening to come to Mont Valerien after a walk in the fields, entered the chapel of the Hermits. The Litany of Providence was at that moment being recited. Jean Jacques and his companion, moved by the calm of the spot, and seized with religious emotion, bowed down, and mingled their prayers with those of the congregation. The service ended, Rousseau rose, and with emotion said to his friend: 'Now I feel what is said in the Gospel: *When some of you shall come together in my name, there shall I be in the midst of you.* There is here a feeling of peace and happiness which penetrates the soul.'<sup>1</sup> Founded on an experience which never fails, let us then not fear to repeat with Montesquieu: 'Admirable fact! the Christian religion, which seems to have no object but the happiness of the next life, also makes our happiness in this one.'<sup>2</sup> Thus the words of the great Master are every day verified before our eyes: 'Whoever shall have left all for my sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, now in this time, and shall inherit eternal life.'<sup>3</sup>

The doctrines of philosophy wither and dry up life; they take away from man everything, except the feeling of his wretchedness, and lead him to the grave between anxiety and disgust. Moreover, when their first glitter has faded away how many unbelievers do we not see envying the happiness of the believers? Wasted with desires, consumed with dulness, tortured with their vain wisdom. 'Ah!' say they, 'if we could but believe!' They feel that faith would reanimate them, and reinvigorate their unnerved souls. The sight of the Christian confounds them with wonder. His habitual calm, his unalterable serenity, and that something pure and soft, which, emanating from the heart spreads itself over all the features, and gives them a heavenly expression, astonishes and enchants them, and draws from them involuntary sighs. And yet what do they perceive? a few outward signs, feeble indications of the sentiments hidden in the depths of the soul.

<sup>1</sup> See the *Etudes de la Nature*.

<sup>2</sup> *Esprit des Lois*, liv. xxiv, chap. iii.

<sup>3</sup> *Matt.* xix, 29; *Marc.* x, 30.

Ah! if they could penetrate to the sanctuary of the conscience, where virtue already receives its prize from the delightful contentment which she inspires; if they could once feel that perfect peace of the intellect satiated with the infinite truth which faith puts it in possession of; that divine hope, in which all earthly desires come to extinguish themselves, and which ceaselessly precipitates itself into the depths of eternity; that delightful love with which the soul quenches its thirst with long draughts; that intimate, indescribable enjoyment of the Deity Himself, communing, if I dare say so, familiarly with His creature, as a friend with a friend, in union with it, entirely possessed by it, to be its good, its joy, its incomprehensible sustenance: with what admiration would they not be at once transported; and with the regret of being deprived of these ineffable benefits, with what ardour and exhilaration would they not disembarass themselves from the swaddling clothes of a foolish reasoning, in order to arrive through faith, according to the expression of the Holy Books, *unto the measure of a perfect man*, or unto the perfect knowledge of God, in Jesus Christ his son.<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, death, so terrible to the unbeliever, fully satisfies the desires of the Christian. He desires it, like St Paul, so as *to be with Christ*,<sup>2</sup> he desires it in order to begin to live, in order *to be delivered from this body of death*,<sup>3</sup> from the material bonds which retain him upon earth, where the pure enjoyments which he tastes are but a slight shadow of the happiness which he anticipates. Did anyone ever see a Christian then give the same example as so many unbelievers, abjure his doctrine, and regret having believed? Ah! it is especially at that moment that he knows all its value, that the consoling truth shines before his eyes with all its splendour. Death is the last ray of light that throws its glow upon him: a light so vivid that it renders almost imperceptible the passage of faith to the clear vision of its object. Hope waving its torch near the couch of the dying man, shows him heaven open to which love is calling him. The cross which he holds between his

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Ephes. chap. iv, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Desiderium habens dissolvi, et esse cum Christo. Ep. ad Philip., cap. i, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Infelix ego homo, quis me liberabit a corpore mortis hujus? Ep. ad Rom. cap. vii., 24.

feeble hands, which he presses to his lips, and to his heart, awakening in his mind recollections of mercy without number, fortify, touch, and animate him. Yet a moment and all will be completed, death will have been overcome, and the deep mystery of deliverance accomplished. A last giving way of nature announces that that moment has come. Religion then raises its voice, as with a last effort of affection: 'Go, it says, Christian soul, leave this world in the name of Almighty God who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, son of the living God, who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost whose inspiration thou hast received. Separating thyself from the body, may a free access be opened to thee to the mountain of Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels and the first-born of the Church, whose names are written in heaven. May God arise and disperse the powers of darkness; may all malignant spirits fly, nor dare to touch a sheep bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. May Christ who died for thee, crucified for thee, deliver thee from torments and eternal death; may that good shepherd recognise his sheep, and place it in the flock of his elect. Mayest thou eternally see thy Redeemer face to face; mayest thou for ever present before the truth disengaged from any veil, contemplate it without end, in the eternal ecstasy of happiness!'<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of these benedictions, the soul enchanted breaks through its obstacles,<sup>2</sup> and goes to receive the reward of its love and fidelity. Here man must be silent: his speech expires along with thought. No, 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.'<sup>3</sup> It is not like a sea which has its ebb and flow, it is the immense, ocean which overflows all its shores at once. Inexhaustible source of life and light,<sup>4</sup> 'Oh my God,' exclaims a prophet in Thy presence is the fulness of joy.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Commandat. animæ.*

<sup>2</sup> The pious and learned Father Suarez at the point of death said, '*I could never have thought that it was so sweet to die.*'

<sup>3</sup> Ep. i, ad Corinth. cap. ii, 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Apud te est fons vitæ, et in lumine tuo videbimus lumen.* Ps. xxv, 10

<sup>5</sup> *Satiabor eum apparuerit gloria tua.* Ps. xvi, 15



Let us conclude. It is very certain that philosophy far from making us happy, is incompatible with happiness, because instead of the infinite truth which our intellect longs for, it presents to it only errors, uncertainties, and doubts; and that, instead of the infinite good to which our heart aspires, it offers it only fugitive and deceptive pleasures incapable of satisfying it; and lastly, because while setting man free from all duties, it constitutes him in a state of disorder, and consequently retains him in a state of suffering,

It is no less certain that religion even here below makes the happiness of man, and will lead him, if its promises are not false to still greater happiness, and which will never end.

All men therefore have an unbounded interest in knowing whether religion is true, they must ardently desire that it may be true; and to remain indifferent in respect to this, is only to prove what moreover religion teaches us, that there is no folly so incomprehensible, no excess so criminal or so monstrous, but what man is capable of it since his fall.

Do you then who, led astray by fatal doctrines, still seek for happiness in the delusions of pride, or the enjoyments of the senses, suffer us to address to you these words of one of the greatest minds that Christianity has produced: 'Where God is, there is the truth: He is in the depth of your hearts, but your heart was gone far from Him. Return, look into yourselves, you will there find, do not doubt of it, Him who has created you. Whither are you running through those rugged and desolate places? Why pass and repass without ceasing through those rough and weary paths? Repose is not there where you are seeking for it. You seek a happy life; it is not there: how could a happy life be there where life itself does not exist.'<sup>1</sup>

He who thus speaks was misled like you; like you he a long time wandered, with inconceivable fatigue through the gloomy labyrinths of a false philosophy, and with the sweat of his brow he eat the bitter bread of error. But weary of sadly wandering away from truth, afar from God, he returned to Him, and tasted peace. Imitate his example, and you will

<sup>1</sup> August. Confess. liv. iv, ch. xii, Nos. 1, and 2.

gather the same fruit. It was after that he had known the good things of this world and those of heaven, that these touching words poured forth from his heart: 'Who shall unroll the folds of an empty and false wisdom? Who shall search to the bottom of those gloomy recesses where so many disgraceful secrets lie hid? I will not even look into them. It is you, it is you alone that I desire, oh justice, oh innocence, whom a pure and brilliant light surround, and who completely satisfy our insatiable desires. In you is to be found a deep repose, a life full of immense calm. He that enters into you, enters into the fulness of joy, and quenches his thirst deliciously at the very source of supreme good. Alas! in the days of my youth gliding on the slope of pleasures, I went rapidly away from thee, oh unchanging truth! and immediately wandering at hazard, I became to myself a region of penury and woe!<sup>1</sup> What other lot could I expect? Thou hast created us for Thyself, oh my God! and our heart is eternally agitated until it reposes in Thee.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> August. Confess. liv. ii, ch. x.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, liv. i, ch. i, No. 1.

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## CHAPTER X

### Importance of Religion with respect to Society.

IT surely will not be expected that I should stop to prove the political necessity of religion. Does a practical truth, as ancient as the world, cease to be indisputable, because after six thousand years of unanimous consent, it pleases a few madmen to oppose their paradoxes to the experience of centuries, and their assertions to the testimony of the human race? 'It would be easier to build a city in the air,' says the wise Plutarch, 'than to constitute a state whilst taking away the belief in the gods.'<sup>1</sup> But without for a moment raising a doubt as to the necessity of religious beliefs, the reason of that necessity may be sought for, and that is what I propose to do in this chapter, in which I shall try to show that philosophy, which destroys the happiness of man, and man himself, is equally destructive to the happiness of nations, and to the nations themselves; and that religion, which alone preserves man, and leads him to happiness, by establishing him in a condition in conformity to his nature, alone also preserves nations, and leads them to happiness, by placing them in a State in conformity to the nature of society.

One of the most dangerous follies of our age, is to imagine that a state can be constituted, or a society formed from one day to another, as a manufactory is erected. Men do not make societies; nature and time make them in concert; and

<sup>1</sup> Contra Coloten. Plut. Opera, p. 1125.

that is why it is so difficult for them to spring up again, when men have destroyed them, the same action which has destroyed being in opposition to the repairing action of time and nature. It is desired to create everything instantaneously, to create everything from imagination, and in a manner, to form society at a single casting after an ideal model, in the same way that a bronze statue is cast. In everything, the arbitrary combinations of the mind are substituted for the necessary relations, and the simple and fruitful laws which are established of themselves, when no obstacle is interposed, as the indispensable conditions of existence. When carried away by chimerical theories, men began to overthrow, they doubted of nothing, for they knew nothing; later they think that they know all, because there has been much action, much suffering, and because that after having dissected nations alive in order to look into their entrails for the mysteries of social organisation, science ought to be complete, and society perfectly well known. With this confidence, nothing puts a stop, nothing embarrasses; men constitute, and go on constituting; they write on a bit of paper that they are a monarchy, a republic, whilst waiting till they be something in reality, till they become a people, a nation. It is a problem as yet unresolved, to know how long a collection of human beings can exist in that state. But there is an unchangeable law against which nothing prevails. Every society which, having left the ways of nature, is obstinate in not returning to them, can only be renewed through dissolution, and only recovers its vigour by losing all, and often even the name of a nation. It must, like to man, go through the tomb in order to arrive a second time to life.

This is without exception; and it is sad to reflect that what is called *enlightenment*, that is to say contempt of good sense, and an unmeasured curiosity to know fully that which ought to be strongly believed, an arrogant desire of judging that which should be respected, infallibly produces this result. As religion and politics embrace the highest interests of men, they bring to them their passions in the first place, and later and with more danger their reason; for the passions always excited by that which exists, and stopping at that, of

themselves never effect great revolutions; whilst reason, passing suddenly from what exists to what it imagines ought to exist, and not finding in ideas the obstacle which the passions find in things, ruins the existing order of things from its base, and destroys everything by making everything distasteful. 'The art of overturning States,' Pascal so well says, 'is to shake the established customs, by probing them to their source, it is a certain way to ruin everything.'<sup>1</sup> Nothing resists reasoning, and society less than other things. And when a whole nation sets to disputing about the best form of government, it may with certainty be predicted that it will not long preserve its own government, supposing that it still has one.

Now, since there are societies more or less happy, peaceful societies, and agitated societies, stable societies, and others ceaselessly in motion, there exists a cause for this difference. Let us try to discover it, and for that purpose, let us lay down a few simple principles, some of those solid maxims rooted in centuries, and which common sense deduces in the first place from the observation of facts of which they are, so to say, but the abridged formula.

Every society tends to perfection, because every society tends to happiness; and happiness for society as for man, is but the *tranquillity of order*. Wherever there is disorder, there is discomfort, restlessness, and a struggle to arrive at a more perfect state. Suffering society seeks to place itself in its natural relations, and its having arrived at that point is known by the internal calm and profound peace which it enjoys. The Scripture also, which puts forward the highest truths under familiar images, in order to render them accessible to the weakest minds, in announcing to the Jewish people a felicity which should fully satisfy their desires, says: 'They shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid.'<sup>2</sup>

Repose, the result of order, is then the happiness of nations, and a society, in which should reign perfect order, would enjoy perfect repose; and this, perhaps, is the secret reason of that

<sup>1</sup> Pensées de Pascal, chap. xxv, No. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Et sedebit vir subtus vitem suam, et subtus ficum suam, et non erit qui deterreat. Mich. cap. iv, 4.

apparent indolence which imperfectly constituted nations cast against certain nations more advanced in true civilisation. But sooner or later there comes a time when the energy of those *lasy* nations being put to the test, teaches their surprised contemporaries to distinguish between the noble repose of strength, and the debasing languor of apathy.

Unity is the essence of order, for the object of order is to unite, and society itself, in its most general sense, is but the union of similar beings. Where there is not unity, there is separation, opposition, strife, disorder and unhappiness.

In order that there should be social unity, each part must be ordained with reference to the whole ; each individual with respect to the family, each family with respect to the particular society of which it is a member ; each particular society with respect to the great society of the human race ; and the human race itself with respect to the general society of intelligences, of which God is the Supreme Monarch.

The very idea of order is contradictory, if it is not carried back so far. For there is no social order without social hierarchy, without authority and without subjects, without the right of commanding and the duty of obeying. Now, between equal beings there naturally exist neither duties nor rights, neither subjects nor authorities, nor consequently any possible order ; and society never will be constituted only with men : man must first be in communion with God, so as to be able to enter into society with his fellow-men.

Neither is there any social order without the sacrificing of the interests of each to the interest of all : and this sacrifice has no reason, that is to say, it is absurd to ask it, impossible to obtain it when it is man that asks it of man, because he can offer nothing as compensation, and because this sacrifice, which is nothing else but virtue, would evidently be the most inconceivable folly, if there did not exist a more excellent and durable society in which it would receive its reward.

Since a society cannot even be imagined without authorities to govern and subjects to be governed, the authorities and the subjects are necessary beings, and there exist between them necessary relations. The expression of these relations is called a constitution.

The constitution is perfect, if it perfectly express the true relations, or the natural relations between subjects and the authorities; and society under its empire, enjoys strength, tranquillity, and happiness to the highest degree. It will on the contrary be agitated and distressed, if the constitution expresses arbitrary relations, or such as are not necessarily derived from the nature of social beings; for to establish arbitrary relations, is to constitute disorder and to sow calamities.

It is to be seen besides that there never existed a State without a constitution, since in every State there are authorities and subjects, or sociable persons connected by true or false relations. When, therefore, a nation talks of giving itself a constitution, it begins by supposing an absurdity, which is, that it has no constitution. It would not be a nation if it had none, it would be nothing. To give itself a constitution, is to change the constitution; it is not filling up a void, but creating one, which will not be so soon filled up; it is displacing the State from its base, and effecting a complete revolution, for the pleasure of making society recommence at hazard. This frenzy, however, only seizes upon nations towards their decline.

Between the divers societies there exist necessary relations, which collectively form what is called the law of nations; and societies are more or less tranquil, more or less happy, accordingly as this law is more or less in conformity to unchangeable order or the nature of the beings of which societies are composed.

Lastly, there exist necessary relations, both public and private, between the members of the same society. The laws are the expression of the public relations, or the rule of public actions; and the laws are more or less good, more or less perfect, accordingly as they express more or less perfect relations, that is to say, more or less natural, or more or less true.

Private actions, or the morals, ought also, and if possible more necessarily, to be ruled by laws, which, penetrating to the heart of man, establish order in his thoughts and affec-

tions ; for the affections and thoughts are the principle and motive power of all human actions.

Constitution, laws, morals, there then is the whole of society. A simple aggregation of men becomes a society, by constituting itself, that is to say, by the establishment of authorities, the necessary foundation of all order ; and even in the material universe there is order only because it is governed by an intelligent power.

The laws contained in the Law of nations, unite a rising society to all the other societies, or to the great society of the human race, and orders it with reference to the whole of which it is a part.

Civil and criminal laws, by regulating the public actions of members of a society between one another, establish public order.

Morals, or laws of morality, complete that which the other laws have begun, and put order into the most secret actions, and those most independent of human justice, by regulating the entire man, even his thoughts and desires.

A State is well-ordered, and society happy, when the constitution, laws, and morals, concurring with a perfect agreement to the same end, are the exact expression of the natural or necessary relations between sociable beings.

I call social truths, these true or necessary relations. The more then there is of truth in the constitution, laws, and morals of a nation, the greater is the happiness enjoyed by that nation : and happiness or social good, is but the truth carried into practice by the constitution, laws, and morals. Thus nations, like individuals, are only happy through the knowledge and love of truth, which is pre-eminently order and good, and through the practice of their duties, which form a portion of that truth.

Let us now examine into the influence of philosophy upon society, under the triple aspect of constitution, laws, and morals ; and in order to arrive at a result independent of all theory that might be disputed, let us limit ourselves to considerations applicable to all forms of government.

Wherever men exist, nature forms societies, and the state of society is not less natural to man than existence, since he



only preserves and perpetuates himself in the state of society. This is proved by the fact, and it is also proved, if I may so say, physically, by the long need which the child feels for the help of others, before it is capable of providing for its own preservation.

Thus society, of which family is the germ, is born and developed like man himself, and often in spite of man, whose imprudent action, thwarting nature under the arrogant pretence of perfecting or reforming it, retards or arrests the progress of growing society, and vitiates its constitution, as the errors of a false science or the passions vitiate that of individuals.

However, notwithstanding partial disorders, man subsists so long as he respects the fundamental laws of his being ; and society also subsists in spite of sometimes very grave disorders so long as the fundamental law of all society remains intact.

That law is the law of authority, a sacred, a divine law, and which man is so far from having invented, that he cannot even understand it, unless religion explain it to him.

This is what appears very clearly, when man, after having excluded God and put himself in His stead, attempts to constitute society with his reason alone, with that reason which by itself can only doubt and destroy.

Philosophy starts from this principle, that naturally each man is absolute master or sovereign of himself, that he owes nothing to anyone, and that nobody owes him anything. This being laid down, it had needs give as a basis to authority, either force, or a free agreement.

Rousseau proves very well that no right, no duty can result from force, which thus essentially differs from authority.<sup>1</sup> Force is the power to constrain, authority is the right to command. From the right of commanding results the duty of obeying ; from the power of constraining results the necessity of yielding. There is infinite space between these two ideas. In order to confound them, language itself must be upset ; it would needs be said that the wind which uproots an oak exercises a right, and that the oak in falling fulfils a duty.

<sup>1</sup> Contrat Social, liv. i.

Force, a physical power, maintains order in the material world, because it always acts according to certain unchangeable laws, wisely ordained by an infinite intelligence. Force brings disorder into the metaphysical world, because in the hands of free but imperfect agents, it often only serves to carry out imperfect or disordered wills. Moreover, to make of force the basis of social order, is to suppose that man is a purely material being, it is to reduce him below the animals, which know another law than force, since they resist it whilst obeying instinct. And yet it will be found that after a thorough sifting, philosophy has not been able to discover any other foundation of society, nor to give any other idea of authority.

It speaks to us with astonishing confidence of a primitive compact, by which in the interest of each, all deposit their sovereignty, or the exercise of their sovereignty, upon certain conditions, in the hands of one or several ; and this compact, if philosophy is to be believed, is the real base of social order. Now, if ever there was an absurd, fatal, and degrading doctrine, it is that one.

And in the first place no one ever saw a society begin with such a compact, and the reason of it is very simple ; it is that it pre-supposes a commencement at least of society, or an assemblage of a certain number of men having a language and dwelling place in common, and habitual relations ; things which would be impossible if there did not exist some order amongst them, consequently laws, and consequently an authority charged with their execution. Where besides would these men, who have been brought together by a stroke of the pen to deliberate upon common interests, take their ideas of government, if until then they had not possessed any ? They would not only be establishing, they would be inventing society. Strange idea that of making social order to proceed from a deliberation, not of savages, for savages are united by social bonds, but of human beings, collected by chance in the woods, where of necessity occupied with physical wants alone, they with difficulty fed themselves with a few acorns taken away by stealth from the voracity of the beasts.

And if it is said that this compact, whether explicit or not, exists by right, this is begging the question itself, and besides, it is an absurdity : for the express will of the contracting parties is the essence of every compact ; otherwise who should settle its conditions.

Every compact also essentially implies the idea of a sanction, which renders it obligatory. Where will this sanction be found, which is the necessary basis of the moral obligation, and without which no real contract exists ? The concurrence of wills, of which so much is made, is here of no assistance. The will of man is not obligatory for himself, how should it be so for another ? He that gives up his sovereignty, or the exercise of his sovereignty, in fact gives up nothing, since he can, and Rousseau admits it, take back again what he has given up as soon as he pleases. He that receives the sovereignty receives nothing but a temporary faculty, a physical power of ruling, which can be taken from him at any moment, and he is held by no condition, since he could not be bound either by the will of others, or even by his own. I do not see then that there results, from the supposed social contract, any duty, or any right, nor in consequence any real authority. I see only a displacement of force, which remains, as a last resource, the sole arbiter of society. If the nation has most force, it will overthrow the sovereign, as soon as it has the will to do so ; and the partisans of the sovereignty of the people all concede to it this right, which they could not refuse to it from their premises. If, on the contrary, force is on the side of the sovereign, he will render the bonds of the nation more burdensome, according to his caprice or his fears, as men tighten the chains of a wild beast from fear of being devoured by it.

Instead then of the tranquillity of order, the supposed compact only establishes a conflict of arbitrary wills, and by destroying the notion of right and duty, or the principle of obedience, it constitutes a state of war between the authorities and subjects. When the force of the sovereign prevails, there is despotism ; when force is on the side of the people, there is anarchy : and sooner or later one of the two must prevail. Any struggle of which government is the object is too violent to last long ; and whilst it lasts, the State is a prey to all the

evils that can press upon a nation. This it is that makes a despotism so much preferable to anarchy ; for anarchy is but the clash of all the separate forces, of which each tries to avail himself ; and until one of them prevail, disorder is at its height, and the sole law is destruction. In this terrible combat of each against all, all would perish if they were not subdued.

The sovereignty which man can enjoy, before the establishment of society, being only relative to himself, consists in depending only on his will ; and as the will is naturally inalienable, sovereignty is so also. It is no more possible to will with the will of another, than it is to think with his mind, or to act with his members. In this respect, therefore, each one remains after the social contract such as he was before, that is to say, sovereign over himself, or independent of all other will than his own ; and to give up the power is not to give up the will, or to cease to be oneself, which is impossible, but solely to put one's own force at the disposal of another. The depositary of government is therefore only the depositary of force ; and all the wills retaining their original independence, instead of the right of commanding which is exercised over the wills themselves, there is only the power of constraining, which the nation, if it is the strongest, can withdraw whenever it choose.

Under the empire of the social contract there do not exist, therefore, any other rights or duties for society than the will of the strongest. Sovereign power is only attributed to the people, because it possesses the largest portion of physical power ; and that force is so much so the sole right, that *the nation*, says Jurieu, *does not require reason to make its acts valid*, or as Rousseau expresses it, that *the general will* (or will of the people) *is always right*.<sup>1</sup> Thus the ideas of power, right, order and justice, become confounded and lost in that of force, the general law, and sole reason of society.

Observe, besides, that all that is said of the nation must be likewise said of each portion of the nation or of each individual ; for the general will and force are but the assemblage of all the individual wills and forces ; and it would be a con-

<sup>1</sup> Contrat Social, liv. ii, chap. iii.

tradition if the will and force of a nation were to be the sole rule and measure of its rights, unless the rights of each individual had equally his will for sole rule, and his force for sole measure.

And, indeed, the partisans of the system which I am examining start from this principle to establish their social compact. They require the formal adhesion of all the individual wills, an adhesion, which as it binds only so long as it pleases the will, leaves it in its primitive independence, and constitutes no order which it is not always free to upset, on the sole plea that it so chooses.

But as the will only becomes determined by reason of a motive, it was necessary to find one which should induce all the wills without exception to adhere to the social compact ; and as the very idea of duty is incompatible with the system, there remains only self-love, or private interests ; and, indeed, it is on this basis that philosophy essays to found society. Rousseau who adopts this doctrine, is the more inconsistent since he elsewhere lays down opposite maxims. If, as he asserts, 'that which private interests have in common is so small a matter, that it will never counterbalance that which they possess that is conflicting,'<sup>1</sup> it is clear that society never could have been established, and could not maintain itself, by the unanimous concurrence of individual wills, or by the agreement of private interests ; and the system which requires this agreement is contrary to the nature of man, since man, as Rousseau admits, 'is sociable by nature, or at least fitted to become so.'<sup>2</sup>

And remark that in the same way as by excluding God from human reason, all truth, all moral law, all duty, all virtue is destroyed, so as to leave only exclusive self love or personal interest to survive ; so also by excluding God from society, all social truth, all authority, all duty, all virtue, is destroyed, in order to establish in its stead private interest, which has become the sole principle of order in society as in the individual.

When these fatal opinions have become spread amongst a

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 199, note.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 112.

nation, when men have been led to believe that each man owes nothing except to himself, that personal interest is the sole rule of the will, that everything may legitimately be done which may be done with impunity ; when, in one word, authority is nothing more than force, social order is but force, and morality is but force, each man then tries his, and labours to increase it by subjecting the forces of others, and independence produces an universal tendency to domination. Society transforms itself into a vast arena in which all interests attack each other, and fight with fury, sometimes singly, sometimes in mass, according to the convenience of the passions. In the midst of this disorder the State lasts for some time only because a certain number of private interests league themselves with the private interest of the government, and oppress all the others ;<sup>1</sup> and Rousseau had an insight into this truth, when in examining the institutions of ancient nations, he asks himself : *What ! does liberty maintain itself only by the help of servitude ?* and he replies in one word this fearful answer : *Perhaps.*<sup>2</sup>

That which he calls liberty is but the absence of the general authority of society, or the more or less unrestricted reign of all the individual powers. It is evident that in this case, each individual power must have its subjects, whom it governs with its individual will, that is to say, slaves ; for the essence of slavery consists in subjection to the will of man ; and whoever obeys man alone is a slave, even were he that man himself. It is so with nations, and the theory of the sovereignty of the people is but the theory of its servitude. It is this which, in another respect, rendered slavery a necessity under the ancient governments, and especially in the republics. It served to quiet the pride of the citizens, and to maintain them in a state of dependence, by deceiving them as to their real condition : they imagined themselves to be free, whilst they saw beneath them a still deeper servitude.

