



# TESTAMENT

MEMOIR OF THE THOUGHTS AND SENTIMENTS OF JEAN MESLIER

*Jean Meslier*

*The First English Translation of the Complete Work by Michael Shreve*  
WITH A PREFACE BY MICHEL ONFRAY

You won't find neologisms here or obscure thought or entangled demonstrations: to read it is to understand it; you feel the rhythm and its anger, the speed and its violence, the brutality of its moral suffocation. It is a sermon on fire, an endless monologue, an incandescent philippic, a copious speech.

—from Michel Onfray's preface,  
“The War Song of an Atheist Priest”

Though Jean Meslier did not gain notoriety until after his death and may be only known by some as a mere footnote to the prerevolutionary period in France, the posthumous release in the early eighteenth century of his blazing manifesto shocked the establishment and aroused the passions of such famed Enlightenment thinkers as Voltaire, Diderot, and Baron d'Holbach. Indeed, some historians have claimed that Meslier's work played a pivotal role in unleashing the rebellious anarchist sentiment that led to the French Revolution and the groundbreaking work of Karl Marx.

What profoundly influenced those thinkers will amaze today's fans of Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and other noted New Atheists because Meslier's words, though centuries old, still maintain their unflinching, ribald sting. With analytic precision Meslier deconstructs Christianity and its use by government to lord over the people while urging his readers to accept the truth of God's nonexistence and to work toward liberty, equality, and happiness: “Do not fool yourselves, my dear friends, open your eyes to this and in general to everything that your pious morons or mocking, self-interested priests and scholars are eager to tell you and make you believe on the false pretext of the infallible certainty of the so-called

*Continued on back flap*

holy and divine religion." He lampoons the great prophets, blasts the scriptures of the apostles and the miracles of the saints, and exposes Jesus and Muhammad as fanatics and imposters. He stumps for women's rights and argues the benefits of divorce. He derides the Cartesians for likening animals to machines and rejects the disturbing belief that they feel no pain. He ridicules Catholics for "worshipping little idols of dough and flour"—the holy sacrament—and for maintaining the notion that an all-loving God created a hell for sinners to burn in.

Shocking, stimulating, and oftentimes uproarious, Jean Meslier's *Testament* is an original and enduring work.

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Prometheus Books

59 John Glenn Drive  
Amherst, New York 14228-2119

Published 2009 by Prometheus Books

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Inquiries should be addressed to  
Prometheus Books  
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Amherst, New York 14228-2119  
VOICE: 716-691-0133, ext. 210  
FAX: 716-691-0137  
WWW.PROMETHEUSBOOKS.COM

13 12 11 10 09 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Meslier, Jean, 1664–1729.

Testament : memoir of the thoughts and sentiments of Jean Meslier / by Jean Meslier ; the first English translation of the complete work by Michael Shreve.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-59102-749-2 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Religion—Controversial literature. 2. Christianity—Controversial literature.

I. Title.

BL2773.M4513 2009

200—dc22

2009020491

Printed in the United States on acid-free paper

*Jean Meslier, Parish Priest of Etrépigny and Balaives  
on the Errors and Abuses  
of the Conduct and Government of Men,  
Wherein We Can See Clear and Evident Proofs  
of the Vanity and Falsity of All the Divinities  
and of All the Religions of the World  
to Be Addressed to His Parishioners  
after His Death  
and to Serve as a Witness of Truth to Them  
and Their Fellow Men*

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before all the wise enlightened people, rejecting as judges in this affair all the ignorant bigots, all the partisans and instigators of errors and superstitions, also all the flatterers and favorites of tyrants and all their pawns

## PREFACE

# THE WAR SONG OF AN ATHEIST PRIEST

**U**sually I don't much like priests. Or at least they have to be famous, like Dom Pérignon, in some domain other than the ascetic ideal. . . . With Jean Meslier, it's more complicated because this atheist priest, revolutionary, communalist, visionary anarchist, almost Proudhonian, if you forgive me the anticlerical, internationalist, materialist, hedonist anachronism, *partisan* as they said among the leftists of the great socialist century, the nineteenth, has supplied impressive matter for thought for all who hold as ideal the motto "Ni Dieu, ni Maître."

This parish priest was born on January 15 in Mazerny in the Ardennes in 1664, the year of Molière's *Tartuffe*. . . . A typical journey that leads him from studies in theology to the parish in the country. Meslier officiates at weddings for free and distributes to the poor the profits of a small rental property he had inherited. In his library, you can find Montaigne and Vanini, La Bruyère and La Boétie among other good books. He lives with a young maid who is not the old and chaste servant whom the councils prefer for fresh and alluring youth. To the hierarchy that reprimands him, he retorts that she is his niece. . . . They punish him with a month of solitary confinement in a monastery. A few years later, he will start up again with another . . . niece.

During his preaching, he's an activist. . . . In a sermon against Antoine de Toully, the lord of the town, he refuses this undeserving man holy water and prayer intentions. The noble complains to the bishop; they punish him again. The following Sunday, Meslier does it again, this time inviting the flock to pray, of course, but for the conversion of the lord to the evangelical virtues and for forgiveness from God for his faults of petty nobility. Jean Meslier then appeals to the faithful of the little country church to get the aristocrat to please stop mistreating the poor and robbing the orphans. Libertine and libertarian, now there's a good parish priest for you. . . .

For ten years every God-made evening, if you'll allow me the expres-

sion, by candlelight and in front of his fireplace he writes a revolutionary text on thousands of little pages. Cramped writing, logical, revolutionary, antiauthoritarian imprecations. Its title? *Memoir of the Thoughts and Sentiments of Jean Meslier*, a work destined to become famous under the title *The Testament of Jean Meslier*. Its targets? The Catholic religion: God, priests, monks, Christ, prophets, the Church, the Scriptures; the people in power: princes, kings, emperors, tyrants, nobles; the various parasites: the legal profession, notaries, "men of injustice," otherwise called prosecutors, lawyers, court clerks, inspectors, judges, police, taxmen, "tax collector cellar rats," farmers-general, rich landowners. Who does it redeem? The poor, the miserable, the victims, the peasants, the workers, the exploited. But women, too. And animals. Just as much victims of the powerful and the rulers.

The book recalls the *Essays* of Montaigne in its Baroque, random composition and its existential economy: the book makes the author as much as the author makes the book. The *Testament* knits together overlong passages and magnificent flashes, effusive tunnels and untimely aphorisms, countless enfolded proofs and brilliant rockets, repetitions and new thoughts. You won't find neologisms here or obscure thought or entangled demonstrations: to read it is to understand it; you feel the rhythm and its anger, the speed and its violence, the brutality of its moral suffocation. It is a sermon on fire, an endless monologue, an incandescent philippic, a copious speech.

Meslier, pressed for time, fears death and wants to get rid of what's needling him and making him suffer: atheist priest, unbelieving minister, miscreant pastor, he lives with this contradiction in his flesh like a pain, a wound, a plague. Why not abandon the priest's habit? The blasphemer who sets the world on fire is afraid to upset his parents and wants to live in peace! He also knows that for an apostate, the stake is not far off. . . . He writes to live, to survive. He confesses himself. He is the matter of his work, like the philosopher from Bordeaux, Montaigne.