There are no calamities which may not proceed from a doctrine which places social beings in relations such that

<sup>1</sup> A good description of the state of things just before the present Elections. *Note of Translator*, July 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Contrat Social*, liv. iii, chap. xv.

more arbitrary ones could not be conceived, and which abandons society to the mercy of the strongest, like those broken-down animals that are turned out into the woods when no more work can be got out of them. The government being bound by no obligatory law, free from all duty, because it is destitute of all right, has only its will or its interest for a rule ; and as every interest which is limited to here below, is but an interest of pride or pleasure, the populace, the vile instrument of the ambition or the pleasures of its master, will find itself reduced to the alternative, either of pampering with the sweat of its toil the luxury of an effeminate prince, or of fattening with its blood the glory of a monster.

But nations have also their will, their interest, their pride, which is more terrible than that of any tyrant. Thence a secret hatred of the authority which hinders and humiliates them, a hatred which extends itself from the government to all the agents of government, to all the institutions, to all the laws, to all social distinctions, and if for a moment they are allowed to feel their strength, they will misuse it for the destruction of everything, and will rush to anarchy, fancying that they are advancing to liberty.

Thus the disastrous principle that all power comes from the people infallibly leads nations either to the deprivation of government, or to an oppressive government. The same doctrine which attacks the throne of God, dethrones kings, dethrones man himself, by lowering him below the brutes : and so soon as reason takes upon itself alone to govern the world, private interest, the everlasting source of hatred, becomes the sole social bond. In like manner, as authority is no longer anything but force, so obedience is no more aught but weakness, for the interest of pride never is to obey. The innate desire of domination, repressed with violence, reacts, and incessantly drives the subjects to revolt. Authority being set adrift in society, disturbances follow upon disturbances, and revolutions upon revolutions.

The most unbridled democracy, which is but the absence of all law and order, or the government of the passions, instead of satisfying them, irritates them, and the populace ever coveting, ever destroying, tormented with vague desires and

vague fears, wearies itself with digging its own grave, and anxiously seeks for the bottom of disorder, in the hope of there finding rest. The very shadow of authority alarms it; every inequality, every distinction, whatever excites its mistrust and wounds its pride. Honouring with its malignity everything that rises above it, every kind of superiority without exception, it inexorably punishes the services that any man had the generous courage to render to it: it punishes riches, talents, genius, fame, and even virtue; and Aristides is banished from the city which he saved, because the Athenians are wearied of hearing him called *the just*.

How can anyone venture to vaunt a doctrine already so often tested, and from which there never proceeded aught but crimes and calamities? Look at that Greece, so polished, so wise, supposing that philosophy were wisdom, look at it such as its own historians represent it. There men spoke only of independence, and its cities and fields were overfilled with slaves;<sup>1</sup> whole nations were chained to the statue of liberty. But it was not enough to sell man, to barter him for vile animals; the most virtuous of the Greeks assassinated him in order to accustom the youth to shed blood, and they degraded him for the sake of giving lessons of morality to childhood.

Will they at least obtain what they so eagerly seek, those barbarous proprietors of herds of human beings? They used to say, and to think that they were free, and in the perpetual inconstancy of their arbitrary institutions, they did but change their yoke, and traverse tyranny in every direction, sometimes subjected to one, sometimes and more severely subjected to a jealous, insolent and capricious multitude.

The instructive history of this celebrated nation is nothing but the history of crime and misfortune. A furious hatred raised State against State, and to foreign were added intestine wars. Seditions, conspiracies, proscriptions, massacres, those are the uniform subject of the narrative of the historians. Not a town could be mentioned but what it was divided into several factions, the more excited and the more implacable, because that in a small population public

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. American declaration of Independence. *Note of Translator*, 1862.



hatred became personal enmity. Each party being by turns triumphant, the weakest had to bear the penalty both of its present defeat and of its past triumphs; and exile, always accompanied by confiscation of property, was the mildest condition to be expected by the conquered. Thence came cruelties which astonish us, and atrocious habits which the legislators opposed by infamous habits. Men had reached that excess of moral indigence, that they could find only vice to oppose to crime.

However, reason exhausted itself in combining forms of government, in complicating the springs of the political machine, with the hope that order would spring from a just balance of forces. In these calculations, yet more vain than ingenious, nothing was forgotten but the passions, and a double guarantee against anarchy and despotism was laboriously sought for in a multiplicity of counterpoises, and in the division of power: but this divided power, or these divers powers soon attacking each other, desolated the State by their interminable quarrels. So many precautions ended only in prolonging a fatal struggle, and in more dearly purchasing a more severe oppression. The State still had the tyranny, and had besides its vengeance.

Rome was at first governed by kings, and that was the cause of its duration. Under their pacific authority, religion, morals, laws, had the time to take root. There can be no doubt that this period was a happy one, for history has preserved but an obscure and very uncertain recollection of it. 'Brutus,' says Tacitus, 'instituted the consulate and liberty,'<sup>1</sup> that is to say, that power was brought nearer to the common people, and from that time it always tended to descend.<sup>2</sup> The great strove in vain to retain it; their resistance had no other effect than to give more splendour to the victories gained over them by the multitude. It aspired to nothing less than to carry into effect the system of absolute equality, which at bottom is but a system of absolute destruction; for

<sup>1</sup> *Urbem Romam a principio reges habuere. Libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit. Annal, lib. i, No. 1.*

<sup>2</sup> 'So long as there remained to the patricians any privileges, the plebeians took them away.' *Esprit des Lois, liv. xi, ch. xvi.*

after having destroyed society by destroying social distinctions, the passions, jealous of natural distinctions which death alone effaces, would destroy man himself, and finish by establishing upon the desert soil, amid the silence of the graves, the doleful equality of the void. Very happily for Rome, circumstances came to its help. The surrounding nations saved it by attacking it. They compelled it to think above all of its own existence, and to seize upon their territory. Colonies were sent thither, which had two great advantages: the reducing the number of artisans, and the setting forth an external object of ambition. If the pride of the Romans had not at the outset turned towards conquest, this people would in a short time have exterminated itself. War alone suspended the intestine dissensions, and the passion of power, ever seeking and finding new enjoyment abroad, Rome endured whilst the earth provided nations for it to conquer. But the universe once conquered, each Roman had the pretension of reigning over the universe, and dreadful commotions shook the empire to its foundations. It had defended itself against all nations, it was not able to defend itself against its own self, against its constitution, against the doctrine which was its base: it is then that were fully unveiled, for the everlasting instruction of society, the terrible secrets of the sovereignty of man. I know not what furious hatred, proceeding impetuously from the depths of the human heart, dragging after it every crime, overwhelmed this nation, condemned by Heaven to punish itself. Like those criminals who are executed on the spot where their crime was committed, its armies led by the hand of God, went afar to undergo their sentence in the countries which they had devastated; and there was not a corner of the empire in which Providence did not compel these fierce worshippers of liberty to leave behind heaps of bones as monuments of the wisdom and felicity of the people-king.

But it was not alone on the battle-field and in the rage of fight that the citizens fell under the sword of citizens. Bloody lists, hung up on the doors of the Senate, on the walls of the temples, announced each day to thousands of Romans, that the conqueror commanded them to die.

At this awful period, chiefs of factions were even seen to give up mutually to each other the life of a friend, a relation or a brother, and to speculate upon the proscriptions. The thirst of gold being added to the lust of power, murder was sold, there was a traffic in death. At last the Empire, *wearied with discord*,<sup>1</sup> came to rest in the bosom of military despotism, and a few monsters quietly devoured that nation which had devoured the world.

But new principles become established with a new religion, which saves society by showing clearly the true relations of man to his Author, and of men amongst each other. The protecting words, right and duty, acquire a meaning; authority takes the place of force, and the reign of God, which above all else is order, succeeds to the reign of man, or to absolute disorder. Under the influence of this sublime religion, the human race was advancing with wide steps towards happiness, by advancing towards perfection, when all at once the heathen doctrines as to government reappear in society. The bloody spectre of the sovereignty of the people called up by the Reformation comes out of the grave in which Christianity had laid it. Immediately the spirit of independence raises the passions against authority; atrocious wars, desolate Europe, and discord, with its implacable animosities, penetrates into the bosom of families. Luther and his disciples justify rebellion, authorise it, and excite it by their seditious writings and preaching. Something of violence is stirred in the depths of men's hearts, and the fanaticism of religious liberty brings forth the fanaticism of political liberty. Germany, France, the Netherlands, England, and Scotland become a prey to the fury of a multitude intoxicated with anti-social doctrines, are covered with ruins, and flooded with blood. The nations, for the first time since fifteen centuries, claim what they call their rights, that is to say, power, the everlasting object of the unbridled desires of pride, and haughtily cite before their tribunal princes, become no longer anything but their delegates, and strive to found democracy upon the fragments of existing order. Thrones quake, and some fall

<sup>1</sup> *Cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa, nomine principis (Augustus) sub imperium accepit. Taciti Annal, lib. I.*

down. The genius of Wickliffe a second time agitates England, destined by Providence to serve as an example to other nations: religion withdraws and abandons this people to the opinions which have seduced it; it is now sovereign over itself. Order immediately vanishes along with peace, and all the calamities together inundate this proscribed land. Constitution, law, justice, humanity, all disappear; only force and the passions remain. The axe of the *levellers* carried from one end of the kingdom to the other smoothes away all social eminences, and royalty itself perishes on the scaffold with the most unfortunate of the Stuarts.

Thus the same errors had at all times the same effects, and a little later a new and more memorable proof will be seen. So soon as man is told that his reason is the source of truth, and that his will is the source of power; truth becomes only that which flatters his inclinations, power is nothing but force, which guided by private interest or by the passions, carries disorder and death into the lowest elements of society; and its members with equal rights and contrary interests would destroy one another to the last, if it were not that being gifted with unequal powers the stronger subjects the weaker to his will, which becomes the sole law, the sole right, the sole justice. Such is the necessary result of the absurd social compact dreamed of by philosophy, and which is in reality but a sacrilegious declaration of war against society and against God. Reasoning and facts show this in concert, and whoever can see and reflect, will recognise that whilst they abolished along with the idea of authority, all the conservative principles of order, peace, happiness and the freedom of nations; these doctrines of independence, a bloody charter of discord and oppression, have never produced, nor been able to produce, under all forms of government from absolute despotism to complete democracy, anything else but tyrants and slaves, revolutions and crimes.

This is not all. When the social relations which unite men in the same society have been destroyed or vitiated, the relations which unite nations in the great society of the human race, are similarly destroyed or vitiated. No other law of nations is then known besides the private interests of each

nation, nor any other right in war than force. Hatred of others, the fruit of an exclusive love of self, animates nations as well as individuals, and makes them hard, jealous, and destructive. This barbarous passion, an odious modification of pride, especially forms the character of those nations where the atheistical principle of the sovereignty of man is publicly sanctioned by the popular institutions. This is so true, that Rousseau looks upon Christianity as little fitted to form citizens, because it instils a spirit of mildness, and detaches from earthly things,<sup>1</sup> that is to say, because it substitutes the universal love of men for that sullen patriotism, so fatal to humanity, a violent and pitiless passion, which does not make citizens to love one another, but which makes men hate everyone who is not a fellow-citizen. Jean Jacques after all is very consistent. He well saw that it would not be possible to found government on private interest without making hatred one of the springs of that government; and he had besides, the example of the republics of antiquity. The only thing which might cause surprise, were philosophic pride less well known, is that whilst warned by the consequences, Rousseau did not withdraw in horror from the principle; for when the dreadful effects of national enmities amongst the ancients are represented to it, the soul in consternation seeks on all sides for a refuge against these terrible recollections. The question is asked with alarm, how man can have endured the feeling of so many evils, or have found in himself to imagine so many crimes.

Enemies of each other from their birth, the nations never in peace, enjoyed only short truces, the observance of which nothing guaranteed, save the interest in keeping them, or the powerlessness to break them. There existed between them no bond of justice, and force had no other rule than the horrible right of extermination. That is the true reason of those unheard-of efforts, of those prodigious resistances which astonish us. Men fought for their property, for liberty, for life; for everything belonged to the victor.<sup>2</sup> And would you

<sup>1</sup> *Contrat. Social*, liv. iv, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> 'A city without strength ran the greatest danger. Conquest caused it to lose not only the executive and legislative power as at the present time, but also all that is held as property among men, civil liberty, goods, wives, children, temples, and even graves.' *Esprit des Lois* liv. ix, ch. i.

desire to know how philosophy at that time protected humanity? 'The Greeks,' says Plato, 'shall not destroy Greeks, they shall not reduce them to slavery, they shall not ravage their fields, they shall not burn their houses; but they shall do all that to the barbarians.'<sup>1</sup>

The policy of the Romans, without justice as without pity, was more fatal to the world than their arms. Who does not know the speech of the austere Cato,<sup>2</sup> in whose eyes every act useful to the interests of the State was lawful? *Roman faith* might more justly have been said than *Punic faith*, so skilful was Rome in eluding its oaths, or so bold in the violation of them. The ruin of Carthage is the proof of it, as the sack of the towns of Epirus by Paulus Emilius is a monument of the mildness and equity of the Senate, whose orders that Consul executed. Observe that these two features are taken from the best times of the republic, and that its history offers similar, or yet more horrible ones, at each page. Humanity was a sentiment so foreign to this nation, that the word even to express it is wanting in its language.<sup>3</sup>

Religion alone, softening the hearts or terrifying consciences, placed some limits to the fury and devastation of war, and protected from the passions, and the doctrines of pride and enmity, a feeble tradition of mercy. When the conquered had no more hope, religion opened to him the temples, and murder sometimes paused at the foot of the altar.

There might be found, without a long search, in modern times a sufficient number of examples to confirm these observations. There exists in Europe a country where religious opinion has sanctioned the principle of the sovereignty of the people. Since then the semi-popular government of that nation, more famous for its pride than for the purity of its morals, seems to have known no other rule of conduct nor other political justice than interest. Like the Romans, it has extended by force and fraud its heavy domination over distant countries, which it oppresses with merciless wisdom,

<sup>1</sup> De Republicâ lib v.

<sup>2</sup> Cato never gave his opinion in the Senate upon any affair without adding: *Delenda est Carthago.*

<sup>3</sup> *Humanitas*, in the ancient authors only signifies, politeness, mildness, amenity.

and planned barbarity ; it reigns like them and with the same maxims, it will end like them.

Analogous principles spreading through Europe, and penetrating along with an anti-religious philosophy into most cabinets, have made the law of nations to retrograde visibly, and it has become pretty nearly what it was with the heathen, the armed interest of might. Public good faith losing its sanctity, treaties deprived of sanction have become transformed into simple human conventions, sufficiently similar, in their nature and effects, to the supposed social contract. The system of expediency taking the place of the doctrine of rights, has shattered the landmarks which separated the inheritances of nations, like the inheritances of individuals. The same as that in moral order, envious sophists authorised themselves from nature and its laws in order to justify the violation of private property ; other sophists taking the same maxims as authority in political order, have invaded public property, provinces and kingdoms, under the sole pretext that nature so required it. From that moment as each State could be seized from one day to another, by order of nature, according to the covetousness of its interpreters, security, the mother of peace fled from a land given up to the fatal caprices of men. The nations no longer relied for protection upon anything except their own strength, and the most numerous armies not sufficing to attain that object, entire nations, compelled to descend into the arena, have fought for their lives with the animosity which so pressing an interest inspires. Society, under the influence of the philosophical doctrines, has gone backwards to the savage state, and those horrible duels between nations astounded the universe which had seen nothing similar since the establishment of Christianity. Never was the art of oppression carried further : never were the gains of victory more cleverly enhanced. An ingenious avarice, enveloping future generations in its sinister calculations, knew how to make the time, the soil, the industry, even the wants of the vanquished, accomplices of its exactions.

To the stability of order, however, to the ancient and holy union which made of the nations of Europe a single political body, and almost a single family, rooted like an oak full of

majesty and vigour, in that old country of civilisation, there suddenly succeeded an alarming mobility, a restless spirit of discord : and without anything having changed except belief and morals, this same Europe became like a large inheritance, which greedy heirs, more powerful than the laws, dispute over with arms in their hands, which they devastate and tear asunder, and the fragments of which they stain with blood. An unbridled cupidity has taken possession of the governments, and private interest disposing alone of empires, they have been stripped in a manner of all but their physical existence, and of the protecting dignity which they derived from the noble idea of society, to become, shall I say it? a kind of goods for traffic, a current coin to be used by the possessors of force ; and so as to give to this hasty commerce in States, securities independent of the good faith of the contracting parties, force again intervened to supply the place of justice, and in the nineteenth century, the century of enlightenment and liberal ideas, personal arrest has been established for nations. When this point has been reached, too much boast must not be made of the progress of social order, nor of the progress of happiness, nor of the progress of liberty.

*Incedo per ignes.* It will be felt that I can hardly offer a few touches of a picture which each one can easily complete for himself. Besides, my intention in this work is less to offer a complete set of reflections, than to induce reflection. What an author says, whoever he may be, is fitting only to a certain number of minds; but if he obtain from his readers a degree of attention which forces them to produce thoughts of their own upon the subject which he is treating, he will have done very much more than if he had himself expressed those thoughts. Truth seems to belong to us more when we have discovered it; it inspires less mistrust, and a greater attachment.

Powerless to establish any other constitution than force, or another law of nations than force, philosophy does not either establish any other legislation than force; because, whilst it refuses to reascend to the Supreme legislator, and confines itself to man, it could not find a reason for duty in equal and independent wills.



The laws are the expression of the relations which unite members of the same society to one another. The more the relations which they express are natural or perfect, the more are the laws perfect, or fitted to lead social beings to their end, which is happiness or the *tranquillity of order*. If the laws, on the contrary, express arbitrary or false relations, they will be a perpetual source of disorder and unhappiness, and will tend to destroy instead of to preserve man.

Being destined to rule actions, it is the essence of laws to be binding; otherwise they would not be a rule, they would be at most but counsel, unless they were supposed to be supported by force, and in that case also, they would not prescribe duties, they would impose a necessity.

The notion of law is then intimately bound up with the notion of authority; and all teaching which destroys the notion of authority, destroys the notion of law. And the philosophers, who, excluding God from society, make authority to proceed from a compact dependent on the free wills of men, or in other terms, who attribute to man the faculty of creating authority, attribute to him equally the faculty of creating law: and law is no longer anything else than the will of man, or, according to the definition of Rousseau, *the expression of the general will*, that is to say, of all the individual wills of the social body. And *the general will being always right*, the laws are always just; the people creates justice as it creates law; it is not even necessary that its will should be reasonable; the essence of law consisting not in reason but in the will, *the people does not require reason to give validity to its acts*; it may legitimately do all that it wills, even tear itself asunder, even destroy itself; 'for,' says Rousseau, 'if it please the people to do itself the injury, who has the right to hinder it?'<sup>1</sup>

In reading these maxims, fruitful in calamities and crimes, it seems like reading the very code of disorder, and the theory of death. If chaos and hell have a legislation, it must be founded on this basis: there is no doubt of it.

Private interest, the sole motive power of individual wills, which collectively form the general will, is in this system the

<sup>1</sup> Contrat Social, liv. ii, chap. xii.

sole reason of law. Now, as by the admission of Rousseau, 'that which private interests have in common, will never counterbalance what they possess that is conflicting,' the nations would live for ever deprived of laws, if it were necessary that they should be in reality *the expression of the general will*, or of all the individual wills without exception. But laws of some sort, as well as some kind of government, being necessary to nations in order that they should last, the law becomes practically the expression of the will of the government, or of the will of the strongest. Having no other foundation than force, neither has it any other security. Men do not obey it, they give way to it. It is a private interest which momentarily oppresses all the others. Thence a new source of hatred: for man naturally hates all that opposes itself to his well-being, or wounds his personal interest.

Thus do all the social truths disappear along with the supreme truth from which they emanate. Carried into effect through the laws and constitution, they produce order, peace, and happiness, by uniting in bonds of love the different parts of the social body. But when error takes their place, everything suffers, everything is divided, and society falls away in shreds. A mutual enmity incessantly arms subjects against governments, nations against nations, citizens against citizens; and anarchy exists in all the elements of the State, even when force maintains an outward appearance of order.

Whatever there was that was conservative in the laws and creeds of the ancients was not of their invention; for the further we go back into antiquity, the more pure and strongly established are these beliefs. They belonged evidently to the primitive tradition, the common inheritance of the human race. But becoming vitiated by degrees, by the passions and by reasoning, their influence is seen to grow weaker with the progress of time, and opposite doctrines produce opposite effects. Thus the spirit of the government in Rome and in Greece, ceaselessly putting personal interest at stake, tended to obscure the principles of justice, and seconded by a corrupting philosophy, ended by entirely effacing them from men's hearts. If these periods of profound dissolution be excepted,

morals, amongst the ancients, were generally better than the laws, because religion, which had partly preserved the essential truths, formed the morals in the first place without obstacle, whilst the laws, arriving later, accommodated themselves to the nature of the government, and like it almost always expressed only false relations; and this difference explains the singular contradictions which are to be observed even in the morals: what there was of good, pure, and generous, proceeded from man enlightened by the primitive religion; what there was of vice, violence, and atrocity, belonged to the citizen perverted by political institutions, and by the doctrines which they gave rise to. The duration of the democratic States, whose annals appear to be so brilliant, would be inexplicable, had they not had a conservative principle outside the government, and Montesquieu saw this well: 'Rome,' he says, 'was a ship held by two anchors during storms, religion, and morals.'<sup>1</sup>

The legislations of pagan nations, especially in the republics tended to oppress the weak. The reason of this is that the laws, the expression of the will of the strongest, had not, and could not have any other object than to protect their interests. Slavery, in oppressing the weakness of that condition, protected the pride of the free man; polygamy and divorce, in oppressing the weakness of the sex, protected the pleasures and fickle caprice of the husband; the horrible debtors' laws, in oppressing poverty and hunger, or the weakness of nature itself, protected the cupidity of the rich; the right of life and death granted to fathers over their children, in oppressing the weakness of tender age, protected the barbarous avarice, and all the passions of the father, or the strong member of the family. And when all the force came to be concentrated in a single hand, when the empire knew but one master, there was also but one sole law, the will of this master, who disposed of three hundred millions of men, of their goods, their liberty, their life, at the convenience of his interest.

As soon as the ancients occupied themselves with practical legislation, it seems as though all idea of justice and shame

<sup>1</sup> *Esprit des Lois*, liv. viii, chap. xiii.

abandoned them. Who does not know the laws of the Thebans, the Cretans, and the institutions of Sparta? Did not the divine Plato desire to establish the community of women in his republic, and to found society upon the abolition of family? That is the grandest effort of human reason in politics, in the noblest age of Greece. Aristotle puts brigandage in the number of different kinds of hunting.<sup>2</sup> I can easily believe it. When a state of war is constituted between man and man, it must be allowable to each one to injure his enemy; self-preservation is in destruction. This was so much the spirit of the ancient democratic states, that Solon amongst divers professions, reckons that of thief.<sup>3</sup> Only, he observes, neither fellow citizens, nor the allies of the republic ought to be robbed. There would be no end to it, if all such laws, all similar maxims had to be brought up. But what it is necessary to say is, that they have found, even the most infamous of them, numerous apologists among the modern philosophers; and some have carried cynicism further in their principles, than the pagans even carried it into their morals.

Good sense only is wanted to see that an immoral law must have bad effects; with wit there are some who find that it may have good effects; genius which embraces all aspects of a question, judges like good sense. Montesquieu, who had as much cleverness as it is possible to have, never met with laws amongst any nation, but what he justified them. There is always in the climate, in the customs, or in the constitution, some circumstances, which, to listen to him, must needs have determined the wise legislator to corrupt his legislation. His book, entirely written for the century in which it appeared, has been of no real utility in politics, and has contributed in a remarkable manner to weaken public morality.

All real legislation emanates from God,<sup>4</sup> the eternal principle of order, and of the general government of the society of intelligent beings. Beyond this, I see only arbitrary wills, and the degrading empire of force; I only see men who

<sup>1</sup> Plato borrowed these ideas from the customs of the Nairs of Malabar. See coasts of East Africa and Malabar Hakluyt Society. *Note of Translator*, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Of man, tom. i, sect. iv, note 27. page 605. *Quest. sur l'Encyclop. Guerre.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> For this reason Suarez named his book : *De lege ac de Deo legislatore.* *Note of Translator*, July 1895.

insolently domineer over other men ; I see nothing but slaves and tyrants. The variable code of interest takes the place of the code of justice, unchanging like the nature of the beings which it is to rule, and which it preserves by maintaining them in their true relations. Observe indeed, the laws drawn, if one may say so, from that divine source : severe and inflexible like the truth, yet, nevertheless imbued with some spirit of mildness which consoles and quiets humanity, they inspire at once confidence and respect, fear and love. Man, no doubt, may violate them, but in doing so violates his reason, his conscience, and his whole nature, and renounces peace and happiness. Ever stable in the midst of the movement of human affairs they grow firmer with the centuries, survive opinions and systems, and without ever growing old rule over generations which pass on loaded with their benefits. Does private interest on the contrary become the principle of the laws immediately they return into the class of inconstant and disordered fancies, which time carries away with contempt? Severe or effeminate, strange and changeable, sometimes dissolute, always pitiless like the passions, they only subsist by bribing hatred by a cowardly complacency, or by striking terror into the indocile. But whether they flatter or terrify, they oppress; and laws made to flatter the people, constantly are the most oppressive. Whoever aspired to the favour of the Roman populace, proposed an agrarian law or the abolition of property; and in a certain nation which thinks itself free, but lately, whoever wished to please the populace, solicited laws of spoliation and death against the Catholics. Man is the same in all countries and in all times.

Legislations that are merely human have also this fearful disadvantage, that the laws which protect order are those which the multitude endures with the least patience, because they tend to maintain that which it is its interest to overthrow. It will endure immoral laws, by reason of the disorder which they sanction, and by which it profits more or less ; but its passions deriving no advantage from good laws, whose object is to repress them, it will necessarily only see in them an obstacle to its desires, and an attempt against its rights. And as no law emanating from man alone, is binding upon man, it

will be needful to put equity under the protection of force, and to wrench from fear what it would be vain to ask from conscience. The greater the terror, the greater will be the submission, public safety will have no other security than the executioner, and men will have to proclaim justice in the name of death, for not having been willing to proclaim it in the name of God.

I have shown that philosophy destroys authority, destroys the law of nations, destroys the laws or the rule of public actions; it remains for me to prove that it equally destroys morality, or the rule of private actions.

What I have said upon this subject, whilst refuting the divers systems of indifference, dispenses me from a long discussion. It will be enough for me to observe that philosophy being unable to find a reason for duty separate from God, has been constrained to found morality as well as society on personal interest limited to this life only, a doctrine subversive of all virtue, according to the opinion of Bayle and Rousseau. 'Without the hope of future welfare,' says Bayle, 'virtue and innocence might be reckoned in the number of things upon which Solomon pronounced his final decision: *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*. To lean upon one's innocence would be to lean upon the broken reed which pierces the hand of him who wishes to make use of it.'<sup>1</sup> Virtue therefore, in good philosophy, is only for fools: it is the result of ignorance or of weakness of mind, and we should no longer be astonished at seeing the progress of vice and crime following upon the progress of *enlightenment* with such regularity.

Rousseau has clearly perceived these consequences of atheism. 'It is very well to try to establish virtue through reason alone, but what solid basis can be given it? Virtue they say, is the love of order: but that love, can it then, and ought it to prevail in me over that of my well-being. Let them give me a clear and sufficient reason for preferring it. At bottom, their so-called principle is a play upon words; for I say also, that vice is the love of order, taken in a different sense. There is some moral order wherever there is feeling

<sup>1</sup> Diction. crit. art. Brutus.

and understanding. The difference is that the good man orders himself with reference to the whole, and that the bad man orders the whole with reference to himself. This one makes himself the centre of all things, the other measures his radius and remains at the circumference. Then he is in order with respect to the common centre, which is God, and with respect to all the concentric circles which are the creatures. If the divinity were not, there is only the bad man who reasons, and the good man is but a madman.'<sup>1</sup>

In truth, philosophy should speak of reason with less arrogance, when *by reason alone* it can only establish crime ; it ought to vaunt its benefits less, when it makes virtue the portion of the *unreasoning*. All its power is in the reason, and as soon as it *reasons*, the man who listens to it becomes *bad*, and then, only then, does he begin to be its true disciple : whoever remains *good*, it disowns him as unworthy to receive its lessons, or as incapable of comprehending them. And now go, assemble men together, dictate to them laws, write constitutions, codes, seek for *unreasoning men* who will consent to *subordinate* themselves for your interest *with reference to the whole*, after that you have taught them that wisdom consists in *ordering the whole with reference to oneself*. Philosophers, you who with so much pride exalt in your pompous sentences the reason of man, it must be that you reckon strangely upon his imbecility. What a language to hold to him is this of yours ! 'No one has the right of commanding you : consequently acknowledge a master. Your sole law is your will : consequently obey the laws which thwart all your desires. Your sole duty is to make yourself, by any means whatsoever, happy here below : consequently, renounce all your interests, stifle the voice of desire, and even that of want ; be just at your expense ; submit yourself without murmuring to the hardest privations, to penury, to labour, to pain, to hunger. You must hope for nothing after this life : consequently act as if you expected another, respect religiously the order established against you, be our willing victim, and we will repay you with profound contempt.' Philoso-

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 118.

phers give thanks to the inventor of the gibbet ; he alone has discovered the foundation and sanction of your morality.

But as Rousseau might be suspected of exaggeration, I will show the consequences which he attributes to atheism, methodically deduced from that monstrous error by the coolest judgment, and the most skilful reasoner, who, until the present time, has combated the unanimous belief of the human race. Let Spinosà be heard.

‘By the law of nature, I understand nothing else than the laws according to which we conceive that the existence and action in a certain manner of each being, is naturally determined : for instance, fish are determined by Nature to swim, and the great are determined to eat the small ; that is why the water belongs to the fishes, and the great eat the small by natural right. It follows from that, that each being has a sovereign right to all that it can do. And we admit of no difference in this respect between man and other beings, nor between men gifted with reason and those to whom reason is unknown. Thus whilst men live under the empire of Nature alone, he who does not yet know reason, or who has not acquired the habit of virtue, lives according to the sole law of his appetites, with as much right as he who rules his life by the laws of reason : that is to say, that in the same way that the sage has a sovereign right to all that his reason dictates to him, or the right to live according to the laws of reason ; the ignorant man, or the man of passions, has a sovereign right to everything towards which his appetites carry him, or the right to live according to the laws of his appetites. The natural law is not therefore determined for each man by sound reason, but by the desires, and the powers. Considered as under the sole empire of Nature, each one has the sovereign right to desire whatever, enlightened by sound reason, or carried away by the passions, he may judge to be useful to him ; and he may legitimately get possession of it, either by force, or by cunning, or by any other means, and consequently regard as an enemy whoever wishes to prevent him from satisfying his desires. From which it follows that the law of Nature, under which all men are born and live in a great measure, prohibits nothing but that which is neither



desired by, nor possible to man, and allows strife, hatred, anger, fraud, and absolutely everything which excites our appetites. Thus the natural law is determined for each one only by his power ; and no one can be certain of the good faith of another so long as he has only his promise for security, since each one by the law of Nature, may act with cunning, and that compacts only bind through the hope of a greater benefit, or the fear of a greater evil.<sup>1</sup>

In constituting society by reason alone, without the intervention of God, man is led to acknowledge no other authority, or other right, or other law than force directed by private interest or by the passions : and when it is attempted to constitute morality with reason alone, it leads equally to the acknowledgment of no other law or right than force directed by private interest or the *appetites* : that is to say, that in one or the other case, an absolute sovereignty over himself is attributed to man; and there is ground for astonishment that Rousseau did not see that his doctrine of the Social Contract is but pure atheism applied to social order, and that he should have adopted in politics, principles, the consequences of which he rejects with horror in morality. This, no doubt, proceeds from the fact that, wishing to establish a rigorous theory of society, he was constrained to go as far as his maxims carried him, consequently as far as atheism, which is but a rigorous deism.

But what society will be able to maintain itself when the rights of each one shall have no other rule than his desires, and other limits than his power, to which, moreover, cunning and fraud are given as a supplement? or rather under the notion of society what conception can be formed of an assemblage of human beings, natural enemies of one another, and ceaselessly occupied with injuring each other mutually? In this horrible anarchy of opposite wills and conflicting interests, of unequal strength, and unequal desires, the love of self becomes confounded with the hatred of others ; and man subjected to the sole law of his appetites, independent of all authority, and free from all duty, like the sovereign people,

<sup>1</sup> Tract. Theolog. Polit. cap. xvi, De jure uniuscujusque naturali et civili, p. 85.

like it also does not require reason to legitimate his acts : it is enough that he will and can ; with these two conditions everything is allowable to him. The field, the house, the wife of my neighbour, his life even belongs to me by natural right, if I desire it, and if I be the stronger. Nature only prohibits to man that which it is physically impossible to him to obtain ; the limit of his power or of his covetousness is the limit of his right. Should he feel a hungry desire for his fellow creature he may, if he have the physical power, eat his flesh and drink his blood, with as little scruple as he eats a morsel of bread and quenches his thirst with the water of the spring.<sup>1</sup> And amidst this conflict of the passions there is not even a glimpse of the consoling possibility of peace, or only a truce, since no compact is obligatory, and that each promise may conceal a perfidious snare, and that in short no one is bound except by his interests. Therefore no more State, no more family, no union, no security. Man will tremble with terror at meeting with man, more dreadful in his eyes than the alligator of the Ganges and the tiger of the Sahara ; and if sometimes instinct brings together by chance two individuals of different sexes, their appetite satisfied, they will look upon one another with fear, and the weaker will hasten to fly in fear of being devoured.

If then philosophy succeeded in fully establishing its reign upon the ruins of all religion it would destroy society, it would destroy the human race, and could carry into effect annihilation, which is at the bottom of its doctrines. But to confine ourselves here to what experience teaches us of its influence upon morals, let us contemplate the philosophical centuries. What a profound forgetfulness of duties ! What an insolent contempt of virtue ! Pride and voluptuousness become the sole motive of human actions, bring forth a cupidity without any check, sad and infallible symptom of the extinction of the moral sense. When the thirst of gold takes possession of a people, it may be boldly asserted that it is

<sup>1</sup> This will appear exaggerated if philosophy had not itself drawn this horrible conclusion from its principles. In a work published in 1791, Brissot establishes without disguise the *right of anthropophagy*. To this same author is attributed the *Theory of Theft and the Apology for Theft*. He was a powerful philosopher was this Brissot !

advancing towards barbarism. Even the sciences only serve to lead it thither more quickly, because of themselves they preserve nothing, and because that their tendency for good or evil being determined by the reigning doctrines, they hurry on by their own movement, the course of the morals which sway them, until they fall headlong into the same abyss along with the institutions, the laws, and the whole of society. Meanwhile, all that makes the happiness of men collectively, concord and peace, domestic union, sweet confidence, faithful friendship, tender compassion, and mutual security disappear. Men no longer feel, they calculate. The base combinations of interest take the place of the generous movements of the heart. A hard selfishness stifles even the sentiments of nature ; for whoever loves himself only, will never be loved. Small and great, rich and poor, all equally impatient to enjoy, swallow up with frenzy the existence of a moment. Marriage without stability as without innocence is but a hasty association for pleasure, which caprice forms, and which caprice dissolves. Adultery and divorce, which is but a legal adultery, destroy family from its foundations. What remains of it becomes a burden which few men have the courage to support. It is in vain that, in order to lighten it, the father's avarice is allowed to reckon the cost to him of the life of the child abandoned to his discretion ; paternity, with this horrible right, is still too burdensome, and vice almost alone, takes upon itself the duty of peopling the State.

'At Athens,' says Montesquieu, 'the people cut off the bastards from the number of the citizens, in order to have a larger portion of the corn which the king of Egypt had sent to them.'<sup>1</sup> This may give an idea of the number of bastards, and consequently of the state of morals in this city, which is so much admired.

The Greeks, with their philosophical institutions, had commenced by depriving virtue of modesty, always putting philosophy in everything. Philosophising, they went so far as to lose modesty even in vice. Philosophy taught them

<sup>1</sup> *Esprit des Loix*, liv. xxiii, chap. vi,

disorders, of which in the greatest furor of the senses, nature does not permit the animals to have even a suspicion.

When materialist doctrines, which reduce morality to private interest, are introduced among a nation, their first effect usually is to disturb political order, and put division amongst the citizens, by exciting beyond measure the desire for dominion. Everybody wishes to command, nobody will obey ; men dispute furiously with one another for the power, and the State torn asunder would give way under these factions, unless men's souls, by degrees becoming degraded, and at length ripe for enduring anything, did not precipitate themselves at the feet of despotism ; for it is in anarchy that are prepared the elements of servitude, and the more complete has been the anarchy, the more profound is the servitude which follows after it.

This double effect of the depravation of morals by impiety has not been sufficiently observed, which is that it irritates the pride of men so as to render the mildest government odious to them, and that it so far extinguishes in them the noble sentiment of their dignity, that they find nothing intolerable, nothing which revolts or astounds them, in the most ferocious tyranny. He who esteems himself no more than the brute, is not indignant at being treated like it, and consoles himself for everything, provided that the life and enjoyments of the brute are left to him. *Panem et circenses*, exclaimed the Romans, in the times of the Cæsars : a little bread dipped in blood, that is all that this nation, so proud and polished, which had conquered the world, required of its masters.

At the origin of society, nations fought for life ; thence it is that wars were then almost always atrocious : but humanity retakes its empire during peace. Peace, on the contrary, among corrupt nations is more cruel than war itself. Cupidity and pride produce a sort of general spirit of cold and calculated barbarity, which breaks forth, according to circumstances, at one time in the morals of the nation, at another in the policy of governments.

Knowledge, says Montesquieu, makes men mild. This is false. Look at the Romans under Augustus. Without speaking of the abandoning of children, and of the bloody

dramas of the circus, we have at the present time no idea of what was the condition of slaves in that nation, the universal heir of the knowledge as of the vices of the human race. Out of the hours of labour, these wretches, who were grudged the vilest food, were chained, in the country, in noisome places underground, into which the air hardly penetrated. Given up to the mercy of an avaricious master, and pitiless overseers, they were overborne by labour, less difficult to endure than the cruel caprices of their tyrants. When old or infirm, they were sent to die of hunger on an island in the Tiber. Some Romans had them thrown alive into their fish ponds, to fatten their lampreys. Death entered into part of all the pleasures of this nation. In order to put more reality into the tragic representations, men were butchered on the scene. Hercules was shown burned alive, and Orpheus torn in pieces by bears to represent the bacchanals. Lastly, what more? man was become so low in the eyes of man, that he was killed to exhilarate a feast, to pass time, and no one was astonished at this. Human victims were sacrificed to dulness, and this was never imagined but in this brilliant age of literature and philosophy.

But here is something perhaps more inconceivable. Ephorion of Chalcis relates that,<sup>1</sup> amongst the Romans, five minas reward were sometimes offered to anyone who would allow his head to be cut off, so that the sum promised was to be received by the heirs, and often, adds the same author, several competitors disputed for death at that price. Let an opinion be formed of the distress of families of which a member thus devoted himself, to snatch the others from the horrors of hunger, and of the atrocity of a nation amongst whom penury was reduced to beg the preference in these execrable transactions. Men were met with who bought the pleasures of murder; there were none found who could feel the enjoyment of pity.

But what is to be said of the excesses, the horrible refinements of debauchery, which had become the public morals in these abominable centuries? Thought even refuses to retrace

<sup>1</sup> Apud Athen. lib. iv.

them vaguely. It is with certain enormous vices, as with those great criminals, which the law affrighted, orders to be led to execution covered with a funeral veil.

So much corruption, so much barbarity, appear to be inexplicable ; and yet it is but too true that the human heart conceals a germ of it, of which religion alone arrests the development. Sow in this infected soil the doctrines of annihilation, and you will soon reap a harvest of death and every crime. Yes, though I should draw upon myself the clamour and anathemas of the numerous partisans of wisdom so held in esteem, I will say it unequivocally, for it is no longer the time to be silent, the irreligious philosophy, of which pride is the principle, necessarily makes men cruel. The man who wishes to be superior to the others, and to feel that superiority, takes pleasure in subjecting them to his caprices ; and the more these caprices are barbarous or disordered, the greater appears to be the dependence or inferiority of the beings subjected to them. Thence the monsters of atrocity and the monsters of licentiousness ; thence the games of the circus, and the *noyades* of Nantes : and as the action of giving death is the greatest act of superiority which one man can physically exercise upon another, pride or the love of self produces the love of murder, and man destroys man, by an effect of the same feeling which prompts a child to take pleasure in breaking its toy.

And if philosophical doctrines, and the morals which they bring forth, predominate in a state, or only in a considerable part of its members, the whole nation, like one man, is carried far away from order by systems of pride and cupidity. Independence within, domination without, that is the object of all desires, the dream of all minds. No other grandeur is acknowledged, nor other prosperity than the glory which accompanies conquests, and the riches which are the fruit of them. The frenzy of arms and the fever of gold agitate and consume the peoples. The science of governing them, a science altogether moral, is lost, and the material art of administering succeeds at the expense of all that constitutes the stability, the vigour and the real felicity of empires. Finance, transformed into low stock-jobbing, commerce, manufactures, armies, become the whole policy, because

money is the whole happiness of States and cannon their whole strength. The nations, greedy of enjoyment, isolate themselves from the past and the future, and tormented, it seems with the presentiment of their end, see only the present, and hasten to swallow it up under the pretext of accelerating the circulation of wealth, that is to say, in order to give more energy and movement to the desires, to hopes and fears, to all the passions and all the vices, the progress of luxury is favoured as much as possible; indeed snares are set for cupidity; the number of theatres is multiplied, of public women, of disastrous lotteries and gambling houses: fearful banks of crime where innocence itself, drawn in by an imprudent weakness goes, under the protection of the public authority to open a fatal account, which is too often closed by suicide or on the scaffold. Morality and conscience fall into such contempt, that men do not dare even to pronounce their names; and if there should arise some of those great and simple questions which unchanging justice has decided, in a manner, from all eternity, do not expect that its voice will make itself heard, or be listened to; its maxims will be treated as scruples, perhaps as a scandal, and between the opulent spoliator and his crushed victim, the wisdom of the age will only see interests to protect and complaints to stifle. Thus, whilst the true policy, that which establishes and preserves, is but lofty and sovereign equity, or the science of order applied to the government of nations; philosophical policy, narrow and low like the material interests which it solely considers, knows no other virtue than cleverness, no other crimes than blunders, because it is but a speculation in glory or money.

The sciences, empty nourishment of pride, may momentarily throw out some glitter; but their splendour will be of short duration. Have they not been seen to follow constantly throughout the earth the progress of civilisation, to arise, to develop themselves, to stop, and be extinguished with it? Pale reflection of the fruitful truths which used to vivify society, they will for a moment shine like wandering meteors on the horizon of the desolated moral world, soon to disappear without returning.

The cultivation of the sciences, over and above a certain stability in political order, requires a vigour of soul and a constancy of application incompatible with the fickleness of institutions, and effeminate habits of a materialist nation. Covetousness kills the passions, for the appetites are not passions ; it consequently kills literature, the sciences, the arts, and only leaves activity for that which concerns the wants and pleasures of the senses. And this is the secret reason of the esteem which philosophy grants to the physical in preference to the moral sciences. This preference will be observed even in the education ; and if there be public education amongst the nation I am imagining, it will infallibly be directed according to the maxims which direct it itself, and the spirit which animates it ; a spirit of pride, which gives the first rank in importance to a futile instruction, good for fostering vanity without checking the inclinations of the heart ; a spirit of pleasure, from which will result a homicidal indulgence of disorders in morals, or, whatever may be done to repress them from merely physical considerations, a hidden corruption a thousand times more disastrous in its consequences than ignorance, which after all ought neither to be so much pitied, nor so much feared ; for, to the greater part of mankind, destined to pass this short and sad life in continual labour, the only indispensable knowledge is that of God and the duties which he imposes on us. Whoever knows that, knows enough to be happy and to make others happy. The little besides that man can learn often serves only to corrupt him, and almost always to torment him : *et qui addit scientiam, addit et laborem.*

In proportion as truth disappears from the constitution, laws, and morals, the State grows weaker, its life flickers, and there comes a moment when it must needs be that all perish, or that all be renewed. Nations subsist only, and are only revived by their beliefs. In going away from God, they approach the void, the possession belonging to all finite beings, and their sole sovereignty. That is why Machiavel, who apparently was neither weak minded, nor a fanatic, without hesitation devotes to universal execration those who by shaking religion shake society : ‘ Infamous and detestable



men,' as he calls them, 'destroyers of kingdoms and republics, enemies of virtue, of letters, and of all the arts which do honour to the human race, and contribute to its prosperity.'

That race of men, who never fail to appear when heaven intends to lay some great chastisement upon the nations, Leibnitz more than a century ago, saw them with dread increasing their numbers in Europe, and that profound observer then already announced the disasters, of which it had been reserved to us to be the witnesses and the victims. His words, so astonishing, when the time in which he wrote them is called to mind, perhaps deserve still more attention after that events have, alas ! so completely justified them.

'The disciples of Epicurus and Spinoza thinking themselves freed from the importunate fear of a watchful Providence, and a menacing future, let loose the reins to their brutal passions, and turn their minds to seducing and corrupting others ; and if they be ambitious and of a rather hard disposition, they will be capable, for their pleasure or amusement, of setting fire to the four corners of the earth. I have known men equal to that, whom death took away.

'I think that coming opinions insinuating themselves by degrees into the minds of men of the highest classes, who rule the others, and on whom affairs depend, and slipping into books that are in vogue, predispose all things to the general revolution with which Europe is threatened. Those who take any care for the public are turned into ridicule ; and when some well meaning man speaks of what will become of posterity, he is answered, *it will be as it may*. But it may happen to those persons to undergo themselves the evils which they think destined for others. If a remedy is not found for this epidemic malady of the mind, whose effects begin to be visible, if it goes on increasing, Providence will correct men by the revolution itself which must spring from it.'

That revolution did indeed arise : who in the whole world is ignorant of it? The blows struck in Europe against society

<sup>1</sup> Sono infami e detestabili gli uomini destruttori delle religioni, dissipatori de' regni e delle repubbliche, inimici delle virtu, delle lettere e d'ogni altra arte che arrechi utilità e honore alla humana generazione. Machiav. lib. I de Discorsi.

<sup>2</sup> Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain.

and religion, resound even at this moment on the shores of America, and in the very depths of its ensanguined forests. Yes, men have been punished; pride itself cannot deny it: they have been punished as never men were before; but are they corrected? If I look around me, I read revolt written on foreheads scarred with the thunderbolts of divine vengeance. If I listen, I hear arrogant blasphemies and mocking laughter. God is still a stumbling block to those who had sworn to blot out His name. And beware of thinking that they have lost the hope, or abandoned the design of dethroning Him. If there remain yet a fragment of faith, if earth is yet the slave of hope, it is that heaven has been ineffectively laid siege to. Full of this idea they collect under our eyes, and again bind together the scattered threads of their vast conspiracy. Pompously calling up from the dust of the grave the first leaders of the sacrilegious war, which they have resolved to prolong, they flatter themselves that those spectres will a second time upset the world. What next? have there not been enough of misfortunes, enough of crimes? and however insatiable of calamities and crimes men could be, ought they not by this to be satiated? Contemplate this Europe, but lately so flourishing, and now so profoundly wretched, that to depict its misery, only these expressions of a prophet can be found: 'the whole head is a sore, and the whole heart faint.'<sup>1</sup> Happy yet, too happy if this faintness do not degenerate into an incurable torpor, and do not lead insensibly after some fresh attacks, to the last sleep.

But whatever is to be the result of that memorable revolution, let us try to draw from it some of the lessons which it contains. They cost us sufficiently dear, for us at least to seek to profit by them.

There existed thirty years ago, a nation governed by an ancient line of kings, according to a constitution the most perfect that ever was, and by laws which, with more reason than those of the ancient Romans, we might have believed to be descended from heaven, so much were they wise, pure, beneficent and favourable to humanity. This nation, cele-

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah ch. 1. 5 according to the Hebrew.

brated for its frankness, its mildness, and its enlightenment, for its love for its sovereigns, and for the religion to which it owed fourteen centuries of glory and happiness, flourished in peace in the midst of Europe, whose envy it excited, of which it was the ornament, on account of the beauty of its legislation, the noble politeness of its customs, and the dazzling masterpieces of all kinds, with which literature, science, and art had enriched it in concert. Happy within its territory, respected abroad, its fame spread everywhere, drew to it the homage of the most distant countries, and the universe admired it as the queen of civilisation.

Such was the nation which God chose to give a great and a terrible lesson to the human race. Suddenly, at the voice of a few sophists, new opinions, new desires take possession of this misled nation. It becomes disgusted with its belief, and the protecting doctrines which had raised it to such a height. Tempted by the fruit of *the tree of knowledge*, it desires to come forth out of its state, and to become *like unto God*, to whom alone belongs all sovereignty. Suddenly this attempt is punished, like that of the first man, by an irrevocable decree of death, with the execution of which the guilty criminal is himself charged.

The death of a society is but the extinction of all social truth : we see then all the social truths abandoning at once this proscribed nation, and leaving it to itself, without a protector and without rule, like those nations irretrievably lost, of whom the ancients used to say : *The Gods have departed*.

From truth love is born, which produces and preserves : and that nation but lately so loving, now without truth, is immediately seized with a hideous spirit of hatred, which animates it to its own destruction.

Weary of all authority, weary of God, human reason undertakes to constitute society, and even religion without Him ; for philosophy attributed to itself not only royalty, or the right of imposing political laws on nations, but also the priesthood, or the function of regulating their belief and their worship. ' You are the *priest of reason*,'<sup>1</sup> wrote d'Alembert to the

<sup>1</sup> Letter of d'Alembert to Voltaire, of December 13, 1764.

old man of Ferney. And this phrase must not be looked upon as an expression of no consequence. The idea which it puts forth is but a rigorous deduction from the principle from which philosophy took its departure ; and so soon as it subjected everything, even God, to man's reason, it became a matter of necessity that man should arrive at worshipping his reason, that is to say, to worship himself, or to declare by a solemn act that he knew of nothing above himself ; for public worship is but the declaration of the public belief ; and when a nation no longer believes anything, its worship is a public declaration of atheism or of unbelief.

But let us consider the progress, and so to speak, the logical affiliation of events. The sovereignty of man has been proclaimed, and his rights, all contained in that word, have become the sole dogma in politics and in religion: then necessarily nothing is seen in the ancient religion of the State, in its creed and its worship, but a sacrilegious attack upon the reason of man. God is spoken of as an usurper; and whosoever declares himself on His side, taking part in the war which exists between God and man, and in which nothing less than empire is in question, becomes at once guilty of high treason against the deity, by denying the absolute independence or divinity of reason, and also of the crime of high treason against man, by attacking the sovereignty of man. As impious and as a rebel he must then be put to death.<sup>1</sup> Everything that belonged to the proscribed religion, its ministers, its goods, the institutions, usages, even the names which it had sanctioned, in a word all that recalls to memory the God looked upon as an enemy, must perish, all, even His temples and images: as when on the return of a legitimate monarch

<sup>1</sup> I say put to death as impious ; for whoever denies God, is punished with death or eternally separated from the society of God, who is the life, because he is the truth : *ego sum veritas et vita* (Joan xiv, 6). This terrible chastisement is a necessary relation to, or an unchanging law of justice ; and it is because this law revealed to man is eminently in conformity with his reason, that as soon as he puts himself in the place of God, he for ever separates from his society, or punishes with death whoever refuses to acknowledge him as God ; and that has been seen in the ancient empires in the East, and at Rome under the emperors, as in France under the reign of atheism. But God, the eternal being, does not punish his rebellious subjects until they have entered into the eternal society, and He waits until then for repentance ; whilst man, the being of a day, does not wait even till the evening, which perhaps he will not see, but hastens to give death, before that he himself receive it.

the statue of a tyrant is broken. Indeed in the heat of this prodigious war of man against God, it was proposed to destroy the books themselves, in which the rights of the Sovereign Being are expounded and maintained. This also was but a just consequence from the ruling maxims, and the impossibility alone of a complete destruction, prevented philosophical fanaticism from giving to Europe the same sight, which formerly Mussulman fanaticism had given in Egypt.

The world had several times seen the scandal of the apotheosis of individual men, and this very thing was the origin of paganism among all nations. But in becoming God, man ceased to be man. Transformed by opinion into another more perfect being, he changed his nature; and even then tradition preserved the belief in a supreme God pre-eminently elevated above these subaltern divinities.<sup>1</sup> But a very different thing happened, it was man in the abstract, or collective humanity,<sup>2</sup> that philosophy made divine by excluding any superior being.<sup>3</sup> Man worshipped himself as man; and finding in his pride and in his appetites the character of infinity, he naturally chose them for the direct object of his worship. He adored his pride under the name of reason and worshipped it under the emblem of pleasure, because pleasure, or the unbridled independence of the appetites, is only, if I may be allowed the expression, the pride of the senses, the same as that pride is the pleasure of the intellect. And as there is no vice or crime which does not necessarily proceed from these two parent passions, when man acknowledges no other authority, or law, or God, than his reason; in order to represent it worthily, it was necessary to seek all the vices and all the crimes, personified in the same living being, and this hideous image, was found in the dens of pro-

<sup>1</sup> Hac arte Pollux et vagus Hercules  
Enisus, arces attigit igneas.—III. 3.

Unde nil majus generatur ipso,  
Nec viget quicquam simile, aut secundum.—I. 12.

*Note of Translator.*

<sup>2</sup> This is what Lamennais means, but his expression 'l'humanité conçue sous sa notion propre' is not clear.

<sup>3</sup> Auguste Comte, and his English imitator Congreve, developed this idea and called it Positive religion. Those who were previously atheists jeered at them for clinging to a remnant of superstition. This folly has nearly died out in England.—*Note of Translator*, July 1895.

stitution. And what more perfect image of the absolute error which destroys all truth, could there be indeed, than the profound disorder which destroys all virtue, and man, and family, and society? A lesson ever to be remembered! Human reason, whose benefits proclaimed beforehand with so much pomp, were to transform the earth into an abode of peace and felicity, that powerful reason reigns at length; its divinity is proclaimed, and its altars are ruins, its hymns songs of proscription, its priests executioners, its worship is death, and annihilation the hope of its worshippers.