Cathartic logic explains the jumble: he thinks like a man in a hurry. As in every soliloquy, you will find repetitions, redundancies. He gets drunk on words. The basso continuo of the book? Anger. The variations? An interminable war song. But he is likewise a son of his Baroque, if not Rococo or Mannerist, times. Ornamentation, exuberance, asymmetry, dissymmetry, extension of the subject matter, broken or undu-

lating lines, what is seen in the architecture in stone of his time also appears in this composition on paper.

This war cry, never before heard in the history of Western thought, offers one of the first true atheist moments, if not the first. It is between 1719 and 1729, the date of the parish priest's death. Prior to him, they call the *agnostic* an atheist who, as Protagoras, concludes that when it comes to God one can conclude nothing; the *pantheist* who, such as Spinoza, affirms its existence consubstantial with nature; the *polytheist*, like Epicurus, who teaches its multiplicity; the *deist*, in the way of Voltaire, for whom God creates the world en bloc, but does not care about the details; or whoever's idol does not correspond to the strict criteria established by the church. Now, *the atheist clearly says that God does not exist*. This is what Meslier clearly writes: "There is no God" (chaps. 59, 74, 93, 94)—that is clear and distinct, blunt, straightforward. . . .

So, according to the long—and sometimes ponderous—demonstrations, the multiplicity of definitions of God opens onto a muddle of contradictory propositions that cancel each other out: merciful and vengeful, trifling and magnanimous, just and jealous, gentle and irascible, inaccessible but liable to be bent by prayer, good but tolerant of evil from the original sin to hell, not to mention the exploitation, injustice, and misery on earth. How could such an unreasonable chimera exist?

Meslier carries out a long and patient exegesis: texts contradict each other, the evangelists say contradictory things, for example, about the genealogy of Jesus, what he did, how he acted, his infancy, his time of public activity, his acts after the baptism, the details of his first retreat, what happened at the Last Supper, the women who followed him and how many, the places and circumstances of his apparitions after his death, etc. These texts were not inspired by the Holy Spirit; they were written by men. We must read the Bible like we read Tacitus or Suetonius, not with the eyes of a believer, but of a historian. Then Meslier tracks down the myths, fables, magic, and children's tales propagated by the Testament stories that are only so much propaganda composed by the church to secure its empire over bodies and souls here and now.

The allegories? Dialectic deceptions to mask the weakness, the indigence, or the absence of thought. The miracles? Stupidities that contradict the laws of nature. The mythology? A recycling of old, pagan fables.

Jesus? An “arch-fanatic, a madman, a fool, a pitiful, wretched scoundrel, lowborn, vile and contemptible”; a frenzied liar; a hyperactive convert; a metaphysical con artist incapable of avoiding crucifixion; a smooth talker not one of whose predictions came true; a megalomaniac who claimed to redeem the sins of the world with his death, but whose sacrifice produced no effect; a guru. The dogmas? Ridiculous, pagan superstitions recirculated. Christian morality? A harmful, deplorable unnaturalness: Why would God give the capacity for pleasure all the while forbidding it? A masochism with fatal consequences. A love-thy-neighbor, including your enemy, especially your enemy, that therefore justifies the world as it is by forbidding revolt or disobedience. A code constructed on the celebration of the death drive, on renouncement. *Et passim.*

What does Meslier propose? A hedonist contract with a free sexuality between freely consenting people. A feminism that gives women power over themselves with, for starters, legislation to authorize divorce in order for them to escape the tyranny of bad husbands. An ethic of compassion for all suffering creatures. Thus, Meslier denies the Christian logic that legitimizes the exploitation of animals, their being put to death for food, their suffering in labor, their mistreatment on the pretext that there is a *difference in nature* between men and animals, the former having at their disposal an immaterial soul, a principle of divinity in them to the contrary of the latter. The atheist priest defends the idea of a *difference in degree* between men and animals, his starting point to call for an ethic of compassion. He tells us that he cannot stand butcher shops, that the sight of blood makes him faint. This is the same man who wants “all the rulers of the earth and all the nobles to be hanged and strangled by the guts of priests” (chap. 2). We have what butcheries we can!

What is Meslier’s philosophy? He invented modern materialism. Without friends, without sophisticated conversations, without libraries, salons, or correspondence with the intellectual bigwigs of his time, without spiritual emulation, but by observing nature, alone and solitary, cloistered deep in his country, Meslier formulates the French materialism that La Mettrie and Helvétius, D’Holbach and Diderot will pillage later. Meslier doesn’t enter on the details of materialist physics. He doesn’t cite Epicurus. Lucretius isn’t in his library, Diogenes Laertius neither.

But he opposes Descartes and his theory of matter with the help of his intelligence alone. He acts alone against the world of idealists, Platonists, Christians, and spiritualists who, in the past as in the present, command an institutional monopoly. Descartes? A “god-cultist,” a “Christ-cultist” who recycles the Christian soul with his “thinking substance.” . . . Because he sees it, Meslier knows that there exists in nature a “continual fermentation of being” (chap. 91): his vitalism is extremely modern. D’Holbach will recall it when he builds his immanent ontology on the “nisus.”

Meslier also invents an immanent ontology; for, where Christianity teaches original sin as the genealogy of evil, he proposes a radically immanent reading: against this *celestial and theological genealogy* of evil, he proposes a *terrestrial and ethological genealogy*. Evil? Too many men in too small a territory. . . . The scarcity of goods breeds violence to eat. From this evidence the philosopher proposes a social eudaemonism, in other words, a different organization of territory. At least a cultural organization that he extracts from nature. Evil has nothing to do with fault but with the bad management of Louis XIV, whose politics created misery. The king? A thief, a criminal, a killer, an exploiter who in sixty-two years of ruling and with all his wars and taxes has brought France to its knees. This man is guilty of massacres, wars, usurpations, “ravaging,” injustices, and famine.

Therefore, the atheist priest doubles as an anarchist priest: he sides with those who have nothing and deserve everything and he couples his words with anger against those who have everything and deserve nothing—therefore, to be dispossessed. . . . They live off taxes and rents, they have everything—women, inheritance, money, enjoyment—and want even more. The collusion of this world with the world of the Christian religion is patent. Class struggle provokes class hatred.

So, a eudaemonist republic is necessary. Meslier asserts that the inequality of organization contradicts natural equality. As a Jusnaturalist, he relies on the natural right by virtue of which men exercise the right to live, work, eat their fill, clothe themselves correctly, house themselves decently, educate their children. Meslier proposes an objective for this republic that would work for the “public use” and the “common good”: “Live happily” (chaps. 51, 52).

To do this we have to abolish the ideological power of Saint Paul,

according to whom “all power comes from God,” a noxious thought because it presumes that to oppose power is to oppose God: the beyond locks down the here below. The collusion of sword and aspergillum is blindingly obvious: Catholicism and monarchy “get along like two thieves.” First, the kings are said to come from God or from the gods, then they end up being called gods themselves. The clergy, accomplices of this undertaking, don’t refute them and they then terrorize the people. They are paid afterward with the benefits obtained from the princes, who are also their friends, accomplices, and confidants. Meslier attacks the monks and monasteries and rails against the fat benefices of the abbeys that despoil “the good workers of what they should have.”

What to do? Act by defending his ideas. Offer a report on the state of repair—States-General ahead of its time. . . . To expose the causes of misery by showing the mechanism of exploitation and alienation. To enlighten the people about the nature of the feudalism. To say that we can change things. We need friends, fellow travelers—activists, we would say today—or intellectuals vested in the cause who will go through the country “to arouse the people everywhere to shake off the insupportable yoke of tyrants.”

How to do it? A good reader of La Boétie, he knows that power exists only insofar as those upon whom it is exercised consent to it. We read in the *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* of this cordial, sublime libertarian, “Be resolved to serve no longer and then you’ll be free.” Meslier agrees. Practically: give nothing to the rich, exclude them from your society, practice civil disobedience, no longer pay taxes, unite to overthrow and smash the throne, resort to tyrannicides “to bludgeon and stab all the detestable monsters and enemies of the human race” (chap. 96).

Why do it? After the abolition of private property, organize the “common enjoyment” of the products of prosperity and skill; rely on the towns to federate; establish contracts to avoid war and build peace; aim for internationalism, “for I willingly speak to all the people of the earth” (chap. 96); act on solid ground: work, food, houses, hygiene, heat, clothes, education of children, the possibility of being well cared for. . . . Meslier offers the first version of libertarian and internationalist communalism.

Jean Meslier died on June 28 or 29, 1729, at the age of sixty-nine.

He left behind four copies of his famous *Testament* and a letter of some twenty pages in which he synthesized his work. The *Testament* is a time bomb. Recopied, it circulates illicitly. Voltaire hears about this fire ship that they were snatching up for a fortune. He obtains a copy but deplores the atheism and libertarian communism. He goes on to produce a fake with deductions that are useful to his anticlerical, deist fight; he preserves the attack against superstitions, the clergy, and the Catholic religion, but he suppresses the negation of God, trashes the political outline, takes drastic measures and discards the details of the materialist philosophy, emasculates the text and concocts a conclusion that makes Meslier a . . . Voltairian deist!

Transformed into an adept of “natural religion” thanks to Arouet, Meslier becomes the shield of Voltaire whose vulgate always neglects to say that he loves the powerful, courts the kings of Europe to obtain pensions, builds his fortune on the slave trade, hates the people (“a bunch of cattle who need the yoke, the prod and hay,” writes the French icon), sends a petition to the pope to get some relics destined for the chapel that he had built in Cirey and in which he wanted to be buried! Voltaire concludes the falsified edition that he gave of the *Testament* of Jean Meslier by writing that it was a “testimony of a priest who asks forgiveness of God.” You’d think you were dreaming!

The entire eighteenth century reads this faulted edition. Materialist philosophers pillage it without citing it; Desmoulins echoes it during the French Revolution; Anacharsis Cloots asks the Convention to build a statue in the Temple of Reason; in 1919, Meslier’s name is engraved on an obelisk in Moscow because the Bolsheviks awarded him a cardinal role in their genealogy. . . . So many detestable appropriations: Robespierre’s deism; Desmoulins’ moderation; the petrifaction in marble of one who has no existing portrait, no tomb, no trace; the appropriation by the totalitarian Marxist-Leninist regime, all would have intensely offended this philosopher of revolt and insurrection. The sailors of Kronstadt, okay; the Soviet bureaucracy, no way. . . .

We have to wait until 1864 to finally get an authentic edition in three volumes, established by Rudolf Charles. Thenceforth, we can read it free of the Voltairian cassock and clown suit with which it has been saddled for so long. We have it intact now in a few editions. We find it extremely modern and terribly relevant today. This radical thinker, this

## 24 PREFACE

brilliant philosopher was buried hurriedly, probably in the yard of the vicarage that was later attached to the property of the aristocrat humiliated in the pulpit! No tombstone, no plaque or sign, no trace, not even a notice in the parish register. . . .

Alone in his vicarage of Etrépigny in the Ardennes, Jean Meslier, atheist priest, invented a radical atheism, proposed a hedonist ethic, formulated an immanent ontology, constructed his libertarian politics and gave them a communalist and internationalist concept, thought of a feminism of action, anticipated the battle against speciesism, erected modern materialism, unmasked the Cartesian deceit, sketched the revolutionary concept of 1789, called for the necessity of intellectual critics. . . . Excuse me. . . . How to pay homage to him today? Read his work, for sure. Read it, but also *and above all*, practice it.

Michel Onfray

(Translated by Michael Shreve)

## NOTE ON THE TEXT

In 1761 Voltaire published his *Extrait des Sentiments de Jean Meslier*. As Michel Onfray points out in the preface, it is an abridged corruption extracted from the first five proofs that omits all reference to the author's atheism and materialism as well as to his revolutionary politics. Voltaire limits himself to Meslier's anti-Catholicism to serve his own purpose, going so far as to make a deist of him.

In 1772 an anonymous book appeared called *Le Bon Sens (Common Sense)*. In 1791 it was published under the name of Curé Meslier. By 1803 it was recognized as being written by Baron d'Holbach. For d'Holbach this was nothing new, since he had published *The System of Nature* in 1770 under the name of Mirabaud, who had died ten years previously. But this version, at least, was an atheist text. It did, however, omit any social or political critique—d'Holbach was no revolutionary.

In English the translation of d'Holbach's *Common Sense* or *Superstition in All Ages* together with Voltaire's *Testament* have been printed together under the name of Meslier even up to the present day. Hence the author is rendered simultaneously both a die-hard deist and an unrepentant atheist.

It wasn't until 1864, two hundred years after the birth of the author, that the complete text was published as *Le Testament de Jean Meslier* in three volumes by Rudolf Charles in Amsterdam. This edition was based on a copy of one of the manuscripts that was, unfortunately, full of errors. A facsimile edition was produced by Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, in 1974. It was reprinted in 2007 in modernized French with preface, notes, bibliography, and an essay on the library of Meslier by H. Baudry-Kruger: *Mémoire des pensées et des sentiments de Jean Meslier*, Éditions Talus d'approche, Soignies, 2007, three volumes.

A critical, annotated French edition didn't appear until 1970–1972: *Oeuvres Complètes de Jean Meslier* in three volumes, Anthropos, preface and notes by Jean Deprun, Roland Desne, and Albert Soboul, based on the MS 19460 of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Likewise, the Coda text of 2007, *Jean Meslier: Memoire contre la religion* (Jean Pierre Jackson

and Alain Toupin) is founded on this same MS with modernized spelling and punctuation.

The present translation, the first in English of Meslier's work, is based on these last two editions. (See also "Note on the Translation.")



It has been over fifty years since the publication of Maurice Dommanget's landmark work *Le curé Meslier: athée, communiste et révolutionnaire sous Louis XIV* (Juilliard, Paris, 1965; Coda, 2008), but it seems that in the twenty-first century the interest, popularity, and influence of the atheist priest is growing ever stronger.