There is in doctrines a hidden virtue, a secret force, either pernicious or beneficial, which is only perceptible through its effects: and that alone would prove that man is not made to choose his beliefs, but to receive them from Him who can neither be deceived, nor will to deceive man; for if the decision rested with the judgment of reason alone, man, almost always misled by false appearances, or by the sophistry of his mind, would perish a thousand times, a victim of his empty reasoning, before having discovered the truths fitted to his nature, and necessary for his preservation, since they astonish and confound him, even when he knows them with certainty, and believes them with full faith. Deep subject of meditation for whoever can reflect: the instrument of an atrocious punishment, the cross, raised in the midst of nations, stops the shedding of blood, and instils into man a heavenly gentleness. The cross is upset, and in its stead a symbol of pleasure is presented for public adoration; immediately blood flows in torrents, an unknown fury seizes upon men's hearts, and the first sacrifices offered to the obscene idol are hecatombs of human victims.

There are truths and errors which are at the same time religious and political, because Religion and society have the same beginning, which is God, and the same end, which is man. Thus a fundamental error in religion is also a fundamental error in politics, and *vice versa*. If therefore there existed an error destructive of authority, in religious society, that error, the most general that could be imagined, must be equally destructive of authority in political society; and this indeed is what is demonstrated without contradiction by the history

of the French revolution. In virtue of his sovereignty man uprises against God, declares himself free and equal to Him : in virtue of the same right, the subject raises himself up against the government, and declares himself *free* and *equal* to it. In the name of *liberty* men overthrow the constitution, the laws, all political and religious institutions ; in the name of *equality*, they abolish all hierarchy, and all religious and political distinctions. Clergy, nobility, magistracy, legislation, religion, all fall together, and there was a moment when the whole of social order was centred in one man. Whilst this man-authority, a mediator between God and man in political society, as the man-God is mediator between God and man in religious society ; whilst, I say, this man existed, nothing was to be despaired of, and order, in a manner, withdrawn into him, might issue forth later, and reappear abroad by a single act of his powerful will. This was known, and his death resolved upon from that moment, was like the last ruin which was to consummate and perpetuate all the others. Since the deicide of the Jews, never had a more enormous crime been committed ; for even the murder of innocence cannot be compared to it. When Louis ascended the scaffold, it was not alone a virtuous mortal who fell under the rage of a few miscreants, it was authority itself, the living image of the Divinity from whom it emanates, it was the principle of order and political existence, it was entire society that perished.

And certainly this could not be doubted, when it was seen that the right of revolt was placed in the number of the fundamental laws of the State, and that *insurrection* was sanctioned as *the most holy of duties*. Never, in the course of preceding ages, had any people reached such a prodigious excess of frenzy, as to protest against all government in the preamble to its constitution : this incomprehensible absurdity was to be reserved for the age of reason.

Then, upon the fragments of the altar and the throne, upon the bones of the priest and the sovereign commenced the reign of force, the reign of hatred and terror : fearful accomplishment of this prophecy : 'and the people shall be oppressed every one by another, and everyone by his neighbour : the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient,

and the base against the honourable . . . because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord.<sup>1</sup> In order to paint that awful scene of disorders and crimes, of dissolution and carnage, that riot of doctrines, that confused clash of all the interests and all the passions, that mixture of proscriptions and impure heads, those blasphemous shouts, those sinister chaunts, the dull and continual sound of the hammer which demolishes, of the axe which strikes the victims, those terrible explosions, and frantic exclamations of joy, the lugubrious proclamation of a vast massacre, those widowed cities, those rivers encumbered with corpses, those temples and cities in ashes, and the murder, the licentiousness, the tears, and the blood ; it would be necessary to borrow from hell its language as some monsters borrowed from it its fury.

'If the world, Voltaire had said, was governed by atheists it would be as well to be under the immediate rule of those infernal beings who are depicted to us as ferociously fastening on their victims.'<sup>2</sup> Atheists governed France, and in the space of a few months, they heaped up more ruins than an army of Tartars could have left in Europe during a ten years invasion. Never since the beginning of the world had such a power of destruction been given to man. In ordinary revolutions, the power is displaced, but does not descend much. It was not so when atheism triumphed. As if it had needs be, that under the exclusive empire of man, everything should have a special character of abasement, power leaving the higher and noble parts of the social body, precipitated itself into the hands of its vilest members, and their pride which took offence at everything, spared nothing. They forgave neither birth because they had come out of the mud ; nor riches, because they had long coveted them ; nor talents, for nature had refused them all to them ; nor science, for they felt that they were profoundly ignorant ; nor virtue, for they were covered with crimes ; nor lastly even crime, whenever it announced some kind of superiority. To undertake to bring down everything to their level, was to undertake to annihilate

<sup>1</sup> Et irruet populus, vir ad virum, et unusquisque ad proximum suum : tumultuabiter puer contra senem, et ignobilis contra nobilem. . . . quia lingua eorum et adinventiones eorum contra Dominum. Is. iii, 5, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Homel. sur l'Athéisme.



everything. From that time also, to govern was to proscribe, to confiscate, and again to proscribe. Death was organised in every hamlet ; and completing by decrees that which had been begun with daggers, whole classes of citizens were devoted to extermination : the foundations of family were shaken by divorce ; even the source of population was attacked, by the granting of public encouragement to licentiousness.<sup>1</sup>

The hatred of order however, too much cramped in this vast theatre of destruction, crossed over the frontiers, and threatened on their thrones all the sovereigns of Europe. Atheism had its apostles, and anarchy its disciples.

War again becoming what it was amongst savages, it was decided that no prisoners should be made. The honour of the soldier shuddered, and rejected this barbarous order. But outside of the camps, even childhood could not disarm the rage, nor touch the hearts of the executioners. I am weary of recalling so many inexpiable horrors. France covered with fragments offered the appearance of an immense cemetery, when wonderful to relate ! in the midst of these ruins, the very leaders of disorder, seized with a sudden terror, draw back panic-struck, as if the spectre of annihilation had appeared to them. Feeling that an irresistible force was dragging themselves to the tomb, their pride suddenly breaks down. Conquered by fear, they hastily proclaim the existence of the Supreme Being, and the immortality of the soul ; and standing up on the quivering corpse of society, they loudly call for God who alone can reanimate it.

I stop ; what should I add to this ever memorable example ? Reasoning, authority, and experience, agree then in showing that the Deity is the first want of nations, the reason of their existence, and that all irreligious philosophy tends to destroy social order, the happiness of nations, and the nations themselves. I will now prove that religion alone preserves them and leads them to happiness by establishing them in a condition conformable to the nature of society.

<sup>1</sup> The wisdom of the legislators of 1793 considered the public women, or as they were called the *girl-mothers*, so useful to the State, that it was proposed to assign to them pensions from the public treasury. They saw in them, no doubt, *priestesses of Reason* ; and in order to preserve the divinity, they took care to endow the worship.

## CHAPTER XI

Continuation of the Same Subject.

LET us listen in the first place to the wisdom of antiquity : 'Ignorance of the true God is the greatest of calamities that can happen to States : and he that overthrows religion, overthrows the foundation of all human society.<sup>1</sup> It is the truth itself, that if God has not presided over the foundation of a city, and that it has had but a human beginning, it cannot escape from the greatest evils. We must then try, by all imaginable means to imitate the primitive state of things ; and confiding ourselves to what there is of the immortal in man, we must found houses, as well as States, by consecrating as laws the will of the Supreme Intelligence. For if a State is based on vice, and governed by people who tread justice under foot, it has no means of safety left to it.'<sup>2</sup> 'The cities and nations the most attached to the divine worship have always been the most lasting and the most wise ; like as the most religious epochs have always been those most remarkable for genius.'<sup>3</sup>

These most judicious maxims belong specially to the school of Socrates, the least corrupt of the ancient schools of philosophy, because the primitive traditions had been preserved in it more faithfully, and in a greater number.

The philosophers themselves, who in our times have taken a miserable pride in combating religion, have none the less ;

<sup>1</sup> Plato De Leg. lib. x.      <sup>2</sup> Ibid tom. viii edit. Bip. pp. 180, 181.

<sup>3</sup> Xenophon Memor. Socrat. 1, 4, 16.

for the most part, acknowledged its necessity, at the risk of passing, with too much reason, for bad citizens, and perverse men, from their striving to destroy an institution eminently useful, and even indispensable as they themselves admit. 'Search,' says Hume, 'for a nation without religion; if you find one, be sure that it does not much differ from the brute beasts.'<sup>1</sup> I have already quoted these words of Rousseau: 'Never was a state founded but what religion served as its base.'<sup>2</sup> This man's reason and his heart drew him towards Christianity, which his pride alone rejected, and he set himself against religion from the same motives which instilled into him that profound hatred of civil society which is to be observed in his writings. But so soon as the passions calm down, truth again seizes on its empire over the mind. It is thus that in *Emile*, he expatiates with so much complacency upon the happy effects of religion upon society. The passage is so striking that I shall not fear to transcribe it wholly, although it is rather long, especially as it is my intention to draw as much support as possible from the concessions of adversaries.

'One of the sophisms most common among the philosophical party, is to oppose an imaginary nation of good philosophers to a nation of bad Christians; as if a nation of true philosophers were more easy to make than a nation of true Christians. I do not know whether amongst individuals the one is more easily to be found than the other; but I well know that as soon as nations are in question, it must be supposed that they would make a bad use of philosophy without religion, just as the present ones make a bad use of religion without philosophy; and this, it seems to me, much changes the state of the question.'<sup>3</sup>

'Bayle has very well proved that fanaticism is more pernicious than atheism, and that is indisputable;<sup>4</sup> but what he

<sup>1</sup> Nat. Hist. of Rel., p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Contrat. Social. liv. iv, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> There is besides this essential difference, that philosophy has a direct tendency to disorder, and leads thither by its own effects whoever reasons and is consistent, whilst on the contrary Religion has a direct tendency to virtue, so that a man cannot be at the same time vicious and believing without contradiction: and thence it is that vice leads to unbelief.

<sup>4</sup> Atheism itself took care but lately in France to refute the so-called proofs of Bayle, *indisputable* proofs according to Rousseau; and few people, I think, will now be tempted to wish for a fresh refutation of them, at the same price.

did not care to say, and what is no less true, is that fanaticism, although sanguinary and cruel, is however a great and strong passion, which raises the heart of man, makes him despise death, gives him a prodigious motive for action, and which only requires to be better directed in order to draw from it the most sublime virtues ; instead of which irreligion, and in general the argumentative and philosophical spirit, attaches to life, renders effeminate, debases the soul, concentrates all the passions in the baseness of self-interest, in the abjectness of the human I, and thus insensibly saps the real foundations of every society ; for that which the private interests have in common is so small a matter, that it will never counter-balance what they possess that is conflicting.

‘ If atheism does not cause men’s blood to be shed,<sup>1</sup> it is less from love of peace than from indifference to good ; since if all go on evenly, little does anything signify to the so-called sage, provided he remains at rest in his study. His principles do not cause men to be killed, but they prevent them from being born, by destroying the morals which multiply them, by detaching them from their species, by reducing all their affections to a secret selfishness, as fatal to population as to virtue. Philosophical indifference resembles the tranquillity of a State under a despotism ; it is the tranquillity of death ; it is more destructive than war itself.

‘ Thus fanaticism, although more fatal in its immediate effects than what is at present called the philosophic spirit, is very much less so in its consequences. Moreover it is easy to make a show of beautiful maxims in books ; but the question is to know whether they adhere closely to the doctrines which they teach, whether they are the necessary deductions from them ; and this has not yet been clearly shown. It remains to be known also whether philosophy, at its ease, and enthroned, would be able to rule vainglory, interest, ambition, and the petty passions of mankind, and whether it would practise that gentle humanity which it vaunts to us with the pen in its hand.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It has caused it to be shed, and in torrents : *that is indisputable.*

<sup>2</sup> That which *remained to be known* on that head in Jean Jacques’ time is known now ; and nothing in the matter of experience is wanting to our instruction.

'In theory, philosophy can do no good, but what religion does it still better, and religion does much that philosophy could not do.

'In practice, it is another matter, but this also requires examination. No man follows his religion in every point, when he has one, it is true :<sup>1</sup> most men have none, and do not at all follow that which they have got ; that is also true :<sup>2</sup> but after all some men have got religion, and in part follow it ; and it is indubitable that motives of religion prevent them often from doing wrong, and, obtain from them virtues, and praiseworthy actions, which would not have taken place without those motives. . . . All the crimes which happen amongst the clergy, as elsewhere, do not prove that religion is useless, but that very few people have got any religion.

'Our modern governments indisputably owe to Christianity their more stable authority, and less frequent revolutions ; it has rendered them themselves less sanguinary : that is proved by facts, by comparing them to the ancient governments. Religion, becoming better known, and setting aside fanaticism, has given more gentleness to Christian customs. This change is not the effect of literature ; for wherever it has shone, humanity has not been any the more respected : the cruelties of the Athenians, the Egyptians, the Roman emperors, and the Chinese, show that. How many acts of mercy are the work of the Gospel ! How many restitutions and reparations does not confession effect amongst the Catholics ? With us, how many reconciliations and almsgivings are brought forth by the approach of the period of the communion ? How much less greedy did not the jubilee of the Hebrews render usurpers ? What misery did it not prevent ? The fraternity established by law united the whole nation : not a beggar was to be seen in it, none either are to be seen amongst the Turks, where the pious foundations are innumerable. They are from religious principle hospitable even towards the enemies of their creed.

“The Mahomedans say, according to Chardin, that after

<sup>1</sup> In one sense, yes ; for it is true that no man is absolutely perfect ; but with that restriction, it seems to me that Fenelon, Vincent de Paul followed their religion pretty well.

<sup>2</sup> The author is going to say the contrary a little further on.

the examination which will follow the universal resurrection, all the bodies will go across a bridge named Poul-Serrha, which is thrown across the everlasting fire, a bridge which may be called, they say, the third or last examination, and truly final judgment, because it is there that the separation will be made between the good and the wicked.

“The Persians, continues Chardin, are very much infatuated with this bridge, and whenever any one suffers an injury, for which he cannot obtain indemnity by any means, or at any time, his last consolation is to say: *Well! by the living God, you shall repay me double at the last day; you shall not pass the Poul-Serrha until you have first satisfied me: I will cling to the hem of your garment, and will throw myself across your legs.* I have seen many eminent men, and of all kinds of professions, who, apprehensive lest any one should thus cry halt to them on their passage over this dreaded bridge, solicited those who complained of them to forgive them: this has happened a hundred times to myself. People of quality who, through their importunity had made me take steps otherwise than I should have wished, came to me after a little time, when they thought that my vexation had passed by, and used to say: *I beg of you, hallal bekun an tehizra, that is to say, make that matter lawful to me, or just.* Some even have made me presents, and rendered me services, so that I might pardon them, by declaring that I had done it with good will; the cause of which is nothing else than this belief that no one will pass the bridge of hell, until he has paid the last farthing to those whom he has oppressed.”<sup>2</sup>

‘Shall I believe that the idea of this bridge, which makes reparation for so many iniquities, does not ever prevent any? and if this idea were taken away from the Persians by persuading them that there is no Poul-Serrha, nor anything like it, where the oppressed are avenged of their tyrants after death, is it not clear that it would put them very much at their ease, and would deliver them from the care of appeasing those unfortunate persons? It is false therefore, that such teaching would not be injurious; it would not be the truth.

<sup>1</sup> Pul-as-Sirat is the correct spelling.—*Notes of Translator.*

<sup>2</sup> Voyages de Chardin, tom. vii, page 50.

‘Philosopher, your moral laws are all very well, but show me I beg of you, the sanction of them ; cease for a moment your vague declamations, and tell me precisely, what you put in the stead of Poul-Serrha.’<sup>1</sup>

If ever so little value be attached to peace, to public safety, to the mildness and stability of the government, to good morals, to virtue, the importance of religion cannot be disputed. But I wish to make the reader to have a still more lively feeling of this importance, of which it would be to have too low and too imperfect an idea, if, only considering religion in its benefits which are in some sort secondary, it were not also conceived to be, by going back to the first cause of so many happy results, as the sole and necessary foundation of all social order.

Order, according to its most extensive sense, is the totality of the relations which are derived from the nature of beings ; and these relations are truths, since they exist independently of the thoughts of the mind which considers them. All truth derives from God, because, *He is He that is*, that is to say, the being above all else, without restriction and without limits, or the infinite truth ; and when He resolved to produce, the whole of creation was but a magnificent manifestation of a part of the truths which the Divine being contains. Those truths being intertwined together by relations necessary in the view of God, His will, by realising them without, has by the same act, made actual those immutable relations which constitute order. Established by the will of the Supreme Intelligence, or the sovereign power of the Creator, the same power, maintains it by continuing to create beings every instant, or to manifest some of the truths eternally existing in God, and their equally eternal relations : and a perfect order would reign throughout the universe, if the non-intelligent will of the free beings did not too often disturb it by a blind abuse of a blind force, which, employed to carry into effect error, or *that which is not*, tends by that very means to destroy *that which is*, or to manifest nothingness.

Authority, or the will of the Supreme Intelligence, is then

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, pp. 198. 202.

the general means of order, in the same way that force, directed by the free non-intelligent wills,<sup>1</sup> is the general means of disorder: and human society composed of free beings subject to error, is divided between these two powers, of which one tends to destroy that which the other tends to preserve.

Now by an unheard of overturning of ideas, philosophy strives to found society upon the very principle of disorder. Refusing to acknowledge another intelligence than the reason of man, it is unable to establish any other authority than force: and the human race, subjected to that destructive power, would perish, if religion did not come quickly to its assistance.

'Religion,' excellently well says M. de Bonald, 'puts order into society, because it alone gives the reason for authority and the duties.'<sup>2</sup>

What indeed is authority in society, unless it be the right to command, which carries with it the duty to obey. But whoever commands is above him that obeys, and so much above, that no greater superiority can be imagined; for it does not imply a simple difference of nature. The angel by his nature, is above man; yet man strictly owes nothing to the angel. If an angel put on a visible form, and descend upon earth, where will be the reason for obeying him? I perceive no right on one side, nor on the other any duty. Every created being is in a natural independence of all other created beings; and if the highest of the celestial spirits

<sup>1</sup> Construct a wall out of its centre of gravity, and it falls, because there is a want of truth in the laws of its construction, or a want of intelligence in the architect. It is the same with society. Man would upset the universe if he could subject it to his action, because he knows but imperfectly the laws which maintain order in the physical world; and when he is ignorant of, or misunderstands the laws which maintain order in the world of morals, when he is ignorant of, or misunderstands himself, his force tends to destroy, because it tends to place beings in false relations, or in relations contrary to their nature. He desires that which *Intelligence* could not desire, that is to say, things impossible, absurd, and contradictory. To desire well-being is a sentiment natural to all men; but all men do not equally see in what their well-being consists. He who seeks for it in disorder is wanting in light. With a more enlightened mind, he would understand that, out of order, there could not exist any happiness, since there is not even life. Disorder therefore is produced by *free non-intelligent wills*. The supremely intelligent Being, is essentially good, happy, and perfect, and the perfection of free creatures, as well as their happiness, consists in conforming their wills to His.

<sup>2</sup> Le Divorce considéré au XIX siècle. Disc. prélim. p. 42.



came, of his own accord, and without other title than his own will, to dictate laws to man, and to subject him to his dominion, I should see in him only a tyrant, and in his subjects only slaves. What is it then when man arrogates to himself the empire over man, his equal in rights, and often his superior in reason, in information, in virtue? Is there a more iniquitous or insolent pretension, or a more ignominious servitude? Certainly I do not hesitate to say it with Rousseau: 'It requires a long alteration of sentiments and ideas, for any one to resolve on taking his fellow creature for a master.'<sup>1</sup> And yet Rousseau himself is constrained, in order to constitute society philosophically, to impose on man the yoke of man, and to subject him to the empire of blind and brutal force. With this result from his principles, there is no ground for astonishment that, civil society appeared to him contrary to nature.<sup>2</sup> Confounding independence with liberty, the absence of all authority and all duty, that is to say, of all order, must have appeared in his eyes to be the most perfect state, or the natural state of man. But order, and the authority which maintains it, having a necessary relation to intelligence, Jean Jacques went so far as to assert that *the man who thinks is a depraved animal*, a strictly just conclusion from the error upon which his system rests. Thus pride proclaims the sovereignty of man, and from that moment, man must needs be, either the base slave of the force of society, or the still baser slave of his appetites, and hardly equal to the beasts in the depths of the forests, their common abode. In truth, it is strange that there should be souls base enough to take pleasure in the abjectness of the philosophical doctrines, or minds weak enough to be led away by them. But it is good, Pascal used to say, that there should be many such men in the world, so as to show that man is quite capable of the most extravagant opinions, and the most unnatural sentiments.

What greatness there is in the thoughts of religion, compared with these debasing maxims? How simple and pro-

<sup>1</sup> Contrat Social, liv. iv, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Everything not in nature has its inconveniences, and civil society more so than all the rest. Contrat Social, liv. iii, chap xv.

found is its doctrine! What light it sheds on society! and how it elevates man, without flattering his pride! It does not say to him: thou hast no other master than thyself, for from that moment he would be the slave of whoever should deign to subject him. But it says to him: 'The sole being who has over thee a legitimate and natural authority, is the infinite Being who created thee, who preserves thee, and supremely disposes of thy destinies. His will is thy sole law; and thy happiness, as thy freedom, consists in knowing and submitting thyself to it. To be free is to tend to thy end without obstacle; thy end is perfection: obey therefore and thou wilt be free. Maintain thyself in thy true relations; thy reason shall depend only on the Supreme Intelligence, and thy will on the immutable laws which the Almighty has established.'<sup>1</sup>

It is all very well to speak with emphasis of independence, of sovereignty; this, arrogant fiction of human sovereignty, is but the veil which covers over an irremediable servitude. As soon as philosophy wishes to establish the mere appearance of order, man must immediately obey, and whom? his fellow-creature; he must bend, he must crawl under the will of his equal: and on the contrary, man is so great that God only has the right of commanding him: noble vassal who depends only on the Eternal! Let man therefore understand what he is; and, if under the mastery of the passions, he feel himself too weak yet to rise to full obedience to the laws emanated from the supreme power which rules all created beings, let him at least conceive that that obedience, the most precious and the noblest of his rights, alone constitutes true freedom, and let him look forward with longing to the moment of his deliverance.

A celebrated writer who did not know Christianity any better than he knew society, has ventured to say that *true Christians are made to be slaves*.<sup>2</sup> It is true that the same writer believed that the ancient Greeks and Romans were free. He has not seen that liberty, independent of forms of government, is solely relative to the nature of the authority.

<sup>1</sup> Here I have altered Lamennais' phrase.—*Note of Translator.*

<sup>2</sup> *Contrat Social*, liv. iv, chap. viii.

Since he wished to speak of Christianity, why did he not at least consult the Gospel, the *perfect law of liberty*<sup>1</sup> as an apostle calls it? He would there have read these words which confound with admiration whoever can penetrate their depth: 'the truth shall make you free,'<sup>2</sup> Christ hath redeemed us.<sup>3</sup> Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, as I have pointed out, when Jesus Christ appeared in the world, man everywhere was the slave of man. It was needed for him to be freed from that hard slavery, that he should hear this great truth, which was in all senses, for society the *gospel of salvation: for there is no power but of God*.<sup>5</sup> Thenceforward becoming identified with the divine authority itself, the authorities established on an immovable basis, inspired respect and love. Man could obey without ceasing to be free, or rather he was free because he obeyed. And it is just so that the Christians conceived it from the beginning, as it is seen in Tertullian. Upon their refusal to worship the images of the emperors, they were treated as rebels and enemies of Cæsar. What does their apologist answer? 'It is not amongst us but in your own ranks that the traitors must be sought, those who whilst proffering to the emperor the basest adulations of servitude, hatch in secret plots against him, and are only present at the festivals held in his honour, in order to profane the public joy by criminal vows, and in their hearts changing the name of the prince, so as to nourish the hope of another reign.'<sup>6</sup> As for us whom no one ever saw mixed up in any revolt, if notwithstanding there should still be any doubt of our submission and religious love for the emperor, let it be known that it is necessary for us to respect in him the choice of the God whom we worship, and the sovereign whom He has established. As for what is required of us, I consent to give to Cæsar the name of Lord, provided that I am not compelled to attach to it the idea of God.

<sup>1</sup> Ep. Jacob. i. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Cognoscetis veritatem, et veritas liberabit vos. Joan viii, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Christus nos liberavit. Ep. ad Galat. iii, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Ubi autem spiritus Domini, ibi libertas. Ep. ii ad Corinth. iii, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Non est enim potestas nisi a Deo. Ep. ad Rom. xiii, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Non ut gaudia publica celebrarent, sed ut vota propria jam edicerent in aliena solemnitate, et exemplum atque imaginem spei suæ inaugurarent, nomen principis in corde mutantes. Apologet. adv Gentes Cap. xxxv.

For I am free as to the rest. I have no other master than the one Almighty and Eternal God, who is also Cæsar's master.<sup>1</sup>

From this sublime idea of authority, the sole foundation of moral obligation, is seen to proceed, along with the duties the conservative order of society. 'Authority is then justified, obedience is made noble, and man must equally fear to command, and feel honoured in obeying'.<sup>2</sup> Justice disarms force, and the noble empire of conscience takes the place of the vile tyranny of the passions excited by interest. What do I say? Religion by concentrating the private interests in the common interest, makes them to concur in the maintenance of order, by binding together the present and the future life, and by detaching man from the transitory advantages which he seeks for with so much ardour. It substitutes for the hatred engendered by the philosophical doctrines, a general spirit of mutual benevolence and love; and this is the distinctive characteristic of Christianity. In it all breathes of the love of God, and of men; love is at the bottom of all its precepts; love is the summary of the law. Not to love is not to be a Christian; it is to banish oneself from the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the companionship of love, in order to enter into the companionship of hatred, of which the angel of pride is the monarch. The Christian does not only obey the government; he loves it because it comes from God, and represents Him in society; and this love, which ascends from the subjects to the government, in some sort, redescends from the government to the subjects, under the form of benefits, and becomes the most certain security for the stability of the governments and the happiness of the nations. United by a strong confidence, from which along with security, arises a mutual devotedness, there may justly be applied to them these profound words of the Gospel: your faith has saved you.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sed quid ego amplius de religione atque pietate christiana in imperatorem quem necesse est suspiciamus ut eum quem Dominus noster elegit? Et merito dixerim, noster est magis Cæsar, a nostro Deo constitutus. Dicam plane imperatorem Dominum: sed quando non cogor ut Dominum, Dei vice, dicam, Cæterum, liber sum illi. Dominus enim meus unus est Deus omnipotens et æternus, idem qui et ipsius. Apoget. adv. Gentes, cap. xxxiii et xxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Le Divorce considéré au xix siècle. Disc. prél. p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> Fides tua te salvum fecit. Marc. x, 52.

Thus for the happiness of men, and the tranquillity of States, is established and preserved, that sacred reverence of authority, which in his energetic language Tertullian calls *the religion of second majesty*. And the same principle which puts order in society by constituting social authority, also puts order into families by constituting domestic authority. These two authorities, similar, because a family is but a small society; unequal because society is a great family, or the assemblage of all the several families, are both one and the other only the power of God, *of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,*<sup>1</sup> according to the expression of St Paul, that is to say, His authority; for under the law of truth and order, nothing is arbitrary, not even names, because they must express true or false relations; and it may be observed casually, that is why language changes with maxims, and changes its nature with ideas. In the same way then, that the paternal power is but social authority in the family, social authority is but the paternal power in society: and this is the reason of the immortality of government, and at the same time of its mildness, among Christian nations.

To bind the government to the subjects, and the subjects to one another, is but the commencement of the benefits of Christianity. The spirit of love which it inspires does not stop, let me be allowed the expression, at the frontier, like the hard and exclusive patriotism of the ancients. In commanding man to love man, Jesus Christ does not discriminate between the fellow-countryman and the foreigner; he does not except even our enemies, those who curse and persecute us: so that by an admirable universality of love, his doctrine tends to unite nations together no less than members of the same society: or rather it tends to form a single society: of all nations. 'The world,' said the author of the Apologetics to the Gentiles, sixteen hundred years ago, 'the whole world, is in our eyes but a vast republic, the common country of the human race.'<sup>2</sup> Is it to be wondered at, that maxims and sentiments so strange to the Pagans, should have changed

<sup>1</sup> Hujus rei gratia flecto genua mea ad Patrem Domini nostri Jesu-Christi, ex quo omnis paternitas in caelis, et in terra nominatur. Ep. ad Ephes. iii, 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Unam omnium rempublicam agnoscimus, mundum. Apologet. adv. Gentes, cap. xxxviii.

everything, both political rights and the laws of war, and the laws and customs ?

This beautiful European civilisation, which had no model in antiquity, to what do we owe it, if not to Christianity ? This allows of so little doubt, that the author of *l'Histoire philosophique des Etablissements des Européens dans les deux Indes* admits it formally, at least as far as regards the nations of the North. Wherever Christianity is introduced, it produces the same effects ; and as soon as it retires, barbarism takes its place. Formerly it civilised a part of Africa and of Asia : fifteen centuries later, it made men of the cannibals of the New World ; and from the wonders which it was seen to effect in Paraguay, an opinion may be formed of what the whole of America would have become under its influence, if a false and cruel policy had not snatched away from religion these infantine nations, which with the authority of heaven and the gentleness of a mother, it was leading towards order by the path of truth. Whilst philosophy, armed with science and force, and disposing as a sovereign of twenty-five millions of men and of their property, in a rich and fertile country, was only able to effect anarchy, indigence, and every evil ; a few poor priests, penetrating with a wooden cross in their hands, into uncultivated countries, inhabited by ferocious savages, created there, by the sole power of truth and virtue, so perfect a republic, that imagination had never pictured anything like it in its most brilliant dreams. It would have seemed as though a few fortunate children of Adam were seen to have escaped from the malediction which had fallen upon his race, and to be peacefully enjoying innocence, and the happiness which accompanies it, in the delicious groves of Eden. God willed that for once at least, religion, acting upon a nation without any obstacle, should alone form it into the social state, so as to show by a great and incontestable proof, that in its dogmas and in its precepts are contained all the truths really useful to men, and all the felicity which his condition allows him to enjoy here below.

But in considering Christianity on a vaster scene, what a power of conservation did it not give to the governments, especially in the countries where, as in France, the religious

principle had acquired the most vigour and perfection? That kingdom *made by the bishops*, according to Gibbon's remark, lived fourteen centuries, without the form of its government having undergone any essential alteration; and we should still see that ancient government upright and flourishing, had not the prop of religion, which had so solidly strengthened it, been taken away at the first, in order to overthrow it. And certainly it will not be alleged that, during that long succession of reigns, under the tutelary authority of seventy-six kings, whose pacific sceptre protected our ancestors, and guided them in the path of civilisation, the population had reason to lament over the changes effected in social order, or that they had acquired the right to disdain that magnificent gift of a divinely constituted authority which they held from Christianity.

I have quoted above what the author of *Emile* says on this subject: the testimony of Montesquieu is not less pointed: 'While the Mahomedan princes incessantly give and receive death, religion amongst the Christians renders the princes less timid, and consequently less cruel. The prince reckons upon his subjects, and the subjects upon the prince. Admirable effect! The Christian religion, which seems to have no other object than the felicity of the next life, also makes our happiness in this.

'It is the Christian religion which, notwithstanding the greatness of the empire and the faultiness of the climate, has prevented despotism from being established in Ethiopia, and has carried into the midst of Africa the laws and customs of Europe. . . .

'If on the one side the continual massacres of the Greek and Roman kings and leaders be placed before the eyes, and on the other the destruction of cities and nations by those same leaders; Timur and Genghis Khan, who devastated Asia: and we shall see that we owe to Christianity, in government, certain political rights, and in war, a certain law of nations, which human nature cannot be sufficiently grateful for.

'It is this law of nations which is the cause that, amongst us, victory leaves to conquered nations those great things, life,

liberty, the laws, property and always religion, when men are not self blinded."

The Christian religion which commands men to see their brothers in all their fellow-creatures, is naturally incompatible with slavery; it has ended also by abolishing it wherever it had been established.<sup>2</sup> But when the interests, in concert with doctrines, nourished an implacable enmity amongst nations; when no other law of war was acknowledged than the terrible right of extermination, to reduce to slavery, was to show mercy; in butchering, men thought they were but just, and servitude was the pagan mercy; happy yet were the conquered, when avarice protected them with fetters from the sword!

After a sanguinary victory gained by Germanicus over the Germans, a few of those unfortunates, climbing to the tops of the trees, sought in their foliage for an asylum from the fury of the Romans: *In sport they pierced them with arrows*, says with fearful coolness the grave Tacitus; *admotis sagittariis per ludibrium figebantur*.<sup>3</sup> The first book alone of his Annals contains many no less atrocious traits, related with the same indifference. The Roman army, in the middle of the night, falls suddenly upon the Marsi, who were plunged in a deep sleep, after a feast, during which they had given themselves up to all sorts of excesses, 'Cæsar,' continues the historian, 'divides into four bodies the eager legions, so as to extend still further the work of devastation. A space of fifty thousand paces was ravaged with fire and sword: neither age nor sex inspired pity, the sacred and profane edifices were razed to the ground, amongst others a temple named *Tanfana*, very famous among these nations. On the side of the Romans, they had not to regret the loss of a drop of blood, the soldier striking enemies who were half asleep, unarmed, or wandering about at hazard.'<sup>4</sup> The following year, arms were again taken up and Germanicus again says Tacitus, 'incited the soldiers to persevere in slaughter: What need have we of captives?

<sup>1</sup> *Esprit des Lois*, liv. xxiv, ch. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch relates in the life of Numa, that in the time of Saturn, there were neither masters nor slaves. In our climates, Christianity has brought back this age. *Esprit des Lois*, liv. xv, ch. iii.

<sup>3</sup> *Annal*. lib. ii, cap. xvi.

<sup>4</sup> *Annal*. lib. i, cap. li.



the utter extermination of the nation will be the only end of the war.<sup>1</sup>

Let us never forget it, that the ancient philosophy so abounding in sterile speculations, did not even think of raising its voice in favour of humanity. It is not to be found that any philosopher had an idea of any other law of nations than that which has just been seen in action in Tacitus, or had called for the abolition of slavery, or had expressed a mere desire for it. Human wisdom contemplated, without seeming to be thereby moved or astonished, the oppression of man, himself insensible of his degradation, and stolidly sunk in his debasing wretchedness. Wonderful to relate, it was needful that the wisdom of God should itself descend upon earth, I do not say only to deliver the human race from the calamities which weighed it down, but to give it the hope, to instil into it the desire of being freed from them.

In our days, war has been the commonplace theme for philosophical declamations, and never have there been more wars, or wars more fraught with destruction, than in the century in which shallow philanthropists have declared all wars to be unjust. Christianity does not declaim; it exhorts to peace, it established it through its maxims by taking away the causes of discord; and when the care for their preservation compels nations to have recourse to arms, it makes humanity the first law of the battles. Religion penetrates even into camps to banish from them hatred and inexorable cupidity, to stop the abuse of force, to give some tenderness to victory, and to cover the weak with its inviolable protection.<sup>2</sup> Not being able to stay the sword, it blunts its point, and then pours balm into the wounds which the sword has made.

<sup>1</sup> Orabatque insisterent cædibus : nil opus captivis, solam internecionem gentis finem bello fore. *Annal. lib. ii, cap. xxi.*

<sup>2</sup> History affords a striking example of the difference which existed, in this respect, between the pagan and the evangelical doctrines, and teaches us to bless the Religion which substituted for the atrocious customs sanctioned by the laws of war amongst the Romans, a spirit of mildness, and if I may so call it, a delicacy in humanity as affecting as they had been hitherto unknown. 'Constantine had been seen after his first victories to give up to the wild beasts the hostile chiefs whom he had made prisoners. Pagan panegyrists celebrated this barbarity with emphasis. They took pleasure in recalling this triumph, in which an emperor added to the magnificence of the games, and to the pleasure of the populace by the slaughter of enemies in the arena. After that Christianity had begun to enlighten

It is not that the history of Christian nations is not sometimes soiled by dreadful examples of barbarity. But what would philosophy gain by bringing them up against us? They are proofs against it, not against us; for they were ever the effect, either of an error expressly condemned by religion, or of contempt of its maxims, a contempt which is at bottom, as I shall soon show, but real unbelief. Certainly it would be strange if Christianity were to be called to account for the crimes brought forth by the forgetfulness of its doctrines, and if it were denied that it makes men mild, clement, and compassionate, because that in ceasing to be Christian, they become hard and cruel.

Observe besides that the devastations and massacres, of which the annals of the ancients offer such frequent instances, were essential to the right of war, as it was understood by them; whilst with us those acts of supreme rigour are a violation of this same right: neither can it be disputed that among Christian nations, these acts are infinitely more rare; and the profound horror which they inspire proves how much the general disposition has changed.

The Christian religion has effected in legislation a revolution no less happy and complete than in political rights, and in the law of nations. The law is no longer the expression of the will of the strongest; it no longer has for its object the protection of private interests, but the establishment of justice, the supreme interest of all; and justice being only the order willed by God, the law under the rule of Christianity, is the expression of the will of the government, and from that moment it must be submitted to, like as to the will of God Himself; for *whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.*<sup>1</sup>

Thus all the social truths are derived from that first and great truth, that *all power comes from God*; and the fundamental principle of political right is also the fundamental

his soul, an orator again recalled those same victories over the Franks; he did not mention their torture. Then Constantine used to promise a sum of money to his soldiers for every enemy whom they brought to him alive.' Des Changements opérés dans toutes les parties de l'administration de l'Empire romain, sous les règnes de Dioclétien, de Constantin, et de leurs successeurs jusqu'à Julien. Par J. Naudet, tom. ii, p. 54.

<sup>1</sup> Qui resistit potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit. Ep. ad Rom. xiii, 2.

principle of legislation. The laws are obeyed for the same reason that the government is obeyed ; and the doctrine which strengthens and moderates the government, equally strengthens the authority of the laws, and softens and perfects them.

Men do not sufficiently admire the wisdom and beauty of Christian laws. They so perfectly express the true relations of social beings, that their very conformity to our nature prevents us from being struck by it. When everything is as it should be, we are only astonished on reflection. The simplicity of order conceals its grandeur from the eyes. The mind pauses in the presence of artificial governments, as the looks are fixed upon complicated works of art. The sight of a living being does not produce any impression upon us ; if an automaton be shown to us, we are then immediately seized with admiration. The ancient legislations tended to oppress the weak ; ours leave no kind of weakness unprotected ; and we are not surprised by reason of the perfect agreement between conscience and the law. Yet it is certain that religion alone could give to the laws, and alone can preserve to them this noble and consoling character. So soon as its authority is set aside, everything is shaken and confounded ; the clearest truths become problematical, and inflexible, unchangeable order, is disdainfully set apart in the doubtful territory of opinion. What is more evident than the natural equality of men ? Nevertheless during more than twenty centuries, reason has founded society upon the slavery of a portion of its members, and did not even consider that it was possible to abolish servitude. Humanity is indebted to Christianity for this great blessing ; it is that alone, it is God who willed that man should be free, and in order to become so, it was needful that he should have faith in freedom. Reasoning, far from freeing him, would have for ever clenched his fetters, since in reasoning upon social order, Rousseau himself lays down the necessity of slavery, in a passage which I have quoted. If he decided thus in France, in the eighteenth century of the Christian era, is it to be believed that at Rome, under the republic, paganism would have instilled into him more generous opinions ?

Without family, there is no State : now polygamy, and

divorce, which is the worst kind of polygamy, destroys family, oppresses the mother, oppresses the child, and introduces anarchy into domestic society. Religion alone, however, has proclaimed the indissolubility of the conjugal bond ; and even after having known this principle, after having long observed its admirable effects, reason, enlightened by the knowledge of Christianity, but rejecting its authority, has judged it fitting to transform marriage into a temporary contract, a sort of lease revocable at will, with the provision of dividing the children, as at the expiration of a farming partnership, the animals produced during its course, are divided. And observe that at the same time that the right of repudiating the head of the house was attributed to the wife, the right of repudiating the sovereign was accorded to the subjects, so close is the connection which exists between the political and the domestic authority.

Can any crime be imagined more repugnant to nature than the murder of a child by the father, or a more barbarous custom than the abandoning of those innocent little creatures, condemned by the passions to be born and never to live ? Yet the laws of almost all the nations of antiquity allowed the abandoning and the murder of children, and it is still at present an universal custom in a large part of the globe. Let philosophic reason weigh the pros and cons, calculate the duties of parents, the interest of a State overburdened with an embarrassing population, the interest of the child itself, which is spared so much suffering, and perhaps crime, by shortening a life after all so little to be regretted ; I shall be much mistaken, if reason, founded upon these and a thousand similar considerations, will not, especially if interest sharpen its sophisticated subtlety, go so far as to see in murder the exercise of a legitimate right, and even an act of humanity. And let me not be accused of having recourse to odious and improbable suppositions ; for the reasoning which just now I applied to infancy, whole nations have applied it to old age ; and practically it does not differ from that by which Rousseau endeavours to justify his cruel conduct towards the sad fruits of his own licentiousness. Let eternal thanks be given to Christianity, which of the child, a worthless being in the

eyes of polity, and too often a burden to cupidity, has made a being sacred in the eyes of religion. Such a one who insults that holy religion, perhaps owes to it his life. Who knows if without it, unnatural parents would not have cast him at his birth into the current of a river, as is the practice of the Indians, or if they would not as in China, have exposed him at night on the high way, to be devoured by animals, or carried away in the morning, in the same cart with the mud and dirt of the streets? It must be taught to those who think themselves wise because they contemn, and profound because the most simple truths do not reach them; baptism saves more children amongst Christian nations than war destroys men. Yet philosophy will see but an absurd superstition in baptism, and you will hear it deride that sublime institution, which, considered from a merely political point of view, would still be an inappreciable benefit, and a masterpiece of humanity.

The mildness and equity of our criminal laws, their sacred inflexibility, the infinite precautions of the legislator to prevent fatal mistakes in their application, are so many more effects of the spirit established by Christianity. It alone has taught man to respect man: philosophy, like Paganism only teaches to despise him; and it is this that made Tertullian say, while reproaching the persecutors of the disciples of Jesus Christ for their fierce disdain of humanity: *Oh man, how great a being, if thou couldst know thyself!*<sup>1</sup> Man then knew himself indeed so little, that he valued himself at a price in money; he was bought, he was sold like base cattle; and in order to abolish that infamous traffic it was needed that God Himself should be sold for thirty pieces of silver. This execrable sale was the treaty for our redemption.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tu homo, tantum nomen, si intelligas te! Apologet. adv. Gentes, cap. xlviii.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of the conquest of America by the Spaniards, religion covering the conquered nations with its mantle, protected their liberty with all its power. The Protestants, the philosophers even have praised the conduct of the Catholic clergy on that occasion. (See Robertson, History of America, and M. v. Humboldt.) It alone, at that memorable period, occupied itself with the interests of humanity, and defended them with courageous perseverance against the avarice of the conquerors. And see, even here, how the facts agree with the principles laid down in this and in the preceding chapter. Wherever policy, guided by private interest, acts alone, the unfortunate inhabitants, oppressed and enslaved; were destroyed in a very short space. Where, on the contrary, they were consigned

The Pagan laws, not less barbarous than their customs, sported with men's lives with a fearful indifference. If it happened at Rome that a citizen was assassinated, his slaves were put to death. If their master was himself under an accusation, they were tortured. And if the law had omitted to provide for some caprice of the sovereign or of the populace, this was remedied by a double crime, as history observes with respect to the murder of the daughter of Sejanus. It must be admitted that this little resembles the sacred duties which religion imposes upon our kings. 'I swear,' this is the oath which it requires of them before pouring the sacred oil upon their foreheads, 'I swear to observe and cause to be observed justice and mercy in every judgment, so that the Almighty and Merciful God may show mercy to me also.' Rigid equity, and Christian gentleness, duty, and the reason of duty, precept and sanction, everything is there.

One of the characteristics of religion is that it never reasons with men. It says to societies as to each of their members : Do this and you shall live.<sup>1</sup> Nothing is more admirable than this method, but it befits only God. Supreme truth alone has the right to prescribe belief with authority, and sovereign justice the right to impose laws which are binding without being inquired into. And as nations live only by belief, and order is maintained only by the aid of the laws, it follows that no society can subsist without a divine authority, to which all minds and all wills bend. If reduced to his faculty of reasoning as a sole means of preservation, man would perish in a very short time : it is the same with nations. The reason

into the hands of Religion, they owed to it these two great advantages, civilisation and freedom. As to negro slavery the Church never approved of it ; it tolerated it because slavery is rather opposed to the spirit of the Christian religion, than formally prohibited by its laws. The Church was preparing by degrees its abolition in our colonies, by softening the condition of the slaves, by forming them for the social state, by carefully cultivating in these backward children, the faculties and virtues, the development of which would announce their arrival at their majority. Religion, no more than nature, does not do anything abruptly. It brings on from afar desirable changes, and effects them by gentle means and slow degrees. That is the course of wisdom. Philosophy came suddenly to disturb this course : it loudly proclaimed the freedom of the negroes, without precaution, without foresight, without examining whether the men it was suddenly freeing were capable of being free. What was the result? the colonies set on fire, the colonists massacred, complete anarchy, and wars of extermination.

<sup>1</sup> Hoc fac, et vives. Luc x, 28.

wanders and totters, as soon as authority ceases to sustain it. Then the passions dispose of it, and lend to it their force which is entirely destructive. What would happen for instance, if the right of property were placed at the disposal of reason? What would not be said, what has not been said, to show its nullity, and injustice? Philosophers, answer clearly, without phrases: by what title would you rather possess your field, and which security appears to you more sure, whether the law which says: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his field, nor his ox, nor anything that is his;'<sup>1</sup> or the reasonings of Raynal, of Diderot, and of Rousseau, upon the origin and foundation of property?

Good morals complete the work of good laws. *Quid leges sine moribus vanæ proficiunt?* said the pagans themselves. Of what use is it to write order in a code, if religion do not engrave the love of it in the hearts? The laws, moreover, confine themselves to proscribing certain offences, they do not command any virtue. Religion has reserved to itself alone that sublime portion of legislation, which rules all in man, even his most secret desires, and most fugitive affections. How many crimes escape from human justice! How many others it is compelled to tolerate! Religion tolerates no disorder: it forbids even the thought of evil; it commands us to tend to an infinite perfection: 'Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'<sup>2</sup> And, wonderful to relate, at the same time that it crushes human pride under the loftiness of its precepts, and represses in the just man all sentiments of presumption, by showing to him ceaselessly new virtues above him for his acquisition, it raises the confidence of the guilty, by opening to repentance the immense bosom of divine mercy. Contrary to philosophy which snatches even hope from virtue, religion takes away despair from crime itself.

Where is the man without compunction who is never touched by the beauty of the Gospel morality? What purity and depth in its precepts! what perfection in its counsels! what a touching love of humanity! What an amiable gentle-

<sup>1</sup> Deuteron. chap. v. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Estote ergo vos perfecti, sicut et pater vester cœlestis perfectus est. Matth. v, 48

ness, and penetrating unction there is in the simplicity of its maxims! How they go straight to the soul, and how they stir up the whole conscience! This divine law may no doubt be violated, but who would venture to contest its excellence, unless he had lost all feeling of right? Peace and felicity are its fruits. It unites, it consoles, it prevents or repairs the evils of nature and society. Heaven would come down to earth if men would by observing it, consent to their own happiness.

And look what Christianity does to constrain men to be happy. It does not present before them any abstract image, any ideal phantom of virtue, which they might perhaps admire, but which they would never take the resolution to imitate: it offers to them virtue itself, living perfection in the person of the God-man; and adding to its precepts a sanction of infinite force, it opens beneath the footsteps of crime the gloomy abyss of hell, the desolate region of eternal woe and torture, and shows to virtue in the heights of the skies, the immortal prize which awaits it. No finite reward or punishment would be worthy of the justice and goodness of God, nor sufficient to retain man within order, since even the hope of supreme good, and the dread of sovereign evil, are still often powerless against the influence of the senses, and the blind ardour of the passions.

In this therefore as in all the rest, the eminent superiority of Christianity over philosophy is indisputable. In the mouth of philosophy the word *duty* is void of meaning: I defy all the philosophers together to give an intelligible definition of it. But even should they succeed in doing so, should they convince the reason of the reality of virtue, what would be that virtue deprived of sanction, other than an empty make-believe; and where would they find sufficiently strong determining motives to engage me to sacrifice to it everything, even happiness? I listen to religion, and I understand it when it speaks to me of eternal rewards and punishments; I see there a motive, an interest of infinite importance; my reason approves, my heart is touched. But where is the heaven of philosophy? where is its hell? where is the immortal palm which it reserves to the disciples of virtue?



Let it show it ; then perhaps I will try to deserve it. But let it not pretend to allure me with fancies. What is the contempt with which it threatens me, if I obey my inclinations ? Of what real good would it deprive me ? In what manner will the opinion of others affect my being ? Will it take from me health, riches, the feeling of pleasure, or independence ? This contempt is nothing if I despise it ; and were I weak enough to be moved by it, what prevents me from withdrawing myself from it, by shrouding, like so many others, my enjoyments under the thick veil of mystery ? But whilst hiding them from other men, I shall not hide them from myself ; they must be bought at the cost of remorse. This is a more grave matter ; let us look into it however. I will admit, that, in the philosophical systems, conscience is not a mere prejudice, or that I have not been able to overcome this prejudice ; it is certain for all that, that placed between a pleasure which I desire, and the remorse which I am apprehensive of, the choice of crime or virtue is simply a matter of sensation. If desire prevail, I give way ; I resist on the contrary if fear is more lively than desire. Now let any passion be named to me which, without the fear of any other chastisement, will be restrained by the simple apprehension of the regret of having violated the abstract laws of order.

No, philosophy can only impose powerless checks upon vice, as it can only offer chimerical rewards to virtue. What does it promise me ? a name which I am not certain to enjoy, an empty noise of reputation, which the wise man disdains, and which gives no consolation for a single misfortune of life. And this promise moreover, what guarantees it ? Who will answer for it that virtue will not on the contrary bring upon my head insult, contempt, hatred and persecution ? Should I be the first mortal who had gathered those sad fruits of his fidelity to difficult duties ? I am then offered in compensation, the joy which accompanies one's own good self-testimony. What a mockery ! the joy of poverty, of hunger, of thirst, of sickness, of the sufferings of the body, and the anguish of the soul, the joy of prisons and scaffolds, the joy of wretchedness without hope ! I do not know what to compare to this strange joy, unless it be that joy which, we are told, we ought to feel at

the sterile contemplation of order, which crumples and crushes all our inclinations under its inflexible laws. Of what consequence is the beauty of a machine to the wretch who is shattered betwixt its wheels?

There, however, are the strongest motives which philosophy has been able to find to turn aside men from crime, and to lead them towards virtue. Not knowing upon what principle to exact from them the sacrifice of their interest, a sacrifice which itself constitutes virtue, it has betaken itself to maintain that virtue is only that interest itself.<sup>1</sup> This would be true if the practice of duties always made us happy in the present time. Then men who cannot be mistaken as to what

<sup>1</sup> 'All questions connected with morality have within our hearts a solution always ready for them, which the passions sometimes prevent us from following, but which they can never destroy; and the solution of all these questions ever comes to an end with more or less ramification, in a common trunk, or our interest well understood, the principle of every moral obligation.' (D'Alembert *Eclaircissement sur les Elém. de Philos.* t. v, des *Mélanges*, p. 6.) I am in admiration of the wit with which such great follies can be spoken. How can my interest which is only related to myself, impose upon me obligations towards others? I do not believe that two more discordant ideas were ever joined together. It would be as well to assert frankly, like Diderot, that our sole duty is to make ourselves happy: that is comprehensible at least. But whatever the maxim of D'Alembert may be at bottom, consider its consequences. In the first place who will guarantee that the generality of men will always be able to *understand well* their own interest, in the sense in which that interest is that of the whole of society, and is dependent upon the relations which may exist between its members? How much knowledge, information, experience, and reflection, what depth and sagacity of mind, are wanted to embrace so many diverse objects, to examine and compare them, and to draw from them in each circumstance, the rules of conduct appropriate to our position? Morality, therefore, will be at most only for philosophers. In fact, since *our well-understood interest is the principle of all the moral obligations*, there could not exist moral obligations for those whom any cause whatever puts out of the condition of well understanding their interest. If they are mistaken, it is a misfortune, and not a crime. More than that, the rogue who in robbing me thinks that he well understands his interest, far from deserving blame, does on the contrary a praiseworthy action; he scrupulously fulfils his duty so far as he knows it. No, you will answer, he misleads himself, and ought to reason better. But who tells you that he can do so? And then, by what right do you pretend that in what concerns him, your judgment is better than his? How will you prove to him that you understand his interests better than he does? Our interest, which is but our happiness, does it not depend upon our manner of thinking and feeling? You fear infamy; he defies it. You show him the gibbet: are all thieves hung? The probability of robbing with impunity is one of the elements of his calculation. But in setting a fatal example, he exposes himself to being some day imitated at his own expense. Be it so, it is a risk which he runs; and why should he prefer the certainty of never being robbed, whilst possessing nothing, to the hypothetical danger of losing a portion of what he might have acquired by that means? The worst that can befall him is to return to the sorry condition in which you wish him to remain. In the interval he will have enjoyed: and as, considering only the present life, it is his *well-understood interest*, thieving accompanied by suitable precautions, is evidently for him, a *moral obligation*.

they feel, would be virtuous, from that same invincible necessity which forces them to desire well-being. But it is very far from being so ; and religion, too rich in truths ever to be in want of falsehood, does not fear loudly to warn its disciples of this. 'If in this life only,' says St Paul, 'we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.'<sup>1</sup>

The interest of the Christian is to gain heaven, whatever labour and suffering it may cost him in this life : but he who does not expect another has but one interest, which is to make himself, no matter at what cost, happy in this one. Now what a strange happiness to propose to man, is this ceaseless combating of his desires, his inclinations, the very wants of his nature ; this sacrifice of self on every occasion, without hope of reward, for the happiness of others ! What, is it the interest of the poor man to want necessaries, when he can take possession of a portion of the superfluity of the rich ? He will be hung if he robs. I understand : the interest of living must prevail over the interest of appeasing hunger. Therefore if he were sure of avoiding execution, the second interest, remaining alone, would point out a contrary duty. Take away the executioner, morality is changed ; he is the father of all the virtues. Yet whatever may be done, this powerful moralist would not be able to suffice for everything. The greater number of the vices which secretly ruin society, or which disturb its harmony, avarice, cupidity, selfishness, ingratitude, hardness of heart, envy, hatred, calumny, licentiousness, are not within his province. He will not secure your daughter, your wife, from seduction. Now, if in the ardour of a violent passion, I be free to satisfy it in secret, with the certainty of never being discovered, will you say that my interest bids me obstinately to reject the pleasure which offers itself to me ? Will it also be my interest which will make me renounce my habits, my comforts, my property, my country, my family, and whatever is dearest to me, for the advantage of my fellow creatures, or of the State to which I belong ? It has not been observed hitherto, as far as I know, that in these various cases, the virtues of the unbelievers compared

<sup>1</sup> Si in hac vita tantum in Christo sperantes sumus, miserabiliores sumus omnibus hominibus. Ep. 1 ad Cor. cap. xv, 19.

with those of the Christians, had a character of superiority sufficiently striking to give much credit to the principle of individual interest. How is there to be found in this interest a motive for the greatest sacrifice which society can ask of its members, and which man can make to man, namely the sacrifice of existence itself? All our present interests are contained in the supreme interest of life. He who gives that, reserves nothing for himself, not even hope. Before raising a pretension to virtue, of which this sacrifice is the last degree, let philosophy go then, and seek in the bosom of the void for an interest which alone shall counterbalance all the others; let it show to us in the depths of the grave, in the midst of that cold dust, and those dry bones which will never be reanimated, the price which is to repay the most sublime devotion.