A great deal of his popularity is no doubt due to Michel Onfray, whose *Traité d'Athéologie* (Paris, Editions Grasset, 2005) was a best-seller in France and in Italy (*Atheist Manifesto: The Case against Christianity, Judaism, and Islam*, Arcade Publishing, 2008). In his ambitious, six-volume *Contre-Histoire de la Philosophie* (Grasset, 2007) we find an entire chapter in volume four devoted to Meslier.

It has been translated into Russian, German, Spanish, Italian, and other languages, and we continue to see a burgeoning awareness in the "atheist priest" everywhere: a Japanese translation in 2006 by Ishikawa and Yoshitoshi Mitsui; a 2006 German novel by Günter Mager, *Das Wissen des Jean Meslier*; a play by David W. Hall and Colin Brewer, *The Last Priest*, produced in London in 2007. There is also a recent work published in French by Serge Deruelle, *Jean Meslier, curé et fondateur de l'athéisme révolutionnaire*, Aden, 2008.

It is a curious fate that only now has Jean Meslier been translated into English. I hope that the present volume, as modest as it is, will, at least, serve to introduce Jean Meslier to the English-speaking public and "spread everywhere, as cleverly as possible, writings like this one, for example, which show to everyone the vanity of the errors and superstitions of religion and make hateful everywhere the tyrannical government of the princes and kings of the earth" (chap. 96).

## 1. PREFACE: PLAN OF THE WORK

My dear friends, seeing that I would not be permitted and the consequences would be too dangerous and distressing for me to tell you openly during my lifetime what I think about the conduct of the government of men and about their religions and morals, I have decided, at least, to tell you after my death. I would much rather say these things aloud to you before I die, if I saw the end of my days approaching and still had the free use of speech and judgment, but since in those final days or moments I may not have all the time or presence of mind that would be necessary to tell you what I think, I am going to tell you now in writing and at the same time give you clear and convincing proofs of everything I have to say in order to try to open your eyes, as late as it is and as far as I can, to the vain errors in which we all, such as we are, have had the misfortune of being born and living; and in which even I have had the displeasure of being forced to keep you. I say displeasure because it really was a displeasure to see myself in this obligation. That is also why I never did my duty except with great loathing and some neglect, as you might have noticed.

Here, simply, is what first brought me to plan this project. Since I naturally felt in myself that there was nothing so sweet, pleasant, attractive, and desirable in men as the peace and bounty of the soul, as equality, truth, and justice which, it seemed to me, should be men's invaluable source of wealth and joy, if they carefully preserved such pleasant virtues among themselves so I also naturally felt in myself that there was nothing so hateful, detestable, and pernicious as the troubles of the division and deprivation of the heart and mind; and especially the malice of lies and imposture, as well as of injustice and tyranny, that destroy and annihilate everything in men that could be better and, therefore, is not only the deadly source of all vices and viciousness that swamp them, but also the unfortunate cause of all the evils and miseries that crush them in life.

In my earliest youth I glimpsed these errors and abuses that cause so many great evils in the world. The more I advanced in age and knowl-

edge, the more I recognized the blindness and viciousness of men, the more I recognized the vanity of their superstitions and the injustice of their evil governments. As a result, without ever having had much commerce with the world, I could say, like wise Solomon, that *I saw*, and I saw with astonishment and indignation, *impiety reign over the land and so great a corruption of justice that those who were set there to bring judgment upon others had become the most unjust and the most criminal and had put iniquity in its place* (Eccl. 3:16).

I knew that there was so much viciousness in the world that even the most perfect virtue and the purest innocence did not escape from the malice of slanderers. I saw, and still see every day, countless innocents persecuted without reason and oppressed by injustice, finding no one who cared about their misfortune or any charitable protector to help them. The tears of so many distressed good men and the miseries of so many people tyrannically oppressed by the wicked rich and by the rulers of the land, gave me, like Solomon, so much disgust and so much contempt for life that I reckoned, like him, that the dead were much happier than the living and those who had never existed were a thousand times happier than those who did and who groaned under so many miseries. *And I preferred the state of the dead to that of the living; and those who had never been born and had not seen the evils that are done under the sun, I considered them happier than both* (Eccl. 4:2).

Though astonished at seeing so many errors, abuses, superstitions, impostures, and tyrannies in power, what surprised me even more was that, although there were many people in the world who were considered very learned, wise, and pious, nevertheless there was no one who dared to speak openly against so many great and detestable disorders. I saw no distinguished person stand up and reproach them, although the poor people did not stop complaining or groaning among themselves in their common misery.

This silence of so many learned men and even men of distinguished rank and character who, it seemed to me, should have opposed the torrents of vice and injustice or who at least should have tried to bring some kind of relief for so many evils seemed to my astonishment to be a kind of approval whose reason and cause I had not yet seen. But, after examining a little more closely the conduct of men and after penetrating a little farther into the secret mysteries of the shrewd and crafty politicians

who are ambitious for office and pretend to want to govern others but who really want to lead them with sovereign and absolute authority or, more particularly, want others to respect and honor them, I easily recognized not only the source and origin of so many errors, superstitions, and injustices, but also the reason why those who passed as intellectual and enlightened men of the world said nothing against so many detestable errors and abuses, although they knew well enough the misery of the people who were seduced and abused by them and oppressed by so many injustices.

## 2. THOUGHTS AND SENTIMENTS OF THE AUTHOR ABOUT THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

The source, then, my dear friends, of all the evils that crush you and all the impostures that hold you miserably captive in the error and vanity of superstitions, as well as under the tyrannical laws of the rulers of the earth, is nothing else but the detestable politics of men. Because some wanted to rule unjustly everywhere and others wanted to be given some vain reputation of sanctity, and sometimes even of divinity, not only did they both cleverly use force and violence, but they also used all kinds of tricks and ploys to seduce the people in order to achieve their ends more easily. As a result, all these shrewd and crafty politicians, taking advantage of the weakness, credulity, and ignorance of the weakest and least educated, easily made the people believe what they wanted them to and then made them accept reverently and submissively, willingly or by force, all the laws that they wanted to give them. In this way, some made themselves honored, respected, and worshipped as divinities, or at least as people divinely inspired and sent specially from the gods to reveal their will to men; and others became rich, powerful, and formidable in the world. And when through these ploys they became rich enough, powerful enough, venerable enough, or formidable enough to be feared and obeyed, they openly and tyrannically subjected others to their laws. The divisions, quarrels, hatred, and animosity that ordinarily rise up among men were also of great use to them because most of them, often being very different from one another in spirit, mind, and inclination, did not know how to put up with one another for very long without discord and division arising among them. And when these troubles and divisions arise, those who are by nature or by circumstance the strongest, boldest, and often the shrewdest and craftiest or the most vicious, do not miss the opportunity to make themselves the absolute masters of all.

There it is, my dear friends, the true source and real origin of all the evils that trouble the good of human society and make men so unhappy in life.