Sophisms do not destroy the reality of things. It will be all very well to try to confound private interests with the general interest, there will always exist between them an opposition, unconquerable by every argument. In a thousand circumstances the general interest will require that I should languish in penury, that I should wear out my health and strength in difficult labours, of which others will gather the fruits; that I should stifle my desires, my inclinations, my affections; in short, that I should suffer, and that I should die: and until it shall have been proved that wretchedness, suffering and death, are in themselves advantages to be preferred to riches, to pleasures, to life, it will be false, evidently false, that private interest, separated from the fear of punishments, and the hope of future rewards, can be the rule of duty, and the foundation of morality. If there existed a country where this doctrine were universally received, the most horrible confusion would there take the place of order, and it would be necessary to hasten to fly from that ill-fated land, where crime without remorse would arrogantly reign under the name of virtue.

Do you desire to put division amongst men, to excite enmity between them, to exalt selfishness, cupidity, and all the passions, bring personal interest into play. Do you wish on the contrary to unite the members of the family and of the State, to produce sweet concord, tender humanity, make each

one, forgetting himself, to feel, so to say, that he exists in others, and that he knows no other interest than the interest of all. Such is the spirit of Christianity, and since there have been nations, none has subsisted but by participating more or less abundantly in this spirit, and in the truths of which it is the principle. Its total extinction in a nation would be the entire extinction of the very life of that nation, just as from its perfect development results the greatest vital power for nations.

To sacrifice everything to self is a natural inclination of man, because man naturally prefers himself to everything. The principle of private interest and the principle of duties are therefore essentially conflicting, and the being who should have no other rule of duty than his interest, would be essentially unsociable; for the giving up of oneself, among the members of any society, is the first condition of the existence of that society. Thus religion, or society between God and man is founded on the mutual gift or the sacrifice of God to man and of man to God, and human society is equally founded upon the mutual gift or sacrifice of man to man, or of each man to all men; and sacrifice is the essence of all real society. The evangelical doctrine of renunciation of self, so strange to the human understanding, is but the expression of this truth, or the promulgation of this great social law. That is why amongst all Christian nations the idea of *devotion* and of *consecration* is joined to all public functions: a sublime idea which religion has made so familiar to us, that it hardly excites our attention. We disdainfully enjoy the benefits of Christianity like those of nature: the more they are great, multiplied and continual, the less do they astonish, and the less do they affect us.

If, however, we wish to feel the difference between our social state and that which preceded it, let us listen to Jesus Christ himself: there are more truths in one of his words than in the speeches of all the philosophers together.

'Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones have power over them.'

Thus on the one side, the appearance, and so to say, the shadow of authority, and in reality the domination of force, *videntur principari . . . dominantur*; and on the other side slavery, *potestatem habent ipsorum*; absence of authority, blind violence, trembling and servile submission, void of obedience : that is pagan society.

‘But, adds the Saviour, so shall it not be among you ; but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister : and whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all : for even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.’<sup>1</sup>

Here everything changes: power, established in the interest of all, becomes a trust, and obedience a right. To reign is to serve, and the sovereign is but the first servant of nations. The greater he is, the more laborious is his ministry; and whilst there is not a member of society who has not the right of being *served*, he alone, deprived of the privilege of obedience, and sacrificing himself, like the Son of Man, to the happiness of men, remains amidst the general liberty, the slave of the public order and happiness : that is Christian society.

The spirit of sacrifice, or the spirit of love there ceaselessly combats, with a success in proportion to the degree of faith, the disastrous principle of private interest. The absolute abandonment of that interest is as it were the soul of our religious and political institutions ; and nothing, in States, is durable or truly social but what reposes upon this basis. The abnegation of self is the first condition of all Christian greatness. It does not belong to many men to be able to bear its weight. Image and source of all the powers conservative of social order, kingship commences in the indigence of the manger, grows and accustoms itself in labour, in fatigue, in watching, it gathers on its passage a few palms, a few fugitive acclamations, soon followed by curses and cries of

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus autem vocans eos, ait illis : Scitis quia hi, qui videntur principari gentibus dominantur eis : et principes eorum potestatem habent ipsorum. Nop ita est autem in vobis, sed quicumque voluerit fieri major, erit vester minister : et quicumque voluerit in vobis primus esse, erit omnium servus. Nam et Filius hominis non venit ut ministraretur ei, sed ut ministraret, et daret animam suam redemptionem pro multis. Marc. x, 42, 45.*

death, by anguish and faintness in the garden of agony, by the tortures of the judgment seat, and at length, bent under the cross, the brows crowned with a diadem of thorns, it comes, blessing its executioners, to expire on the mountain which crowns the valley of Topheth.

It is peculiar to narrow minds to be extremely struck by the weakness of individuals, and very little by the general spirit of institutions. All the reproaches which have been cast against the nobility, and the clergy, have no other foundation. But let us be shown anything in antiquity to be compared to that hereditary consecration of certain families, and certain classes of citizens to the service of society, in the high offices of the priesthood, the magistracy, and war ; so entire a consecration, so perfect a sacrifice of man to man, that nothing is excepted from it, neither rest, nor domestic enjoyments, nor property, nor life. Will you judge, from a single fact, of the change which in this respect religion has effected in our ideas ? The severe Brutus carried on by force of arms the most horrible exactions in the provinces, without his reputation suffering by it. Among us, any public man who should have allowed his soul to be mastered by base personal interest, would lately have been branded as the lowest of wretches.

We have seen philosophy, coming after Christianity, introduce into society every disorder and crime, and no one has been surprised, for nothing is more easily conceived than the transition from good to evil, or the depravation of the human heart ; it is the inclination of nature itself. Eighteen centuries before this period, Christianity, coming after philosophy, had introduced all the virtues into society, and never had so great a prodigy astonished the earth ; for the transition from evil to good, the effort by which nations raise themselves out of the bosom of dissolution, and universal anarchy, to the perfection of order, is visibly above nature. The pagans also could not at first understand anything in Christian morality. They contemplated with surprise, and almost with aversion, that sublime disinterestedness, that perfect union, that compassionate charity, that gentle austerity of customs, which formed so strange a contrast with their own vices. Virtue to them was like a fearful mystery. A secret distrust alienated

them from the disciples of Jesus Christ, from that young society, of which the Scripture gives in a few words such a wonderful idea. 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul : neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things in common.'<sup>1</sup> The world, astounded at such a spectacle, grew alarmed at it, and reason, destitute of faith, not being able to reach to that height, men who knew no other motive of human actions than interest, saw themselves constrained to impute secret crimes to the Christians, in order to explain their public virtues. It was, in part, to repulse these unworthy accusations, and to indicate to the pagans the source of the virtues which they calumniated, that Tertullian published his admirable Apology.

'I call to witness,' he said, 'your own acts, you who preside every day at the trial of the accused. That thief, that assassin, that violator of the temples, that seducer, is he inscribed upon your registers as a Christian? Or when Christians appear before you in those qualities, who amongst them is found guilty of those offences? It is with your own people that the prisons and the mines overflow ; it is with your people that the wild beasts are fattened, it is among your people that the managers of the massacres incessantly recruit those flocks of criminals destined for your games. There there is no Christian, or he is only a Christian. If he is charged with another crime, then he is not a Christian.

'We alone then are innocent. Why wonder at it, if for us it is a necessity to be so? Yes, it is a necessity for us. Taught by God, we are perfectly acquainted with virtue, which a perfect master reveals to us ; and we practise it faithfully by the command, and under the look of a formidable judge. For you it is taught by man and commanded by man. You can therefore neither know it like us nor practise it like us : everything is wanting to you, both the fulness of truth, and the awful sanction of duty. What is the wisdom of man for showing what is really good? What is his authority for

<sup>1</sup> *Multitudinis autem credentium erat cor unum, et anima una ; nec quisquam eorum, quæ possidebat, aliquid suum esse dicebat, sed erant illis omnia communia. Act, cap iv, 32.*



commanding it? The one is as easily misled as the other is easily despised.

'And indeed, which is the most complete precept, that which says: thou shalt not kill; or that which forbids even anger? Which is the more perfect, to prohibit adultery, or the mere lust of the eye? bad actions, or even injurious words? to forbid injury, or to forbid even the repulse of injury? and know also that what appears to tend towards virtue in your laws, they have borrowed it from a more ancient law, the divine law.

'What, however, is after all the authority of human laws, which man eludes by concealing his crime, and which he defies voluntarily or from necessity? Consider besides the shortness of the punishment, which death terminates whatever it may be . . . as for us, who must be judged by a God who sees everything, and who knows that his punishments are eternal, we alone embrace virtue, both because we know it perfectly, and because there are no shades thick enough to hide crime, and by reason of the greatness of the punishment, not only long, but eternal. We fear the sovereign judge, what has he to fear who judges men who fear Him; we fear God, and not the proconsul.'<sup>1</sup>

If philosophy knows of any more repressing motives, let it indicate them. If it do not know any, let it withdraw and leave religion to reign in peace over society, where it alone establishes and maintains order. Whatever pride may persuade itself, the hand of man is too weak to bear the sceptre of the moral world. Never, at the voice of reason, and under the empire of human laws, have virtues been seen to arise, such as those of which Tertullian will draw the portrait.

'We do good without regard to persons, because we do it for ourselves, expecting our reward, not from men whose gratitude and praise we disdain; but from God, who makes this universal love a duty to us. Every act, every word hurtful to others, the desire, the simple thought of evil, are equally prohibited to us. Whom could we hate, if it is commanded us to love even our enemies? If it is forbidden us to revenge

<sup>1</sup> Apologet. adv. Gent. c. xlv.

ourselves on those who offend us, so as not to make ourselves as guilty as them, whom could we offend? Do you yourselves judge of it. How often have you to be severe with the Christians, whether of your own accord, or to obey the laws? How many times, without waiting your orders, and without other right than its fury, does not a hostile populace cast stones at us, and fire our houses? In the bacchanalian frenzy they do not even spare the dead, torn out of the graves where they repose, that sacred asylum of death, they tear the corpses, already mutilated, and unable to be recognised, and scatter about the fragments. Were we ever seen to use reprisals against this mad hatred which follows us beyond the tomb. A single night and a few torches would be enough to take ample vengeance: but God forbid that a divine religion should have recourse for avenging itself to human means, or that it should be afflicted at being tried by suffering.

‘Indifferent to glory and honours, your public assemblies have no attractions for us. We renounce your dramas on account of their superstitious origin. We have nothing in common with the extravagances of the circus, the obscenities of the theatre, the barbarities of the arena, the frivolity of the gymnasium. We form but one body, united by the bonds of one same faith, of the same discipline, and the same hope. We assemble together, in a manner, to besiege God with our prayers. This violence is agreeable to Him. We pray for the emperors, for their ministers, for all the authorities, for the present state of this world, for peace, for the putting off of the end of the universe. We unite together to read the Scriptures, whence we draw, according to circumstances, the lights and warnings of which we stand in need. That divine word nourishes our faith, raises our hopes, strengthens our trust, tightens the bonds of discipline by inculcating precept . . . old men preside. They arrive at that honour, not with money, but by the testimony which is rendered to their tried virtues. Money has no influence in the things belonging to God. If there is amongst us a kind of treasure, its source is pure, and we have not got to blush for having sold religion. Each one furnishes a small sum every month, or when he pleases, and if he please, and if he be able; no one is obliged thereto; the

offerings are voluntary. It is like the chest of piety : it is not dissipated in feasting or debauchery, but it is employed to relieve and to bury the indigent, to bring up poor orphans, servants broken down with old age, the unfortunate who have been shipwrecked ; and if there are any Christians condemned to the mines, detained in prison, or sent to the islands, solely for the sake of God, religion opens her maternal heart in favour of those who have confessed her.

‘ Nevertheless, people are to be met with who reproach us for these works of love. *See, they say, how they love one another ;* since as for our enemies they all hate each other : *see how they are ready to die for one another :* as for them, they are rather ready to butcher each other. As to the name of brothers which we give ourselves, they only cry out against it, I suppose, because amongst them all the names of relationship are but false expressions of attachment. We are your brothers also by the rights of nature, the common mother of all men ; but you are hardly men, because you are bad brothers. How much more truly are they brothers, and more worthy of the name, who acknowledge the same God as father, who have imbibed the same spirit of holiness, who having proceeded out of the bosom of the same ignorance, have contemplated, entranced and trembling, the light of the same truth ? But perhaps our brotherhood is held to be illegitimate, because we do not make a parade of it, or because we live like brothers upon the same property, which, among you every day puts division between brothers. When the feelings and hearts are intermingled, how could property remain separate ? Everything is in common between us except our wives. The only thing which we reserve for ourselves, is the only one which other men put in common. They make between one another a sort of exchange of the rights which marriage gives them ; after the example, no doubt of their sages, of a Socrates amongst the Greeks, of a Cato amongst the Romans, who gave up to their friends the wives whom they had married, to have children of them, of which they would not be the fathers. Was it against their will ? I know not. What care for chastity could wives have whom their husbands so readily

gave up? Oh wonderful instance of Attic wisdom, of Roman gravity! a philosopher and a censor ministers of prostitution!<sup>1</sup>

In depicting the Christian virtues, so sublime and so humble, so pure and touching, Tertullian continually appeals to the testimony of the heathen. He challenges them boldly, he summons them to contradict him, if he asserts anything which is not publicly averred.<sup>2</sup> In our days even philosophy, not venturing to dispute the truth of a fact attested by all history, has attempted to make use of it to explain by natural means the rapid propagation of the gospel. In order not to own that Christianity had been divinely established, it saw itself compelled to acknowledge that it brings forth divine virtues.<sup>3</sup>

During thirty centuries, man, though witnessing the misery attached to the human state, had not even thought of coming to the help of his suffering brothers. There is not to be found

<sup>1</sup> Apolog. adv. Gentes. cap. xxxvi, xxxvii, xxxviii, xxxix.

<sup>2</sup> The idea which the pagans had of the purity of Christian morals, contrasts in a remarkable manner with the depravation of their own morals, in the proceedings of the martyrdom of Saint Afre, who was burned alive in the year 304 at Augsburg in Rhoetia, during the persecution by Diocletian. The judge named Gaius, being informed that Afre had until then lived in great disorder, said to her, 'Sacrifice to the Gods; it is better to live than to die in torture.—AFRE. I have been a great sinner before knowing God; but I will not add any new crimes to those which I have had the misfortune to commit, by doing what you require of me.—GAIUS. Go to the temple and sacrifice.—AFRE. Jesus Christ is my God: I have him always before my eyes. I continually confess to him my sins, and because I am unworthy to offer him a sacrifice; \* I desire to sacrifice myself for the glory of his name, so that this body which I have so often polluted, may be purified by torture.—GAIUS. I know that you are a harlot: therefore sacrifice, *for you cannot pretend to the friendship of the God of the Christians.*—AFRE. Our Lord Jesus Christ has said that he came down from heaven to save sinners. The Gospel relates that he permitted a harlot like me to wash his feet with her tears, and that he forgave her her sins. Far from rejecting sinners, he conversed familiarly with them and ate at their table.—GAIUS. *Sacrifice, so as to have many lovers, who may enrich you.*—AFRE. I renounce for ever such gains. I have thrown away all the goods that I acquired in that way. The poor amongst our brethren would not accept them, although I told them that I gave them to them in order that they should pray God for me. †—GAIUS. *Jesus Christ will have nothing to do with you; it is in vain that you look upon him as your God: a courtesan could never be called a Christian.*—AFRE. I own I do not deserve to bear the name of Christian; but Jesus Christ has done me the favour to admit me into the number of those that believe in him, etc. Lives of the Saints, tom. vii, pp. 121, 122, édit. de Versailles.

\* Sinners during the canonical penitence, could not be present at the celebration of the holy mysteries. They prayed at the door of the Church, outside, during the Mass.

† The Church, in consequence of the ancient discipline, would not receive, even for the relief of the poor, the offerings of open sinners, or money which had been acquired by illicit means. See the Consult. apost. L. iv, v, vi.

<sup>3</sup> See the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Gibbon.

amongst the ancients the shadow of an institution in favour of the unfortunate, philosophy and paganism never dried a single tear. Although pity is in nature, and perhaps because it is in nature, reasoning drives it away. Seneca calls it the *vice of a weak soul*. *Do not lament with those that weep* is one of the precepts of Marcus Aurelius, and the common doctrine of the Stoics. The wise man, says Virgil, *does not feel compassion for indigence; neque ille, aut doluit miserans inopem, aut invidit habenti*. How far from this cold selfishness is Christian charity! What! is man then sensitive to the pains of others, that it is necessary to harden him, by filling his soul with barbarous doctrines? On the contrary, the greatest miracle of Christianity is to make him feel for woes not his own: and that one at least will not be denied, for it strikes all eyes, if it do not touch all hearts. Come, follow the footsteps of the religion of love; reckon, if possible, the benefits which it bountifully scatters among men, the works of mercy which it inspires, and which it alone can reward. During a plague which, in the third century, ravaged a part of the empire, the heathen abandoning their friends and kindred, only thought of sheltering themselves from contagion by flight. The Christians, at that time so cruelly persecuted, took care of all the sick, believers and idolators, and revenged themselves on their enemies, as Christians revenge themselves, by sacrificing themselves for them. How many similar examples does not the Church history afford? The disciples of Jesus Christ wearied their detractors with benefits. 'Is it not a disgrace to us,' wrote the Emperor Julian to Arsaces, pontiff of Asia, 'that the Galileans besides their own poor, feed also ours?'

Christianity did not degenerate with age. Its annals are filled only with the services of all kinds which it has rendered in successive centuries to humanity. The same spirit of love which brought forth so many prodigies in the early times, brings forth similar ones every day amidst ourselves. Who does not remember, with profound emotion, those Spanish monks passing through the streets of a plague-stricken town,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Malaga.

ringing a little bell, so that everyone being warned of their passage, might call for their generous assistance? Almost all of them died martyrs to their devotedness.

But let us leave particular instances, with which volumes might be filled without number: let us not recall to mind either the Borromeos or the Belzunce, or that Vincent de Paul who, in times of calamity, fed whole provinces, whose immense charity reached beyond the ocean, as far as the shores of Madagascar, and to the forests of New France, and who seemed to have taken upon himself alone to relieve all of human miseries; wonderful man, who compelled our century to believe in virtue: let us consider only the permanent establishments, the general and durable benefits of religion. Those solitary asylums of innocence and repentance, which the nations will more and more learn to regret, those peaceful retreats for misfortune, those superb palaces of indigence; who raised them but religion? Mistress for a moment, philosophy was able only to destroy them. Human reason spared nothing of what faith had created for the advantage of humanity. And with what profusion had not Christianity multiplied those touching institutions, so eminently social? Their almost infinite number equalled that of our woes. Here the daughter of Vincent de Paul visited the infirm old man, dressed his repulsive wounds, and spoke to him of heaven; or with touching charity, become a mother without having ceased to be a virgin, warmed in her bosom the castaway child. Further on the hospitable sister helped and consoled the sick man, and forgot herself in order to bestow on him day and night the most irksome cares. There the monk of St Bernard, establishing his abode in the midst of the snows, shortened his life to save that of the traveller lost upon the mountain. Elsewhere you might have seen the brother of *Pious death* near the bed of the dying man, occupied in softening his last passage for him, or the brother the *grave-digger* putting his remains into the earth. By the side of those brave knights, those *praying soldiers*, who almost alone, long protected Europe against the barbarity of the Mussulmans, were to be seen the fathers of mercy, surrounded, as in triumph, by the captives whom they had, not enchained, but delivered from their chains,

while exposing themselves to a thousand dangers and to inconceivable fatigues. Priests, monks of all orders, breaking, with superhuman virtue, the dearest ties, went away with great joy, to sprinkle with their blood distant and savage countries, without other hope or desire than to snatch from ignorance, from crime, and from misery, men who were unknown to them. After having fertilized with his sweat our barren hills and waste lands, the laborious Benedictine, withdrawn into his cell, tills the no less arid field of our ancient history and antique laws. Education, the pulpit, missions, no useful work was foreign to the Jesuit. His zeal embraced everything, and sufficed for everything. The humble Capuchin perpetually wandered through the country districts to help the pastors in their holy functions, went down into dungeons, to carry there words of peace to the victims of human justice ; and like to the hope of which he was the minister, accompanying to the end the wretch who was going to die, he took a part in his anguish, he revived his failing courage, and strengthened him equally against the terrors of the scaffold and against those of remorse. His compassionate hands only let go their hold, so to speak, of the unfortunate man whom they had received at the foot of the inflexible tribunal of man, after having set him down at the foot of the tribunal of the Merciful God.

But will you turn your looks, saddened by these painful scenes, to a sight as gentle as it is loveable? Contemplate the brother from the Christian schools, teaching to childhood the elements of letters, the doctrine of science, and the more precious doctrine of duty, speaking to it with unction of God, and moulding it to happiness by moulding it to virtue. Let us never forget it, religion is the sole education of the common people. Without religion it would know nothing, nothing especially of that which it is most important to society that it should know, and for itself to know. It would be equally ignorant of the duties and destinies of man ; it would vegetate in the midst of academies, universities, and schools, in a ferocious abasement, a hundred times worse than the savage state. Religion civilises it ; it feeds the poor with truth as it feeds him with bread ; it enlightens, it increases his intelligence ; and the last of the little children taught in its

school, more really a philosopher than any of the so-called sages, who acknowledge no other guide than their reason, would confound, catechism in hand, that haughty reason by the sublimity of its teaching. It was worthy of materialist philosophy to think to perfect popular education, by substituting evolutions for instruction, and by putting a dumb stone into the hands of the people instead of the book from which it drew those lofty and important lessons.

I should not finish, if I attempted to recall even summarily, all the services rendered by the Catholic clergy. It was certainly a noble idea, to place by the side of the inexorable ministers of the law, the sacred ministers of morals and humanity, and to make of mercy a public function. Penetrate into the bosom of families, question their members, they will tell you what they owe to this admirable institution. How many enemies it has soothed, how many husbands and wives, relatives, and citizens it has reconciled, how many victims it has snatched from vice, how many injuries have been repaired, crimes prevented, griefs consoled, and secret wretchedness diminished by it? Do you know what a priest is, you whom that name irritates or causes to smile with contempt? A priest is, by his duty, the friend, the living providence of all the unfortunate, the consoler of the afflicted, the defender of whoever is deprived of defence, the support of the widow, the father of the orphan, the repairer of all the disorders and all the evils which your passions and fatal doctrines bring forth. His whole life is but one long and heroic devotion to the happiness of his fellow creatures. Which of you would consent to exchange, like him, domestic joys, all the enjoyments, all the good things which men so eagerly seek after, for obscure labours, difficult duties, functions the exercise of which shatters the heart, and disgusts the senses, often to gather no other fruit from so many sacrifices than contempt, ingratitude, and insult? You are still plunged in a deep sleep, and already the man of charity, anticipating the dawn, has recommenced the course of his benevolent works. He has relieved the poor, visited the sick, dried the tears of misfortune, or made to flow those of repentance, taught the ignorant, strengthened the weak, and confirmed in virtue the souls tossed by the storms of passion.



After a day entirely filled with such good works, evening arrives, but not repose. At the hour when pleasure calls you to the theatres, to festivities, a messenger runs in great haste to the sacred minister ; a Christian is approaching his last moments ; he is going to die, and perhaps of a contagious disease ; no matter ; the good shepherd will not let his sheep expire without soothing his anguish, without surrounding it with the consolations of hope and faith, without praying at its side to the God who died for it, and who gives it at that very moment, in the sacrament of love, a certain pledge of immortality.

That is the priest, there he is ; not such as judging of him from a few scandalous exceptions, your aversion takes pleasure in representing him ; but such as he really exists in the midst of us. Yes, religion is at this day what it was at its origin. There are fewer Christians, but the Christians are not changed. The purest virtues, virtues worthy of the first centuries, still honour Christianity, I would wish no other proof of it than those pious associations, those useful establishments which a zeal as lively as enlightened forms every day before our eyes. How many men and women of all conditions, how many young men even, concealing themselves from all beholders to do good, according to the Gospel precept, consecrate to the search after misfortune and to its relief the time which you lose in frivolous amusements, or which you employ perhaps in insulting the holy religion which inspires them with this wonderful devotion. You do not know them, I am aware of it, but they are known in the hospitals, in the prisons, in the obscure cellars where the indigence which they have relieved blesses them. The charitable lady has not forgotten the road which leads to the abode of the poor ; and if you never meet her there, it is of you that we ask the reason.

I will tell the reason why, for it is important that it should be known ; it is that your cold reasoning and apathetic philanthropy only tend to destroy, in its last germ, every sentiment of humanity. Whenever Christianity grows weak in a nation, immediately that nation, not knowing what to do with misfortune, is seen to conspire against all those who suffer. A thousand pretexts are invented for exemption from succouring them. To give alms to a beggar, is to encourage vaga-

bondage and laziness. Is he hungry? is he naked? let him work. But he is an aged man : at all ages there are means of employing oneself. It is a child : take care not to bring it up in idleness ; it is impossible too early to oppose vicious habits. It is a mother burdened with a numerous family : she says so, but does she speak the truth. Before magnificently presenting her with a few farthings, it would be necessary to make inquiries ; and there is no time for that. That other wishes for work, and seeks but does not find any : perhaps it is that he has sought badly : for that matter we will think of it ; and meantime nothing is given for fear of the bad example. As a general rule : whoever asks, is from that moment to be suspected ; to listen to such people, is injuring good order, it is injuring them themselves, it is encouraging hunger.

Without having recourse at once to the same expedient as Galerus, who ordered the assemblage of all the beggars of his empire, in boats which were afterwards sunk, a mild philosophy attains nearly the same object, by its learned systems, and its beneficent institutions. It calls to its aid all the physical sciences, to tear from nature the secret of some nourishment, so vile that even avarice may offer it to the needy without regret ; and to calculate with precision the measure of pain, the degree of want, beyond which man dies if not succoured : so much does it dread the luxury of pity ! Happy yet, happy the poor man if he had only to groan over this derisive assistance : but they do not stop there. In order to spare to the happy of this generation the importunate sight of these wretches, they are sequestered from society, thick walls are raised between the sighs of the poor and the ears of the rich, liberty is taken from those who have lost all other goods, they are treated as criminals whose only crime is suffering ; and yet this horrible inhumanity will be vaunted to us as a masterpiece of administration. If you are indifferent, at least be not cruel : open your philanthropic dungeons, do not fear anything, the wretches whom they contain will not ask you even for the crumbs of bread which fall from your sumptuous tables ; they will not ask you for life, that would be too much ; what they ask, is that you should permit them to die, giving a last look at the places which saw their birth, at those fields which they

cultivated for you, and which will no longer feed them ; what they ask, is solely what nature grants to all beings, and what you do not refuse even to animals.

However, learn it from the great Master, whatever you may do, *ye have the poor always with you*. There will always be poor people, in order to prevent man from growing hard ; in order to disturb the fatal repose of opulence, to awaken pity and compassion in the inmost hearts ; there will always be poor so that there may always be virtues. Lastly, there will always be poor, suffering beings, to represent the human race so suffering itself, and so poor, that a single movement of pride on the part of a child of Adam is a wonder eternally inexplicable to reason.

But if the poor always exist, there will also always exist a religion which consoles them. I have recapitulated a portion of its benefits ; they are as great as they are indisputable. How can it be that a religion so favourable to humanity should have enemies amongst men ? Is it possible that so much love should not disarm hatred ? Alas ! that which excites this hatred is the beauty, the very perfection of the gospel law. The severity of the duties which it imposes terrifies the passions, and men dispute the good which it does, on account of the good which it commands them to do.

There is no sophistry more common than that by which Christianity is made responsible for all the crimes which are committed among Christian nations. There have been wars of religion ; therefore religion commands the shedding of blood. There are thefts and assassinations ; therefore religion represses neither theft nor assassination. There are bad priests ; therefore religion is but the cloak with which the clergy covers over its disorders. But tell me, do you think that morality is a chimera, a source of calamities ? If you think so, I can conceive that you should accuse religion. If you do not think so, give an answer yourself to your objection otherwise I shall retort it with greater force against morality.

It is surely to give a proof of a rare abnegation of mind, to repeat ingenuously the old declamations which made Montes-

quieu smile with pity. See with what contempt he crushes the sophist Bayle: 'To say that religion is not a motive of repression, because it does not always repress, is like saying that civil laws are not a motive of repression either. It is ill reasoning against religion, to collect together in a large work a long enumeration of the evils which it has produced, if the same thing is not done with regard to the good which it has effected. If I chose to relate all the evils which civil laws, monarchy, and republican government have produced in the world, I should tell of fearful things.'<sup>1</sup>

Of what do men not make a misuse? They misuse the food destined for their nourishment, the strength given to them for action and self-preservation, they misuse speech, thought, science, liberty, and life. They even misunderstand God. Is it to be said, on that account, that these things are pernicious? Is it to be said that there is nothing good but the void?

The wars, the massacres, and all the crimes of which Christianity has been the pretext, ought so little to be attributed to it, that in order to take away the effect, it would have been sufficient to have increased the energy of the so-called cause. A few degrees more faith, and virtue would have triumphed along with religion.

What is a thief, a murderer, a miser, a priest without pity or of bad morals? They are men without faith, or of weak faith, since they give way to passions which they ought to subdue; they are rebels, whom religion condemns to death unless they pass sentence against themselves by repentance; they are unbelievers, either dogmatically or practically, consistent atheists, or the most inconsistent of Christians. There is not, therefore, a single crime committed in the world for which we have not got the right to call unbelief to account. It is that which produces them all, even those with which it arrogantly reproaches Christianity: it is unbelief which brought forth St Bartholomew; it was that which guided the steel of Ravallac.

As soon, therefore, as prejudice and sophistry are set aside, there remain present only religion and its benefits. It alone

<sup>1</sup> *Esprit des Lois*, liv. xxiv, chap. ii.

puts order into society, by giving the reason for authority and duty, by perfecting the laws, by purifying the morals, by uniting in the bonds of love all the members of the social body. Will any one deny the importance of so beneficent and necessary an institution? and if it is admitted, upon what motives will ground be taken for justifying the apathetic indifference in which some affect to maintain themselves with respect to a doctrine on which depends the happiness of man, and the happiness of nations: and I will add, the outward glory of God? For, assuming the existence of a true religion, that religion, the sole means of society between God and man, is also, as we will prove in the following chapter, the means which God has chosen for manifesting externally the perfections or His glory, and for establishing order in the society of intelligences of which He is the monarch. To violate that order is, therefore, one of the greatest crimes which an intelligent being can commit; and to expose oneself to violate it, by refusing to assure oneself whether it exists, is a folly so astonishing that I have no terms for describing the creature which could be capable of it.

And now, nations, do ye give ear: from the abyss of misfortunes into which you have been precipitated by your credulous trust in a false wisdom, the parent of disorder and death, listen to religion which cries out to you: Come to me, all you who vainly labour to rise again, you who give way under the burden of human institutions and the doctrines of annihilation; dying nations come to me; abandon those deceiving physicians who promise you strength, and are only able to waste that which remains to you, in painful throes. Come, hasten, time presses: each day life grows weaker in you, corruption progresses, dissolution is coming on; soon you will be no more than a stinking corpse: come to me, and I will recreate you: *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi, 28.

## CHAPTER XII

### Importance of Religion with respect to God.

SUPPOSING that there does exist a true religion, I propose to show how much contempt of the dogmas and infraction of its precepts are outrageous towards God, and criminal in man.

Let us tear ourselves away from the dominion of the senses, let us shut our eyes, and for an instant withdraw our mind from the impressions left by external objects, which, filling it with empty images, turn it away from the contemplation of intellectual realities, and make it forget even its own nature, by leading it astray into the world of matter, fleeting home of illusions which mislead us as to our real nature, our duties and our destinies. Let us understand that the physical organs are not man, that material creation is but the shadow of a more noble creation, that earthly societies are but a feeble reflection, a dependency in relation to our present state, of the great society of all intellectual beings, of which God is the monarch ; a perfect and eternal society, to which man must belong, to which he already belongs partly here below, but in which his place, which he must choose himself in his capacity of a free being, will not be irrevocably fixed until, stripped of his mortal covering, he shall have ceased to belong to the mixed society, in which order requires that he should be temporarily tried. Let us understand that even this last society does not consist in an assemblage of bodies, and in the combination of material interests ; that it becomes a real society only when its

members, united by laws relating to their intellectual nature, obey the Supreme Power which rules intellectual beings: for true society is only to be found amongst the intelligences; and that is one reason why human society becomes dissolved, when man, making himself material, brings into society only his body, and his physical actions and wants. Lastly, let us understand that if the Creator has established an order full of wisdom and majesty in the collection of material beings, if He has subjected them to laws appropriated to their nature, and upon which their preservation depends, it is absurd to suppose that there exists no order willed by God in the society of intelligent beings, abandoned without rule or law to the destinies which they might make for themselves. This is repugnant to the simplest lights of reason. Whatever is, is ordained. The idea of the simultaneous existence of several similar beings contains within it, that of certain natural relations between these beings, consequently the idea of order; and thence it happens that by destroying natural order amongst beings, the beings themselves are destroyed.

But in order still better to conceive the importance of order in the society of the intellect, and the crime there is in violating it, it must be understood that, through all eternity the supremely perfect Being, loving Himself with infinite love, enjoyed in His vast repose a boundless felicity; and that when He resolved to create, owing nothing except to Himself, since none other existed, He could only contemplate an object relative to Himself, that is to say, His glory or the manifestation of His infinite perfections.

Now, to manifest His perfections was to manifest His being, to produce externally a living image of it; and, indeed, man was created in the image and likeness of God. Participating, though in a finite degree, in His whole being, he was, like God, power, intelligence, and love, he was able to know the truth, to love good, and to realise it externally by his acts.

And so that his resemblance to the Supreme Being might be more perfect, God willed that man, concurring freely in His designs, should render himself, in some respects, voluntarily

His image, by regulating the use of the faculties with which he has been enriched, upon the immutable relations or eternal laws which are attributes of God.<sup>1</sup>

He therefore revealed to man that which it was necessary that he should know of these laws; and religion, bond of union between God and man, as its very name indicates, is but this immortal and sublime legislation.

Whoever then infringes it, injures,<sup>2</sup> as far as in him lies, the Eternal Being, deprives Him of a part of His glory, introduces disorder into the society of the intelligences, and rebels against the power which rules it: a crime so great that God alone could judge it not to be inexpressible.

But of necessity it must be either expiated, or punished: for it is thus that, notwithstanding the guilty opposition of man, the designs of God are accomplished, and that order is re-established. 'Punishment rectifies disorder: if any one sin, it is disorder; but that punishment should follow sin, that is rule, you return, therefore, through punishment into order which you have put away by guilt. But that man should sin with impunity, is the height of disorder.'<sup>3</sup> This disorder will never be, because God cannot be out of rule in anything, He who is rule. Since this rule is perfect, completely straight, and in nowise bent, everything that does not suit it, is shattered by it, and will feel the action of the invincible and unchangeable rectitude of the rule.<sup>4</sup>

Before, therefore, rejecting religion with disdain, let man learn to know it. Contempt is easy; it is a pleasure which ignorance procures for pride at a small cost: and yet it would be needful to look a little further and to consider the consequences of this contempt, and to think of the answer to be given to the Supreme Lawgiver when He shall call us to account for it. It is not enough to laugh: and God also will laugh, says the Scripture, *irridebit et subsannabit eos*<sup>5</sup> But in that awful day, which will be the day of His justice, the crea-

<sup>1</sup> Here I have altered the Abbé's phrase.

<sup>2</sup> In the original *dégrade*.—*Note of Translator*.

<sup>3</sup> Here I have omitted a few words of excessive rhetoric.—*Note of Translator*.

<sup>4</sup> *Méditation, sur l'Evangile*, tom. i, p. 51, édit in 12.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm ii, 4.



ture that rebelled will contemplate without obstruction the order which it outraged, and admiring it with despair, will feel it to be so in conformity with its nature, that it will be for it a lesser torment to concur in it by its punishment, than to disturb it, if it were possible, by an unjust enjoyment of the happiness which it deserved to lose.

Of what use is it to deceive oneself? What good will come of it? What, alas! is that short slumber procured by the help of intoxicating sophistries, compared with that terrible watch which will succeed to it, and to which nothing succeeds? Yet men will tranquillise themselves on such frivolous motives, that I blush to recall them. A haughty creature, abasing itself from pride, will seek for independence in the depths of abjectness; and hoping by dint of baseness to escape from the eye of the Sovereign Being, will attempt to pass clandestinely through the moral world like those obscure vagabonds whom the police does not know, or despises. Even in the hypocritical humility of its language, the spirit of rebellion and aversion to rule is to be recognised. 'What is man, it says, with respect to God? How with the infinite distance which separates them could the creature offend the Creator? What can the empty homage, or the mad outrage of the creature of a day signify to the Eternal? What to Him are his thoughts, feelings or actions? Weak mortals cease to attribute your crouching sentiments to the Most High. God, do not doubt it, is too great to come down to man's level, and man is too small to raise himself up to God.'

Is that your excuse, degraded intellect? is that the foundation of your stupid security in the forgetfulness of your duties? the Being who created you is too great to have created you for Himself! He is too perfect to occupy Himself with the perfection of His work! God is too much above you to be irritated at your preferring yourself to Him, and at your will setting itself in opposition to His sovereign will! God is too wise to have established any order amongst His intelligent creatures, to have prescribed laws to them, to require them to observe them! In giving you your being, He said to you: I create you to adore or to outrage, as it pleases you; to love or to hate me according to your fancy: truth, error, good, evil,

everything in you is indifferent to me ; your isolated existence is not bound to anything in my counsels ; vile production of my hands, you do not deserve to attract my attention : go out of my sight, go out of my thoughts, and let yours be your law, your rule, and your God !

Strange that men should free themselves from all duty towards the Creator for the very reasons which best prove the importance of these duties, and also how guilty man becomes in violating them. You refuse to adore God, and why ? because He is too great, too perfect, that is to say, too worthy to be adored. You refuse to obey God, and why ? because He is too powerful, too wise, that is to say, having too much right to your obedience. You refuse to love God, and why ? because He is too just, too holy, too good, that is to say, too much to be loved. I no longer wonder that having prepared such peremptory answers, you should wait in peace for the awful judgment which will decide your eternal fate.

It is certainly no small proof of the original degradation of man that these extravagances should find a place in his mind. But were they so many incontestable truths, he must be taught, that even then he could deduce no solid motive for being at rest in that state of absolute independence in which he seeks to place himself. For religion teaches us that between God and man there exists a Mediator, who uniting in himself the divine and the human nature, fills up the immense space which separates us from the First Being, and gives to our homage united to his, and to our works united to his, an infinite value. From that moment all pretexts founded on the nothingness of man, for dispensing with rendering to God the worship He requires of us, vanish like shadows. Our natural infirmity, which seemed to dismiss us for ever far away from the Infinite Being, rather serves to make us understand the enormity of the crime we commit in infringing the laws of a society which God has established by such wonderful ways.

We know, and analogy alone would lead us to form the opinion, that there exist pure intelligences more perfect than man, and members, as well as man, of that high society of which the Mediator is the bond. But it is not given to us

fully to know the vast hierarchy of spiritual beings, nor the body of laws which rule them. They are such as are solely relative to a state too different from ours, for God to have willed to reveal them to us. He has granted to us the precise measure of light that we need in our present condition, but nothing more. In granting to man all that is necessary to him for arriving at his end, He refuses that which would only serve to gratify a vain curiosity. For besides that faith, in order to be meritorious, must be mixed with obscurity, and resemble, according to the expression of the apostle, a light that shineth in a dark place,<sup>1</sup> there is a kind of knowledge for which our nature here below is not competent, and in the knowledge to which we can attain, a degree of splendour which far from being useful, would become dangerous to us, and would completely disarrange the economy of the designs of God with respect to us. Our freedom, our very existence depends upon this mixture of light and obscurity. If we were to perceive the entire grandeur of the human soul, without at the same time discovering the infinitely more lofty perfections of the Supreme Being; enchanted, without the power of defending ourselves from it, with a disordered admiration of ourselves, we should instantly fall like the rebellious angel from pride. And if God, suddenly removing the veil, were to permit us to contemplate even a small portion of His glory, the soul in its transports would shatter the body, too weak to resist the impetuosity of the sentiments which this sight would call forth.

It may be conceived, therefore, that the general laws of religion are modified according to the nature of the different beings which it unites, and according to the different states in which those beings may be placed. Thus man, a mixed being, has duties relatively to his double nature and his present condition; and as he is preserved, and his faculties developed only in the social state, God has seen to the establishment of a society depositary of the laws destined to regulate the use of those faculties, or to put order in the whole of man, in his thoughts, his affections, his actions; a

<sup>1</sup> Petri Ep. ii, cap. i, 19.

society at the same time spiritual and visible, because man is both mind and body ; one society, because religion is one ; a universal society, because religion is universal ; a perpetual society, because religion is perpetual ; a society holy and perfect, because it is ruled by perfect laws, under the authority of a perfect Monarch.

Whoever separates himself from this society, founded and governed by the Mediator, possesses no right to the benefits of the mediation, and is deprived of all means of communicating with God. He deprives Him of the glory which He would have derived from the homage of a creature made divine by its union with that of the Mediator ; and he declares himself sufficiently great to reach to the Infinite Being without the intervention of the man-God : he puts himself in the place of God, by opposing his reason to the divine reason, which has judged the incarnation necessary in order to establish that wonderful society of man and his Author. He rejects the most signal mark of love which the Almighty could have given him : he disdains His benefits, sets himself against His will, disturbs the harmony of creation, and there where the Eternal, the immutable principle of all good, had wished to establish the resemblance of His perfections, he obliges Him to contemplate evil. Those indeed form a strange idea of God who suppose Him to be insensible to such an outrage. The more perfect He is, the more is indifference opposed to His nature. He has a supreme hatred of disorder : He has a horror of it, as man has a horror of his own destruction ; with this difference, that in man this horror is a blind and limited feeling, whilst the hatred of disorder, commended to God by His infinite wisdom, is infinite like it.

Now, as religion contains all the laws which men ought to obey, to reject religion is to reject all the duties together ; it is to shatter all the bonds of the society of intelligent beings at once, and to set oneself up in the most fearful and complete state of disorder in which a free creature can place itself. *Heaven and earth would pass away*, sooner than that so great a crime should remain unpunished ; for the overthrow of physical nature, and even the annihilation of the universe,

would be an infinitely lesser evil than the violation of a single rule of justice.

The little importance which some affect to attach to religion proceeds from their not knowing it ; and the misfortune is, that people think they know it because they have heard it much spoken of, because they have spoken much of it themselves, without having any other idea of it than that which has been formed by chance, under the influence of a thousand prejudices, and of as many interests contrary to truth as there are passions. If only it were understood that religion is the sole means of order in the moral world, it might doubtless be hated, as there can be hatred of God ; but men would cease to despise it. The crime of those who violate it would not be less enormous, but it would be less stupid. Like the angel of pride, they would choose between good and evil, knowingly. The perversion of the will would not extend to the reason. They would cause horror at their desperate audacity, but they would not excite that humiliating pity which their imbecile contempt inspires.

Let them know then, that in creating man after His likeness, that is to say, capable of knowing, of loving, and of acting freely, God, having had no other design than to manifest His perfections, willed that the immutable laws of His wisdom should be the rule of man's faculties ; or that God intended to establish in man, a being like Himself, the same order as exists in Him.

Now, religion eminently fulfils this important object ; and first of all, it puts order into the thoughts of man, by regulating them upon the eternal law of truth. It teaches him to know himself, to know the Mediator who unites him to God, and God Himself : so that he possesses implicitly all truths, since he has the knowledge of God, who is their source. It is not that the mind can grasp on all sides the idea of the Supreme Being, so as to form a notion exempt from obscurity. It belongs only to God to know Himself in that manner. Perceiving Himself such as He is, and according to all that which He is, by a single act of His almighty understanding, He is to Himself but a great thought ; and all His perfections, being in a way confounded in the immense idea of being, the most

positive of all ideas, He can only be defined by that sublime affirmation, *I am that I am.*

From the very fact that it is limited, the human intellect perceives nothing with that perfect clearness. That of which it is ignorant more or less obscures that which it knows; for each part having necessarily relations with the whole, the whole must be known, in order to know perfectly the least of its parts. Thence it is that reason understands nothing fully: a feeble and tremulous gleam barely marks out a few outlines, a few slight features of the objects which it considers: as soon as it attempts to penetrate their inner nature, thick shades arrest its looks, and drive it back into the ignorance from which it essayed to escape. That is its condition, as sad as it is irremediable, when it is reduced to seek for the truth by its own means only. Incapable of affirming, incapable of denying, perpetually wafted by the impulse of conflicting probabilities, over the vast sea of doubt, it is not reason which can give a foundation to the thoughts of man so as to render them as steadfast as the thoughts of God: and, nevertheless, this must needs be, in order that our intelligence may truly be the image of the divine intelligence, infinite in certainty as in extent. Who then, will come to the help of this feeble understanding? What powerful hand will raise it to this height? Who will place, oh man! upon thy trembling lips, that speech that thou must pronounce with as full an assurance as God Himself: *He is that He is?* it will be religion: and how? Do not think that it will rashly load the reason with the weight of infinite truth which it would be unable to sustain. No, but it will make up by faith for the weakness of the intellect. After having proved its divine authority, it will enjoin on men to believe that which they are still unable to understand, and it will put in its beliefs, infinite in their object, and infinite in certainty, since they rest upon divine testimony, the same order which exists in the ideas of God: and as the same truths are known, through the same faith, to all understandings, there is society between them and the Great Being who created them for Himself.

The essential bond of this society is the Mediator, by whom alone we know God: *neither knoweth any man the Father*

*save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*<sup>1</sup> We could not find in ourselves this sublime idea, which contains the infinite. What do I say? We can find no truth within ourselves; these truths all come to us from without; reason is only the capacity of receiving them, of recognising and combining them; and on account of our double nature, in order that they may become perceptible by us they must needs put on a form that can be perceived, or be incarnate, so to speak. The word is like the body, which renders ideas visible to us; they are effaced from our minds with their expression. It is, therefore, not surprising that we should only know God through His *Word* or Verb; nor that that immaterial word, wishing to communicate itself to us without changing our nature, should have clothed itself with it: *And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,*<sup>2</sup> for in the established order, it needed to be a body in order to *speak* to our understanding. Eternal wisdom remaining what it is, has put itself in relation with man, who also remains what he is; and the union of the Deity, and humanity in the person of the Word, represents exactly the union which He came to establish between God and the human race. *I came,* says the Man-God himself, *to bring truth into the world,* or according to the remarkable expression of the Gospel, *to bear witness unto the truth,* that is to say, not, which would be impossible, to make man understand it perfectly, but to declare to him that it exists, and what its nature is: *Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*<sup>3</sup> In this manner the certainty of the witnessing supplying the place of the certainty of proof, man has been able, without any change of nature, fully to possess infinite truth; he has been able *to become a child of God,* or to enter into His society, for a family is the image and element of all society; and that freely, because if the mind is not free to refuse to give in to evidence, the will is always free *to listen,* or not to *testimony,* to accept or to reject it; and it is indeed by thus believing, without being compelled to it by any intrinsic and invincible proof, that man voluntarily renders

<sup>1</sup> Nemo novit, Patrem, nisi Filius, et cui voluerit Filius revelare. Matt. xi, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Et verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis. Joan i, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ego in hoc natus sum, et ad hoc veni in mundum, ut testimonium perhibeam veritati: omnis qui est ex veritate, audit vocem meam. Joan. xviii, 37.

to God a homage worthy of Him ; a real *worship in spirit and in truth*, which consists in acknowledging, by a perfect submission to His word, the infinite dependence of our reason upon the Divine reason.

It was not, however, sufficient to have promulgated the truth, it was also needful to provide for its preservation, for its reign must be eternal ; it had to be preserved from all admixture, and to be made accessible and easy of recognition for all men, by a means analogous to their nature. Jesus Christ, or the Mediator, wonderfully fulfils this great object : and the means which he chose, is to be admired at the same time, for so profound a knowledge of man, that it could only belong to a superhuman being, and for that beautiful character of unity, the peculiar property of the works of God. What indeed does he do ? Does he write his doctrine in a book ? does he seek to surround it by so many argumentative proofs, that the mind should be in the impossibility of refusing to accept them ? That, no doubt is what a philosopher would have attempted to do. But who does not perceive that, seeing the weakness of our mind, it would only have been to open a wider field to difficulties, and that in thus addressing human reason, and in so doing, authorising it to admit only that which it should fully conceive, an insurmountable barrier would have been raised between man and the incomprehensible Being ? Jesus Christ despising all the vain props of human opinions, descends into the depths of our nature, in order to lay there the foundations of perpetual religion. He preserves the truth in the thoughts of men, as the thoughts themselves are preserved, by the words handed down : and to ensure their transmission, he unites by external and indissoluble bonds those whom he has united internally by the same faith ; he constitutes them as a society, under a government of which he is the head ; in a word, he founds his Church. Sent by his Father, he in his turn sends pastors, whom he invests with his authority. *'Go ye therefore and teach all nations : and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.'*<sup>1</sup> And as he said of himself: *He that sent me is*

<sup>1</sup> Euntes docete omnes gentes . . . et ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus, usque ad consummationem seculi. Matth. xxviii, 19, 20.



*true ; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him.*<sup>1</sup> These pastors also will say : *He that hath sent us is true ; and we speak to the world those things which we have heard of him.* Simple witnesses, they testify to what they have heard from their master, and their testimony is only that of Jesus Christ, who has promised to be with them alway, without any interruption ; as the testimony of Jesus Christ is but that of God Who sent him, and Who said of him : *This is My beloved Son ; hear him.*<sup>2</sup> This is why Jesus Christ adds : *He that heareth you heareth me ; and he that despiseth you despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me.*<sup>3</sup> To enter into the society of God, or according to the expression of the Gospel, *to become His son*, it is then necessary to receive the truth from the teaching of the Church, as it received it from Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ received it from his Father : it must be received with faith, *fide*, because for us here below that is the sole means of possessing it, and the slightest doubt would be an offence against the infinite authority which attests it. Come out of that position, make reason intervene to judge whether it should admit or reject the dogmas which God reveals to us, and immediately the immense and magnificent edifice of religion, transferred to this fragile basis, falls away on all sides, and crushes under its ruins the presumptuous reason which had imagined itself capable of sustaining it.

With this obligation to listen to the Church, and the order of spiritual society resting upon its testimony, upon that of Jesus Christ, and that of God, there exists three corresponding degrees of disorder, or three great crimes against truth : for truth may be attacked by denying either the witnessing of the Church, or that of Jesus Christ, or the declaration even of God : denials which constitute the three general systems of error, exposed and combated in the commencement of this work.

The first which is *heresy*, consists, according to the sense

<sup>1</sup> Qui me misit verax est : et ego quæ audivi ab eo hæc loquor in mundo. Joan viii, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Hic est filius meus carissimus : audite illum. Marc. ix, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Qui vos audit, me audit : et qui vos spernit, me spernit. Qui autem vos spernit, spernit eum qui misit me. Luc. x, 16.

of the word itself, in *choosing* from amongst revealed truths those with which reason is the best satisfied, rejecting the others, either as useless, or as doubtful, or as decided errors. But from the moment men refuse to listen to the Church upon one point, there are no longer any motives for listening to it upon any other : whoever rejects a part rejects the whole. It matters not what is believed, faith is from that moment extinguished ; for, instead of subjecting one's judgment to the law of truth, the truth is subjected to the private judgment. By that, all the relations between the spiritual society are upset ; reason which should obey, is made to be the power which commands ; an attempt is made to substitute the certainty of proof for the certainty of declaration ; and thus by transforming religion into a simple opinion, the foundation is destroyed even of those truths which are retained ; which makes the apostle say : '*Whoever offends in one point of the law, he is guilty of all :*'<sup>1</sup> a principle equally true whether it be applied to morals or to doctrine.