There is the source and origin of all the errors, impostures, superstitions, false divinities, and idolatries that are miserably spread throughout the earth. There is the source and origin of all they offer you as the holiest and most sacred in everything they make you piously call religion. There is the source and origin of all the so-called holy and divine laws they want to make you obey as if coming from God himself. There is the source and origin of all the splendorous but vain and ridiculous ceremonies your priests pretend to perform with pomp in the celebration of their false mysteries, false solemnities, and their false, divine cult. There is the origin and source of all the haughty titles and names of lord, prince, king, monarch, and potentate who all, on the pretext of governing you as sovereigns, oppress you as tyrants; who, on the pretext of the public good and the public need, rob you of the best and most beautiful things you have; who, on the pretext of receiving their authority from some supreme divinity, make you obey, fear, and revere them as gods. And finally, there is the source and origin of all those other empty names of nobles and nobility, of count, duke, and marquis who swarm over the land (as a very sensible writer of the last century said) and for the most part are like ravaging wolves who, on the pretext of wanting to enjoy their rights and authority, trample, pillage, molest, and rob you every day of all the best you have (de la Bruyère, *Characters*, "On Opinions").

There, likewise, is the source and origin of all the so-called holy and sacred authority of the spiritual and ecclesiastical order and power that your priests and bishops lay claim to, who, on the pretext of bestowing on you the spiritual benefits of grace and a wholly divine favor, rob you subtly of all your temporal goods that are incomparably more real and more solid than those they pretend to give you; who, on the pretext of wanting to lead you to heaven and obtain eternal happiness for you, prevent you from peacefully enjoying any real good here upon the earth; and who, finally, reduce you to suffering real pains and a veritable hell in this life, the only life you have, on the pretext of wanting to shelter and protect you in another life, which does not exist, from the imaginary pains of a hell, which does not exist, in the fear and hope of which they keep you without purpose (for you, but not without use for them).

And since the form of these tyrannical governments exists only by the very means and principles that they established, and since it is dangerous to want to fight against the fundamental maxims of a religion and

shake up the fundamental laws of a state or a republic, we should not be surprised if intellectual and enlightened men conform to the general laws of the state, as unjust as they may be, or if they conform, at least in appearance, to the custom and practice of the established religion, although they recognize well enough the errors and vanity. Though they may loath to submit themselves, nevertheless it is much more useful and advantageous for them to live quietly, preserving what they can, than to expose themselves voluntarily to ruin while trying to oppose the torrent of common errors or to resist the authority of a sovereign who wishes to be master of all.

Moreover, in large states and governments, like kingdoms and empires, since it is impossible for the sovereigns to do everything themselves and to maintain their power and authority throughout the land by themselves, they take care everywhere to set up officers, administrators, viceroys, governors, and a number of other officials who are highly paid at the public expense to watch over their interests, maintain their authority, and make sure their will is punctually carried out so that no one would dare take on the responsibility of resisting or even speaking openly against so absolute an authority without being exposed at the same time to the manifest danger of ruin. That is why the wisest and most educated men are compelled to remain silent, although they obviously see the abuses, errors, disorder, and injustice of so wicked and hateful a government.

Add to this the views and the individual inclinations of all those who possess or who aspire to possess the different levels of responsibility either in the civil or the ecclesiastic state. Certainly there is hardly any one of them who does not think much more about making a profit and seeking their own gain than about sincerely acquiring the public good for others. There is hardly anyone who is not compelled by some view of ambition and self-interest or by some other view that gratifies the flesh and blood. Those who, for example, are ambitious for the responsibilities and occupations in a state will not be the ones to oppose the pride, ambition, or tyranny of a prince who wants to subject everything to his laws. On the contrary, they will flatter him in his evil passions and unjust plans in the hope of becoming wealthier and more powerful in the shadow of his authority. Those who are ambitious for the benefices or honors in the church are not the ones who will oppose him because it is by the favor

and power of princes that they claim to succeed or be supported once they have succeeded. And far from thinking about opposing their evil plans or contradicting them in anything, they will be the first to applaud them and flatter them in everything they do. Furthermore, they are not the ones who will reprimand the established errors or expose to others the lies, illusions, and impostures of a false religion since it is on these very errors and impostures that all their honors and power are founded, as well as all the fat payments they get every day. It is not the greedy rich who will oppose the injustice of the prince or who will publicly reprimand the errors and abuses of a false religion, since it is often by the favor of the prince that they possess the lucrative jobs in the state or the rich benefices in the church. They will concentrate on hoarding riches and treasures rather than on destroying the errors and public abuses from which they all profit so much. Also, those who love the soft life, the pleasures and commodities of life, are not the ones who will oppose the abuses I am talking about: they would much rather calmly enjoy the pleasures of the easy life than be exposed to suffering persecutions for wanting to oppose the torrent of common errors. It is not the devout hypocrites who will oppose them, because they only love to be covered in the cloak of virtue and use the specious pretext of religious piety and zeal to hide their fraud and their most wicked vices and to achieve more shrewdly the particular goals they have in mind, which is always to seek their own interests and their own satisfactions by deceiving others with the charming face of virtue. Finally, it is not the weak or the ignorant who will oppose them because, being without learning and authority, it is not possible for them to unravel all the errors and impostures with which they are maintained, nor can they resist the violence of a torrent that would not fail to drag them down if they refused to follow it.

Furthermore, there is such a bond and chain of subordination and dependence between the different states and conditions of men, and there is almost always so much envy, jealousy, treachery, and treason among even the closest relatives that they cannot trust each other and, consequently, they cannot do anything or sustain anything without exposing themselves to immediate discovery and betrayal by someone. They cannot trust their friend or even their brother in a matter of such serious consequences as wanting to reform such an evil government. So, since there is no one who is able or willing or bold enough to oppose

the tyranny of the rulers of the earth, we should not be at all surprised if these vices reign so powerfully and so universally in the world.

And that is how the abuses, errors, superstition, and tyranny have been established in the world. It would seem, at least in such a case, that religion and politics should not agree with each other and that they should be conflicting and opposed to each other, since it seems that the gentleness and piety of religion should condemn the severity and injustice of a tyrannical government, and it seems, on the other hand, that the discretion of a wise politician should condemn and curb the errors, abuses, and impostures of a false religion. It is true that these things should have been done, but what should be done is not always done.

So, although it seems that religion and politics should be conflicting and opposed to each other in their principles and in their maxims, nevertheless they get along well enough once they have made an alliance and pact of friendship together. For then they become thick as thieves and forevermore defend and support each other.

Religion supports the political government as malicious as it may be; and in turn, the political government supports religion as vain and false as it may be.

On the one side, the priests, who are the ministers of religion, advise you, under penalty of wrath and eternal damnation, to obey the magistrates, princes, and other sovereigns as being established by God to govern others; and on the other side, the princes make you respect the priests, they give them good stipends and incomes, they maintain them in the vain and abusive duties of their ministry, they compel the ignorant to look upon as holy and sacred everything they do and everything they order others to do and believe, on the good and specious pretext of religion and the divine cult. And that, once again, is how the errors, abuses, superstitions, impostures, and tyranny were established and how they are maintained to the great misfortune of the poor people who groan under such hard and heavy yokes.

Perhaps you will think, my dear friends, that with such a large number of false religions in the world my intention is to make an exception for the Christian, Apostolic, and Roman religion that we profess and that we call the only one that teaches the truth, the only one that knows and properly worships the true God, and the only one that leads men on the true path to salvation and eternal happiness.

But, do not fool yourselves, my dear friends, open your eyes to this and in general to everything that your pious morons or mocking, self-interested priests and scholars are eager to tell you and make you believe on the false pretext of the infallible certainty of their so-called holy and divine religion. You are no less seduced or less abused than those who are the most seduced and most abused; you are no less in error than those who are the most deeply plunged. Your religion is no less vain or less superstitious than any other; it is no less false in its principles, no less ridiculous and absurd in its dogma and maxims. You are no less idolatrous than those whom you yourselves accuse and condemn of idolatry: the idols of pagans are different from yours only in name and shape. In short, everything that your priests and scholars preach to you with so much eloquence concerning the grandeur, excellence, and sanctity of the mysteries they make you worship, everything they tell you so seriously about the certainty of their so-called miracles, and everything they recite with so much zeal and assurance concerning the grandeur of the rewards of heaven and the terrible punishments of hell, are, in fact, only illusions, errors, lies, fictions, and impostures invented at first by the shrewd and crafty politicians, continued by the seducers and impostaers, then received and blindly believed by the ignorant and vulgar people, and finally maintained by the rulers and sovereigns of the earth who encourage the abuses, errors, superstitions, and impostures and even authorize them by their laws in order to keep a tight rein on the community of men and make them do whatever they want.

That, my dear friends, is how those who governed the people and who still govern now, presumptuously and with impunity abuse the name and authority of God to make themselves feared, obeyed, and respected rather than to fear and serve the imaginary God whose power they terrify you with. That is how they abuse the specious name of piety and religion to make the weak and ignorant believe whatever they want them to. And finally, that is how they establish everywhere on earth a detestable mystery of lies and iniquity instead of working, as they should, to establish everywhere the reign of peace and justice, as well as truth—a reign whose virtues would make all people happy and content on earth.

I say they establish everywhere a mystery of iniquity because all the hidden motives of the shrewdest politicians, as well as the maxims and

ceremonies of the most pious of religion, are really only mysteries of iniquity. I say mysteries of iniquity for all the poor people who are the miserable dupes of all the mummeries of religions, as well as the puppets and hapless victims of the power of the rulers. But for those who govern or who are part of the government, and for the priests who govern the consciences or who are provided with good benefices, it is like a gold mine or a golden fleece, like a cornucopia that brings forth all kinds of goods at their pleasure. And this is what leads all the good gentlemen to amuse themselves and have all kinds of good times, while the poor people, abused by the errors and superstitions of religion, groan sadly, needily, and yet peaceably under the oppression of the rulers; and while they patiently suffer their pains, while they vainly enjoy praying to gods and saints who do not hear them, while they enjoy the vain devotions, while they repent their sins, and, finally, while these poor people are working and worn out day and night in their jobs, sweating blood and tears, to earn a paltry living for themselves and lavishly supply pleasures and satisfactions for those who are making them so unhappy in life.

Ah! My dear friends, if you really knew the vanity and folly of the errors that you support on the pretext of religion, and if you knew how unjustly and how indignantly they abuse the authority they have usurped from you on the pretext of governing you, you would certainly have nothing but contempt for everything they make you worship and respect, and you would have nothing but hatred and indignation for everyone who abuses you, who governs you so badly, and who treats you so shamefully. I remember the wish of a man a while back who had no culture or education, but who, to all appearances, did not lack the common sense to pass sound judgments on all these detestable abuses and tyrannies. In his wish and in his way of expressing his thought it seemed that he saw rather far and penetrated rather deeply into the detestable mystery of iniquity of which I just spoke, and recognized very well the perpetrators and instigators. His wish was that all the rulers of the earth and all the nobles be hanged and strangled with the guts of priests.

This expression may seem hard, rude, and shocking, but you must admit that it is candid and simple. It is concise but expressive and it expresses very well in a few words everything these kinds of men deserve. As for myself, my dear friends, if I could make a wish (and I

would not fail to do so, if it could have any effect), I would wish to have the arm, strength, courage, and body of Hercules to purge the world of all vices and iniquities, to have the pleasure of bludgeoning all the monster tyrants with their crowned heads and all the other monsters and ministers of errors and iniquity who make all the people of the earth groan so piteously.

(Erganes, king of Ethiopia, killed all the priests of Jupiter in a city of his country and abolished the priesthood because they had filled the city with errors and superstitions. The king of Babylon did the same to the priests of Bel [Dan. 14:20-21; Louis Moreri, *Historical Dictionary*]).

Do not think, my dear friends, that I am driven by any particular desire for vengeance or any motive of animosity or any personal interest. No, my dear friends, it is not at all passion that inspires these sentiments or makes me speak and write in this way. It is really only the inclination and love that I have, on the one hand, for justice and truth, which I see so indignantly oppressed, and, on the other hand, the aversion I naturally have of vice and wickedness, which I see so insolently reigning everywhere. We cannot have too much hatred or disgust for the people who everywhere cause such detestable evils and who abuse men so universally.

What? Would not we be right to banish and chase away in disgrace from a city and province the deceiving charlatans who, on the pretext of charitably giving healthy and effective remedies and medicines to the public, were only abusing the ignorance and simplicity of the people by selling them harmful and pernicious drugs and ointments at a very high price? Yes, without a doubt we would be right to banish and chase away these vile swindlers. Likewise, would not we be right to openly reprimand and severely punish all those brigands and bandits who gang up to rob, kill, and massacre inhumanely those who unfortunately fall into their hands? Yes, certainly, it would be very good to punish them severely, we would be right to hate and detest them, and it would be very wrong to allow them to carry out their plundering with impunity.

All the more reason, my dear friends, do we have for reprimanding, hating, and detesting, as I do here, all those ministers of errors and iniquity who rule over you so tyrannically, some over your consciences, others over your bodies and goods—the ministers of religion who rule over your consciences being the worst abusers of the people, and the princes and other rulers of the world who rule over your bodies and

goods being the worst thieves and murderers who are on earth. *All those who came, said Jesus Christ, were thieves and robbers* (John 10:8).

You will say, perhaps that it is partly against myself that I am speaking since I myself am in the ranks of those whom I call here the greatest abusers of the people. It is true that I am speaking against my profession, but not at all against the truth and not at all against my inclination or my own sentiments. For, as I have hardly ever had the slightest belief or hardly been inclined to bigotry and superstition and I have never been so stupid as to think highly of the mysterious delusions of religion, so I have never had the inclination to do my duties or even speak of them to my advantage or with honor. On the contrary, I would always rather have openly shown the contempt I had, if it had been permitted to me to speak according to my inclination and sentiments.