Heresy, then, overturns the whole scheme of mediation. Refusing to believe on the testimony of the envoys of Jesus Christ ; the heretic denies their authority, their mission. He makes himself a judge of the means which the Mediator had to choose for speaking to him, and by an inevitable consequence judge of his word. By placing himself above the Church, he sets himself above its Head, above the man-God. And as in reality, all that he knows of him, he can only have learned it from the Church, from its written monuments and its traditions ; by ceasing to believe the Church, he soon, if he is consistent, arrives at not believing the Mediator himself, at denying his authority, his mission, his existence ; and this is the second general system of error or deism.

In the same way that the heretic, rejecting the intervention of the teaching pastoral body, desires to put himself in immediate relation with the Mediator ; the deist, rejecting the intervention of the incarnate Word, desires to put himself in direct relation with God ; such is the essential character of his doctrine. He denies the witness of the Mediator by whom

<sup>1</sup> Quicumque autem totam legem servaverit, offendet autem in uno, factus est omnium reus. Ep. B. Jacob. c. ii, 10.

only we know God, as the heretic denies the witness of the Church by which alone we know the Mediator. 'Thus disorder goes on increasing in the thoughts of man, and the unfaithful image of the Deity, ceasing to reflect His perfections, becomes more and more disfigured. For to pretend to know God otherwise than by His word, is to desire to know Him as He does not know Himself; it is by separating Him from His substantive wisdom, to mutilate His essence, and to bring to Him our obscure reason, in order to lighten up portions of His being. Moreover, from that moment He becomes to us as one immense doubt. Impenetrable mysteries surround Him, it is not known what He is, or whether He exists. 'It is not,' says Rousseau, 'a small matter to know at length that He exists; and when we have arrived at that, when we ask ourselves, what is He? where is He? our mind becomes confused, and wanders, and we no longer know what to think.'

But in order still better to understand what a pitch of madness it is to pretend to reach to God, and to know Him by the reason alone, let it be observed that we do not know any spiritual beings in this manner. How do we assure ourselves of the existence of the soul in other men, unless it be by the communication of thought? and the thought of another person would it not be totally unknown to us, if it were not revealed to us by speech? Without this revelation our soul, eternally solitary, would live in absolute ignorance of beings similar to itself. Now, if man must of necessity speak to man in order to become known to him, how could man know God if God did not speak to him? Seeking, therefore, in vain for the Infinite Being within the limits of his reason, which is incapable of alone producing this immense idea, the deist ends by denying God, whom he does not comprehend: and this is the third general system of error or atheism.

Until this, man preserved some feeble points of resemblance to his Author: atheism completes their obliteration. All the foundations of certainty, shaken at once, fall down. A profound night covers the understanding; reason, tottering in the gloom, does not know what course to take, and plunges into

absolute scepticism. In losing God, man loses all the truths. Such is the extreme pitch of disorder in an intelligent being.

Let us tremble at the sight of this disorder : it is more fearful than would be the chaos of nature, if the light of day being extinguished, it were of a sudden plunged into impenetrable obscurity.

Who will conceive the misfortune of a creature without religion, without God? But above all, who will conceive its crime? Sectarians, deists, atheists, do not say: How could we be guilty in being mistaken, whilst seeking sincerely that which is true? for that itself is to accuse God, it is to suppose in Him contradictory wills, that is to say, that whilst commanding men to believe the truth, He refuses them the means of knowing it. Neither ignorance nor error is a crime in itself, as the one or the other may be involuntary. No one, therefore, is guilty exactly, because he is ignorant or is mistaken; and it is for that, it is because man is naturally ignorant, and is misled with such a deplorable facility, that God has not willed that the knowledge of the necessary truths should depend upon his reason, but upon his will. He has arranged and disposed everything so that they should be attested to him in all times by the testimony of an infinite authority. From that moment then the will, by rejecting them without excuse, becomes guilty of an infinite crime, of which unbounded pride is the principle.

Calvin, on what ground do you deny the real presence which the whole Church believes and attests?—On the ground of my reason, which could not comprehend this mystery.—So then, the testimony of the apostles and their successors, with whom Jesus Christ promised to *be always even to the end of the world*, must give way to your individual reason; and it must be that the Church, that Church which St Paul calls the *ground of the truth*,<sup>1</sup> has been false, because you do not understand!

Rousseau, on what ground do you deny revelation, and the Mediator? you who have said: 'The acts of Socrates, which no one doubts, are less well attested than those of Jesus

<sup>1</sup> *Ecclesia Dei vivi, columna et firmamentum veritatis.* Ep. i, ad Timoth iii, 15.

Christ.'<sup>1</sup>—On the ground of my reason, which cannot understand the necessity of revelation, nor of the dogmas revealed by the Mediator.<sup>2</sup>—So then, the testimony of so many millions of Christians, who have believed upon evidence of fact, even the testimony of the *Son of Mary*, whose life and death were those of a God,<sup>3</sup> must give way to your individual reason: and it must be that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, has been false,<sup>4</sup> because you do not understand!

Diderot, on what ground do you deny the existence of God, which is testified to by the universal tradition of the human race?—On the ground of my reason, which is unable to comprehend God. So then, the unanimous testimony of nations, attesting from age to age a fact primitively revealed, must give way to your individual reason; and it must needs be that the whole human race, that God even, has been false, because you do not understand!

Pride then, an unlimited pride, which no excess can terrify, that is the crime of the atheist, the crime of the deist and the sectarian. Implicitly at least, they all three deny the declarations of God, and proclaim themselves greater, more perfect than Him, by setting themselves up as judges of His word: a real idolatry of human reason, of which we have seen the latest development and public avowal in the worship of the goddess of reason.

As soon as rule is disregarded, that extremity must be reached; there is no means of halting on the way: the principle hurries along the mind, and the more it possesses of vigour and rectitude, the more it goes astray. It is one of the wonders of Christianity that it not only offers us the truth, but that it ensures to us its possession, and that it defends the truth in man against man himself. That alone would prove the divinity of the Christian religion; for man has no means of resisting himself: that which remedies the feebleness of nature, is evidently above nature.

But God has not drawn nigh to man by such admirable

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 182.

<sup>4</sup> Qui credit in Filium Dei, habet testimonium Dei in se. Qui non credit Filio, mendacem facit eum: quia non credit in testimonium quod testificatus est Deus de filio suo. Ep. i, Joan, v, 10.

ways in order to leave him free to go far from Him. If His gifts are bestowed without repenting, it is that, whether received or rejected, He can derive glory from them, either by crowning them by a last gift, that of perfect beatitude, or by rejecting on His part those who have rejected them. The reward of having loved the light here below will be to possess it for eternity at its source: *In lumine tuo videbimus lumen.*<sup>1</sup> But those who hate it, and who take pleasure in the darkness of their own intellect; oh God! what dost Thou reserve for them, except that dreadful *darkness* of which it is written: *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*<sup>2</sup>

In the second place, religion puts order into the affections of man; it rules his love, as it rules his understanding, by teaching him to proportion it to the degree of perfection of beings; and man becoming thus, in a new aspect, the image of God, completes the perfection of that wonderful resemblance, with reference to which the Almighty designed to create him.

Here again Christianity rises above human doctrines, as much as divine wisdom is above our wisdom. What depth indeed in this precept apparently so simple! 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul: and with all thy strength: this is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'<sup>3</sup> Man, like to God, must be loved with a love similar to that which we owe to God, but not with an equal love: the same distance must subsist between these two loves as between the image and its model. One word suffices to Jesus Christ to warn us of it, by reminding us of our origin, the greatness of which is the very motive of our dependence. 'On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'<sup>4</sup> That is to say, that they embrace at once present society, and the eternal society, of which the Mediator,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxv, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ejicientur in tenebras exteriores: ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium. Matth. viii, 12, et ibid xxii, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex omnibus viribus tuis, et ex omni mente tua. Luc. x, 27.—Hoc est maximum, et primum mandatum. Secundum autem simile est huic: Diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum. Matth. xxii, 38, 39.

<sup>4</sup> In his duobus mandatis universa lex pendet, et prophetæ. Matth. xxii, 40.

announced by the prophets, came to open to us the entrance. Infinitely perfect, and supremely to be loved, God loves Himself with an infinite love: it is the law of order that must regulate man.<sup>1</sup> All limited love is unworthy of Him. He is pre-eminently the good, the unmeasured good, the sole good, and consequently the sole end to which should tend all our desires, all our affections. We must love Him more than all things, more than ourselves, both by reason of our imperfection, and because not being our own good, an enlightened love of ourselves must strive towards God, and dwell there, in the very interest of our own well-being. We must love ourselves in Him, as He loves Himself in us; we must love nothing but for Him, and we must love Him as He loves Himself. Profound mystery! for where will man, so poor and feeble, find the infinite love which he owes to God? How will he acquit himself of this immense debt? Sinking nature feels only its powerlessness. Yet take courage, oh man! *that which for you is impossible is easy for God.*<sup>2</sup> Were you not by nature equally incapable of knowing Him? He has sent to you His Son, and you know Him fully by faith. That divine Son united to his Father will send the Spirit which unites them, *to help your infirmity*<sup>3</sup>; and in the same way that you know God by His Word, you will love Him through His love. This substantial love, uniting itself to you, will render your love divine, will invest it with the character of infinity, which alone can render it worthy of God. You will thus enter into the immortal society of the *true worshippers who worship the Father in spirit and in truth*;<sup>4</sup> that is to say, by His Word, which is truth<sup>5</sup> and by His Spirit, which is love: for *the truth has been effected by Jesus*,<sup>6</sup> *and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A few words are here omitted. *Note of Translator.*

<sup>2</sup> Quæ impossibilia sunt apud homines, possibilia sunt apud Deum. Luc. xviii, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Spiritus adjuvat infirmitatem nostram. Ep. ad Rom. viii, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Venit hora, et nunc est, quando veri adoratores adorabunt Patrem in spiritu et veritate. Joan iv, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Christus est veritas. Ep. i, Joan v, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Gratia et veritas per Jesum-Christum facta est. Joan i, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Charitas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis. Ep. ad Rom. v, 5.

The second commandment is like the first : *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. All men, equal by nature, or equally perfect, have a right to an equal love. The preference which one of them might give himself over the others, not being founded upon any natural superiority, would be a violation of order. That is the principle of that sublime sentiment which is named humanity, a sentiment born of Christianity, and which extends to the whole human race, the love which each man has for himself.

It is not the case that religion destroys family affection, or the noble love of country ; on the contrary, it transforms the natural inclination into a duty ; it strengthens it by regulating it, and prevents it from degenerating into an exclusive and disastrous passion, by making it subordinate to this great general law : the preference of all to the few, of country to family, of the human race to country, of eternal society to present society.

‘Order,’ says Bossuet, ‘is perfect, if God is loved more than oneself, if oneself is loved on account of God, one’s neighbour not on one’s own account, but like oneself for God. Every virtue lies in that.’<sup>1</sup>

Love without rule is selfishness, an absolute preference of oneself to one’s fellow creatures and to God. Love regulated only by the laws of actual society, is humanity, or the equal love of all men, by reason of their equality by nature. Love regulated by the laws of eternal society, is charity ; an entirely divine sentiment, since it is but the love itself of God for man. For, *God so loved man that He gave His only Son, that man might gain everlasting life.*<sup>2</sup> Man must therefore love man, so as to sacrifice everything, even life itself, to obtain for him immortal life.

And as this is only the possession of God, or of the Supreme good, man must not love anything, nor love himself, except with a view to this final object. Everything that turns him aside from this is an evil, and he ought to hate it ; everything which relates only to a temporary existence is not a real good,

<sup>1</sup> Meditat. sur l’Evangile, tom. i, p. 475, in 12.

<sup>2</sup> Sic enim Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret : ut omnis, qui credit in eum, non pereat, sed habeat vitam æternam. Joan iii, 16.



and unbending order forbids his attaching his heart to it. The time is short, says the apostle, and nature repeats this to us every day ; every day death, with its iron hand, engraves this great lesson upon thousands of tombs : 'The time is short : it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it : for the fashion of this world passeth away.'<sup>1</sup> Woe to him who lets his love wander away and grovel in this perishing world ! for when it shall just now have passed away, what will there be left to that wretched soul other than an infinite waste, and in an eternal separation from God, an eternal impossibility of love ?

The same principle which puts disorder into our intellects, also puts disorder in our hearts. Pride or the unruliness of reason, by which we raise ourselves above everything, produces concupiscence, or the unruliness of love, by which we love ourselves above all things ; in the first place, more than our fellow creatures, and afterwards, more than God. Strange excess ! But it is so. Man arrives at the point of offering to himself an exclusive worship of love, as well as an exclusive worship of admiration. Enchanted with his own excellence, he loves himself without measure or rule ; and from that moment, judging of good and evil by their relation to his corrupt nature, he calls good all that flatters his pride and his senses, and evil all that wounds them. Fame, riches, pleasures, even the most disgraceful ones, that is what this immortal creature will seek for as its object ; and, the eye fixed on a vile metal, or the ear eagerly open to a vain noise of reputation, it will declare to itself that there is more perfection, or more real good in that intoxicating sound, or in that coveted piece of gold, than in the Creator of the worlds, and the eternal source of all good. And God would be indifferent to such an outrage ! He, whom order requires to will to be loved as He loves Himself, would accept either the

<sup>1</sup>Tempus breve est : reliquum est, ut et qui habent uxores, tanquam non habentes sint : et qui flet, tanquam non flentes : et qui gaudent, tanquam non gaudentes : et qui emunt, tanquam non possidentes : et qui utuntur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur : præterit enim figura hujus mundi. Ep. i, ad Corinth. vii, 29, 31.

ragments of love which the satiated passions abandon with disdain, or indifference, or hatred! No: this would be to deceive oneself too grossly. Whoever despises the supreme good, must expect only supreme evil. No mercy for this crime which implies every crime. *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him*: for he can still return to the truth through love; but *whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost*, who obstinately hardens himself against love itself, that one is without resource, without hope; for who could bring him back, if he has at once resisted both the light of truth and the inspirations of love? God Himself can do no more for him; he has exhausted the power, as well as the mercy of the Infinite Being; and his sin, implying a total opposition of the will to order, *shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, religion puts order into the actions of men, and for that it prescribes certain external duties, and interdicts contrary actions. Now, man is in relation with his fellow creatures, and with God, Order in the acts which relate to God is called worship. Order in the actions which relate to our fellow creatures is called morality or virtue.

Actions are determined by love; love is determined by the knowledge of good or of truth. That is why, among sectarians, morality and worship assume a vague character like their beliefs, and like them tend to becoming abolished; they are indifferent in the eyes of the deist, who, not knowing what he believes, allows of believing nothing, consequently of loving nothing; and they become for the atheist, who only believes in himself, and loves only himself, the hideous morality of self-interest, and the monstrous worship of pride and pleasure.

Man, composed of two substances, owes to God the homage of his whole being; or to speak the profoundly philosophical language of the Catechism, he must know, love, and serve God; know Him with his mind, love Him with his heart, and serve Him with his senses. The necessity of an external worship is then deduced from the nature of man, an intelligent

<sup>1</sup> *Quicumque dixerit verbum contra Filium hominis remittetur ei; qui autem dixerit contra Spiritum sanctum non remittetur ei, neque in hoc seculo, neque in futuro. Matth. xii, 32.*

and physical being. A purely spiritual worship is the worship of pure spirits; it is the worship of the angels; but it is not that of man, who by effect of the intimate union of soul and body, cannot enter into the society, either of God or of his fellow-men, except by the help of his organs. 'The worship, it is said, which God requires, is that of the heart.'<sup>1</sup> What hinders it from being said also, 'the virtues which God exacts, are those of the heart,' and from concluding thence, that by loving one's neighbour, justice is fully accomplished? What a pitiable thing! as if love did not necessarily manifest itself by external acts. Whoever loves man, serves man, and whoever loves God serves Him in the same manner. Worship is in action, like virtue; and in the same way that each one ought in political society, to contribute by his action to the maintenance of order, from which the happiness of men results, each one must also contribute by his action in religious society, to the maintenance of order, from which results the glory of God: and as external worship is a relation which derives from the nature of man, public worship is a relation which derives from the nature of society.

Ignorance, however, will smile at the very name of worship; it does not see that it is that which preserves belief, and nurtures love. Wearisome and puerile practices, fantastic ceremonies, that is all that it discovers in this sublime manifestation of faith. Philosopher, laugh, if you will, at our *genusflexions* and *gestures*;<sup>2</sup> but after having had your laugh, tell us what would have become of the human race had it not knelt before the cross? Compare with your internal worship, which consists in *accustoming oneself to sublime contemplations*;<sup>3</sup> the Christian worship, which consists in accustoming oneself to sublime sacrifices of self; reckon the virtues which have been brought forth by your solitary addresses to the Eternal,<sup>4</sup> and those which spring every day from a single look at the image of His Son.

But religion commands us to look at still higher considerations. It is not even sufficient to admire that wondrous unity of design, that intimate correspondence which binds to-

<sup>1</sup> Emile, tom. iii, p. 134. <sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 135. <sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 126. <sup>4</sup> Ibid.

gether dogmas and worship, as strictly as the human soul is bound to the body; so that the truth being given us by external means, or by speech, grace or love is also given us by external means, or by the sacraments: It is to be understood besides that worship, in its magnificent generality, is but the outward realisation of infinite truth and infinite love, the mutual gift and effective sacrifice of God to man, and of man to God, or the consummation of their society. And, indeed, I see upon our altars infinite truth really present in the person of the incarnate Word, but hidden under the appearance of bread, symbol of the life which it communicates to us, as the Word itself was hidden under the veil of human nature; I see it, this Word made flesh, giving itself to man whom he bought with his blood, and feeding him at the same time with his body immolated for him, with his truth, with his love, with his whole divinity, in order to render man divine, and to prepare him for a union, not a more real one, but more intimate, more delicious, and more durable. Thus the infinite love of God is manifested by infinite action, and religion would be to me more incomprehensible without this mystery, than this mystery is incomprehensible to me.

On his side, man associated with the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ,<sup>1</sup> the man-pontiff, minister and image of God as Pontiff, realises outwardly infinite truth and love, by the production of the incarnate Word upon the altar, prodigious production, which makes men share in the divine power, and which the Church, in its wonderfully profound language, expresses by the absolute term of *action*, because, indeed, no other action can be compared to that infinite action which is exercised upon God Himself.

Man also realises infinite truth by the public profession of the faith; and the infinite love which the Holy Spirit inspires into him, by public acts of adoration, obedience and annihilation; by the entire sacrifice of his being, of his reason, through faith; of his heart, by detaching himself from perishable

<sup>1</sup> Tu es sacerdos in æternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech. Ps. cix, 4. Vide et Joan xii, 34. Ep. ad Hæbr, v, 6; vii, 17. Pontifex factus in æternum. Ibid vi, 20.

goods; of his senses, by the practices of mortification which the law enjoins or recommends. It is thus that he accomplishes the precept, and that he loves God *with all his mind, and with all his heart, and with all his strength*; for his strength, or his senses only act in order to manifest his love. Now, 'the greatest effort of love is to give up life for that which is loved:'<sup>1</sup> it is the last, the perfect sacrifice, and also the necessary means for arriving at a perfect union with God. That is what death is to the Christian, the last act of the infinite worship which he owes to the Supreme Being. Here again is to be observed the strict correspondence of the order of nature with supernatural order.<sup>2</sup>

Feeble minds, who come to shatter yourselves against the stones of the altar, comprehend now this word; *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.*<sup>3</sup> Outward homage, prayer, all the acts of worship are inseparable from the worship of the spirit. Love necessarily manifests itself without; and it is in vain that *shaking off the yoke of God, and breaking the bonds of His society, you dare to say: Non serviam.* In spite of yourselves, you must serve. *You will serve your desires, your passions;*<sup>4</sup> you will make gods of them;<sup>5</sup> for whatever we prefer to God, is god for us: you will render to them the worship which you refuse to the Almighty. You will adore your own selves in your haughty reason, and in your insensate pride, *in omni colle sublimi*; you will prostrate yourselves before your vices; you will erect as temples the obscure dens of prostitution, *sub omni ligno frondoso, tu prosternaberis meretrix:*<sup>6</sup> you will serve, but basely as a degraded people serves the tyrant which chance gives it, until, suddenly carried away by the *impetuous torrent of justice,*<sup>7</sup> you will go again, and for ever, far from the eternal source of love, and of sovereign good, to serve, without hope,

<sup>1</sup> Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis. Joan xv, 13.

<sup>2</sup> A few lines have been omitted here. *Note of Translator.*

<sup>3</sup> Dominum Deum tuum adorabis, et illi soli servies. Luc iv, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Servientes desideriis et voluptatibus variis. Ep. ad Tit. iii, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Quorum Deus venter est. Ep. ad Philip, iii, 19.

<sup>6</sup> A seculo confregisti jugum meum, rupisti vincula mea, et dixisti: Non serviam. In omni enim colle sublimi, et sub omni ligno frondoso, tu prosternaberis meretrix. Jerem ii, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Et revelabitur quasi aqua iudicium, et justitia quasi torrens fortis. Amos v, 24.

in the desolate regions of hate, and in the empire of sovereign evil.

From the precept of loving one's neighbour as oneself for the sake of God, flow all the laws of morality and of society. This single precept puts order into families, into the State, and amongst nations; for nations have amongst themselves the same relations, and are subject to the same duties as individuals. The perfect observation of this commandment, would make of actual society a perfect reflection of the eternal society, of which we are one day to be members. Observe that the entire fulfilment of this precept is in fact but the entire sacrifice of oneself to others; a sacrifice which peculiarly constitutes virtue, as the sacrifice of others to oneself constitutes crime. Virtue itself is then a positive worship which man renders to God, in his image; and like Jesus Christ, *come* in his quality of *king*<sup>1</sup> not to be served but to serve,<sup>2</sup> Jesus Christ *immolated since the origin of the world*,<sup>3</sup> is at once, in his eternal priesthood, both priest and victim: so each member of the body of which he is the head, or of the spiritual society which he has established, associated with his *kingship* in order to serve, and with his priesthood in order to immolate himself, is equally priest and victim: *Vos regale sacerdotium*.<sup>4</sup> But if virtue is a real worship, crime is a real idolatry, or a sacrilegious adoration which man offers to himself, by immolating order to his passions, by declaring that they should be served by beings after the likeness of God: and in the same way that the greatest act of virtue, or the last effort of the love of others, is to sacrifice one's life for them, so the greatest crime, or the last excess of unruly love of self, is the sacrifice to oneself of the life of others; and if it was not in vain that the incarnate Word willed that it should be said of him, *There is the man*, every murder is a deicide.

Apply these considerations in detail to either domestic or

<sup>1</sup> Dixit itaque ei Pilatus: Ergo rex es tu? Respondit Jesus: Tu dicis, quia rex sum ego. Joan, xviii, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Filius hominis non venit ut ministraretur ei, sed ut ministraret, et daret, animam suam redemptionem pro multis. Marc. x, 45.

<sup>3</sup> Qui occisus est ab origine mundi. Apoc. xiii, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ep. i. B. Petri. ii, 9

social duties, and you will conceive that, without religion, everything is disorder because all order is relative to God. Order in our thoughts is to know Him; order in our affections is to love Him; order in our actions, to serve Him, either directly, by the exercise of the worship established by the Mediator in religious society; or indirectly, by the exercise of moral virtues, or of the worship which we offer to His image in political society. For we owe nothing to man simply as man; and God alone is the principle as well as the object of all the duties. This appears very clearly in the Gospel, when in announcing that dreadful day in which all the human race will appear before Him to receive its last sentence, the man-God promises to recompense works of love and to punish the contrary works, not precisely because anyone shall have served or have oppressed man, but because by serving or oppressing man, he shall have served or injured God: *Quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis mihi fecistis. Quamdiu non fecistis uni de minoribus his nec mihi fecistis.*<sup>1</sup> Beyond that, I see neither crime nor virtue; and nothing less than those words is necessary to explain to me those which follow: Come ye blessed of my Father. . . . Depart from me ye cursed . . . and these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.<sup>2</sup>

That is what religion is with regard to God, that is what it is with respect to man. Let us take care of being misled: it is not a system which is submitted to our judgment, but a law to which we must subject our hearts. Moreover the first voice heard at the apparition of the man-God imposes silence on human reason, by revealing the secret of the order which the Mediator comes to establish: *Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will.*<sup>3</sup> Let us listen attentively: glory to God: such is the principal object, the first cause of the incarnation; for God acts only for Himself. If He sends His son into the world, it is to make His glory to shine forth, to manifest His being, to testify to the truth, to extend the reign of love: that is the mission of the Word

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xxv, 40, 45.

<sup>2</sup> Venite benedicti Patris mei. . . . Discedite a me maledicti. . . . et ibunt hi supplicium æternum; justi autem in vitam æternam. Matth. xxv. 35, 41, 46.

<sup>3</sup> Gloria in altissimis, et in terra, pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis: Luc. ii, 14.

made flesh. Now is it the reason that will be addressed? no, but the will; for it does not depend upon the reason to comprehend, but it always depends upon the will to believe that which is attested by a sufficient authority; it depends upon the will to love good, to obey the laws of order: *Peace to men of good will.*

Those will hearken to God in His envoy, and will glorify Him by their faith, by their love and their works, whose will will be *good*, or exempt from the corruption of pride, principle of all evil, and who will incline their hearts to believe, to love, to obey, instead of harassing their reason in order to comprehend; or rather, whose enlightened reason will understand that it is supremely reasonable to believe without comprehending, whenever God speaks in order to reveal such high truths, which He alone is capable of fully comprehending. *Peace to those men of good will*; peace, that is to say, society, union with God, outside of which there is no peace for any intelligent being: *peace on earth*, through the inward enjoyment of order which religion establishes in their minds, affections, and actions. That which disturbs the peace of the understanding, is the strife of error against the truth, of error which springs from proud reason, against the truth which is known to us by the testimony of the Word: by forcing reason to submit, by giving faith to it as a rule, the will terminates this struggle. That which disturbs the peace of the heart, is the fight of the *flesh against the spirit*.<sup>1</sup> of the unruly love of ourselves against the love of God, which His Spirit excites within us: by giving way to its impression, by completing the sacrifice of our whole being to its Author, the will terminates this fight. That which troubles the peace of society, is the perpetual struggle of the interest of each with the interest of all: by subjecting the passions to duty, or to the law which bids us sacrifice ourselves for our brothers, the will puts an end to this struggle. Therefore, once more, *Peace on earth to men of good will*, and in heaven, the eternal fulness of glory: *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua.*<sup>2</sup>

But for the men whose perverted will refuses to listen to the

<sup>1</sup> Caro enim concupiscit adversus spiritum: spiritus autem adversus carnem hæc enim sibi invicem adversantur. Ep. ad Galat. v, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xvi, 15.