And so, although I was easily led in my youth to the ecclesiastical state to please my parents, who were pleased to see me there because it was a state of life softer, more peaceful and more honorable in the world than that of the common man, nevertheless I can truthfully say that the view of any temporal advantage and the prospects of the fat payments of the ministry never brought me to love the duty of a profession so full of errors and impostures. I was never able to take a liking to most of those good and hardy gentlemen who took such great pleasure in greedily receiving the fat payments for the vain functions of their ministry. I hated even more the mocking and clownish attitude of those other gentlemen who only think of having a good time with the large incomes of their good benefices and who among themselves cheerfully mock the mysteries, maxims, and the vain and deceitful ceremonies of their religion, and who even mock the simplicity of those who believe and who in this belief supply them so piously and so lavishly to enjoy themselves and live so well at ease. Just look at the popes (Julius III, Leo X) who themselves mocked their dignity and the other (Boniface VIII) who said, joking with his friends, "Ah! How rich we are from this fable of Christ!"

It is not that I reprimand the mockery that they pleasantly make of the vanity of the mysteries and mummeries of their religion, since they really are things worthy of mockery and contempt (those who do not see the vanity are very simple and ignorant), but I reprimand the bitter, burning, insatiable greed they have in taking advantage of the public errors, and the shameful pleasure they take in mocking the simplicity of

those who are in ignorance and whom they themselves maintain in error. If their so-called authority and good benefices allow them to live so fatly and peacefully at the public expense, then let them at least be a little sensitive to the miseries of the public, let them not aggravate the weight of the yoke of the poor by multiplying the number of errors and superstitions with a false zeal, as many do, and let them not mock the simplicity of those who, being so motivated by piety, do so much good for them and wear themselves out for them. For, it is an enormous ingratitude and a detestable treachery to treat in this way their benefactors, as all people are for the ministers of religion, seeing that it is only from the work and sweat of the bodies of the poor that these men get all their livelihood and abundance.

I do not believe, my dear friends, that I have ever given you reason to think that I shared these sentiments. On the contrary, you could have noticed several times that I was completely opposed to them and I was extremely sensitive to your pains. You could have noticed that I was not very attached to that pious lucre of the payments of my ministry, since I often neglected and abandoned it when I could have profited from it, and I never canvassed for benefices or asked for masses and offerings. I certainly would have always taken more pleasure in giving than in receiving, if I had had the means to follow my inclination; and in giving, I would willingly have always had more regard for the poor than for the rich, following the maxim of the Christ who said (in the account of St. Paul, Acts 20:35) that it is better to give than to receive; also following the advice of the same Christ who recommended to those who prepared a feast not to invite the rich, who had the means to do the same, but the poor, who did not (Luke 14:13).

And following the other advice of Montaigne, who recommended to his son to always look toward those who held out their arms rather than those who turned their back (*Essays*, III, 13), I have also willingly done as the good Job in times of prosperity: *I was, he says, the father of the poor, I was the eye of the blind, the foot of the lame, the hand of the armless, the tongue of the mute* (Job 29:15). I have always willingly, like him, stolen the prey from the hands of the vicious and as willingly broken their teeth and jaws (Job 29:17). *There are only the great hearts*, says the wise Mentor to Telemachus, *who know how much glory there is in being good* (Fenelon, *Telemachus*).

And with respect to the false and fabulous mysteries of your religion and all the other pious but vain superstitious duties and obligations that your religion imposes on you, you know very well, or at least you could have easily noticed, that I hardly devoted myself to the bigotry and I hardly thought much about maintaining you in it or of advising you to practice it. I was, nevertheless, obligated to teach you about your religion and to talk to you about it sometimes, at least, for better or for worse, to do the false duty that I committed myself to as priest of your parish. And ever since then I have had the displeasure of seeing myself in this annoying obligation of acting and speaking entirely against my own sentiments; I have had the displeasure of keeping you in the stupid errors, the vain superstitions, and the idolatries that I hated, condemned, and detested to the core.

But I declare to you that I was never without pain and extreme loathing for what I was doing. That is also why I totally hated all the vain functions of my ministry, and particularly all the idolatrous and superstitious celebrations of masses, and the vain and ridiculous administrations of sacraments that I had to do for you. I cursed them thousands of times to the core when I had to do them, and particularly when I had to do them with a little more attention and solemnity than normal when I saw you come to your churches with a little more devotion to attend some vain solemnities or to hear with a little more devotion what they make you believe to be the word of God, it seemed to me that I was abusing your good faith much more shamefully and that I was, consequently, much more worthy of reproach and condemnation, which increased my hatred of these kinds of ceremonies and pompous solemnities and vain functions of my ministry so much that I was hundreds and hundreds of times on the point of indiscreetly bursting out with indignation, almost not able to hide my resentment any longer or keep to myself the indignation I felt. However, I did, in a way, keep it to myself, and I struggled to keep it to myself until the end of my days, not wanting to expose myself during my life to the indignation of the priests or to the cruelty of the tyrants who, it seemed to me, would not have found cruel enough tortures to punish me with for such so-called recklessness.

I am pleased, my dear friends, to die as peacefully as I lived. Moreover, having never given you reason to want to harm me or to enjoy any harm that might come to me, I also do not believe that you would be

happy to see me persecuted and tyrannized for this matter. That is why I resolved to keep silent until the end of my days.

But as this reason forces me to keep silent at present, I will at least, in a way, speak to you after my death. It is with this in mind that I began to write: to open your eyes, as I said, as far as it is in my power, to all the errors, abuses, and superstitions with which you have been raised and fed and that you have, so to speak, been suckling on.

It has been long enough that the poor people have been so miserably abused by all kinds of idolatries and superstitions. It has been long enough that the rich and the rulers of the earth have pillaged and oppressed the poor. It is time to deliver them from their miserable slavery. It is time to open their eyes everywhere and make them know the truth of things.

And if to tame the rude and wild spirits of common man it was once necessary, as they claim, to amuse and abuse them by the vain and superstitious practices of religions so as to keep them more easily in rein, it is certainly now even more necessary to open their eyes to all the vanities, seeing that the remedy that was used against the first evil became in time worse than the first evil by its abuse. It is up to all thinking men and those who are the most educated and most enlightened to think seriously about working hard for so important a cause as this, everywhere opening the eyes of the people to the errors they are in, making hateful and contemptible the excessive authority of the rulers of the earth, everywhere inciting people to shake off the insupportable yoke of tyrants and, in general, persuading all men of these two important and fundamental truths:

1—To be knowledgeable in the sciences and arts, which is what men should principally work at in life, they only have to follow the lights of human reason.

2—To establish good laws they only have to follow the rules of human wisdom and discretion, i.e., the rules of honesty, justice, and natural equality without vainly being sidetracked by what is said by charlatans or what is done by idolaters and superstitious god-cultists. This, on the whole, can obtain for all men a thousand times more benefits and happiness and bodily and mental rest than all the false maxims and vain practices of their superstitious religions.

But since no one is trying to enlighten the people, or rather, since

no one dares to undertake the task, and since the works and writings of those who may already have wanted to undertake it appear nowhere publicly in the world, since no one sees them, since they deliberately suppress them and hide them on purpose so that the people will not see them and discover the errors, abuses, and impostures in which they are maintained, and, on the other hand, since they show them only the books and writings of a bunch of pious idiots and hypocritical seducers who, under the cover of piety, are happy to maintain and even to multiply the errors and superstitions—since this is so and those who, with their knowledge and goodwill, would be the most appropriate to undertake and carry out with pleasure so good and commendable a plan for the people, rather devote themselves in their published works only to encouraging and supporting and adding to the number of errors and to aggravating the insupportable yoke of superstitions instead of working to destroy it and to make it contemptible, and since they devote themselves as well to flattering the rulers, to praising them shamefully like cowards instead of boldly reprimanding their vices and nobly speaking the truth, and since they stick up for them like despicable cowards with their contemptible views and shameful complacency or with the feeble motives of some individual interest like to curry favor or get ahead for themselves, their families or their friends, etc., I myself will try here, my dear friends, with what weak and little talent I have, simply to uncover the truths they hide from you. I will try to show you clearly the vanity and falsity of all those so-called great, holy, divine, and formidable mysteries they make you worship, as well as the vanity and falsity of all those so-called great and important truths that your priests, preachers, and scholars force you to believe to be indispensable, under pain of eternal damnation, as they say—I will try, I say, to show you clearly the vanity and falsity of this.

Let the priests, preachers, scholars, and all the instigators of such lies, errors, and impostures be scandalized and angered as much as they want after my death; let them treat me, if they want, like an impious apostate, like a blasphemer and an atheist; let them insult me and curse me as they want. I do not really care since it will not bother me in the least.

Likewise, let them do what they want with my body: let them tear it apart, cut it to pieces, roast it or fricassee it and then eat it, if they want,

in whatever sauce they want, it will not trouble me at all. I will be entirely out of their reach; nothing will be able to frighten me.

I only foresee that my parents and friends in this case might have the displeasure and grief of seeing and hearing everything they may shamefully do and say about or against me after my death. Indeed, I would willingly spare them this displeasure, but this consideration, as strong as it may be, will not hold me back: the zeal of truth, justice, and the public good, as well as the hatred and indignation I have of seeing the errors and impostures of religion and the pride and injustice of the rulers governing so imperiously and tyrannically over the earth, will override all other individual considerations, as strong as they may be. Moreover, my dear friends, I do not think that this undertaking should make me so despicable or attract as many enemies as you might think. Maybe I could flatter myself that if this writing, as ill-formed and imperfect as it is (having been so hastily dashed off), passed on through your hands and had the destiny to become public and if all my sentiments and the reasons on which they are based were closely examined, I would, perhaps, (at least among honest, thinking men) have as many favorable supporters as bad critics.

And so I can say that many of those who, because of their rank or authority or because of their position as judge or official or whatever, might have to condemn me outwardly for the sake of their reputation, will approve of me inwardly in their heart.

### 3. ALL RELIGIONS ARE NOTHING BUT ERRORS, ILLUSION, AND IMPOSTURE

K now, then, my friends, that everything that is spouted and practiced in the world for the cult and adoration of gods is nothing but errors, abuses, illusions, and impostures. All the laws and orders that are issued in the name and authority of God or the gods are really only human inventions, just as all the beautiful celebratory pageants and sacrifices and divine services and all the other superstitious practices of religion and devotion that are done in their honor.

All these things, I say, are only human inventions, which were, as I already mentioned, invented by the shrewd and crafty politicians, afterward cultivated and multiplied by the false seducers and charlatans, then accepted blindly by the ignorant, and finally supported and authorized by the laws of the princes and rulers of the earth who used these human inventions to keep a tight rein on the community of men and do with them whatever they wanted.

But basically, all these inventions are only “reins for calves,” as Montaigne said (*Essays*, II, 6), because they are only used to rein in the minds of ignorant and simple men. Wise men are not reined in and do not allow themselves to be because, in fact, it is only the ignorant and simple who have faith and let themselves be led by this.

And what I say here in general about the vanity and falsity of the religions of the world, I do not say only about the foreign and pagan religions, which you already regard as false, but I say it also about your Christian religion because, in fact, it is no less vain or less false than any other. I could say, in a way, that it is even more vain and more false than any other, because there is, perhaps, none so ridiculous or so absurd in its principles and principal points than this one, and none so opposed to Nature itself and good judgment.

I am telling you this, my dear friends, so that you will not be fooled any longer by the lovely promises it makes to you of the so-called eternal recompense of paradise (which is only imaginary) and you will set your minds and hearts at ease about all the vain fears it gives you of the so-

called eternal punishments of hell (which does not exist). For, everything they tell you about the beauty and magnificence of the one, or the terror and frightfulness of the other, is only a fable; there is no more good to hope for or evil to fear after death.

Therefore, wisely take advantage of the time by living well and enjoying, if you can, moderately, peaceably, and happily the benefits of life and the fruits of your labor, because this belongs to you and is the best thing you can do, seeing that death, when it puts an end to life, puts an end to all knowledge and feeling of good and evil.

And as it is not libertinism (as you may think) that attracts me to these sentiments, but solely the force of truth and the evidence of fact that convinces me, and as I do not ask or even want anyone at all to believe me only on my word in a matter of such great importance, and as I desire, on the contrary, to make you know for yourselves the truth of what I have just said by reason and by clear and convincing proofs, I am going to offer you here proofs that are as clear and convincing as any that can be found in any field of science, and I will try to make them so clear and understandable for you that, even with a little common sense, you will easily understand that you really are in error and they thrust it upon you by force; and everything they make you believe as if by divine faith, does not even deserve any human faith.

#### 4. FIRST PROOF: OF THE VANITY AND FALSITY OF RELIGIONS, WHICH ARE ALL ONLY HUMAN INVENTIONS

**H**ere is the first of my reasons and proofs. It is clear and evident that it is an abuse, error, illusion, lie, and imposture to want to make purely human laws and institutions be accepted as wholly supernatural and divine. Now, it is certain that all religions in the world are, as I said, only purely human inventions and institutions, and it is certain that those who first invented them used the name and authority of God only to make it all the more easy to accept the laws and orders that they wanted to establish. We have to accept this truth, at least with respect to most religions, or else we must admit that most religions are really divine institutions.

We cannot say that most religions are really divine institutions because, seeing that all the different religions are conflicting and opposed to each other and even condemn each other, it is evident that, being conflicting in their principles, maxims, and principal points, they cannot all be true, nor, consequently, can they all come from the same principle of truth, i.e., God. That is also why our Roman Christ-cultists, who condemn all the others, acknowledge and have to acknowledge that there cannot be more than one true religion, which they do not fail to claim is theirs. Consequently, a fundamental maxim of their doctrine and belief is that there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and only one Roman, Apostolic, and Catholic Church, outside of which they claim there is no salvation (Eph. 4:5–6).

From this I obviously infer that it is certain that at least most religions of the world are purely human inventions and that those who first invented them used the name and authority of God only to make it easier to accept the laws and orders that they wanted to establish and at the same time to make themselves more honored, feared, and respected by the people whom they were leading and on whom they wanted to foist this trick.

Here is how a sensible author talks about it:

When I see the human race divided into so many religions that contradict and condemn each other, when I see that everyone works vigorously at spreading his own and that everyone uses either tricks or violence to spread his own and that, however, there are so few people, not to say nobody, who make us understand by their practice that they believe what they profess with so much fervor, I am far from believing that so many different cults were not first invented by politicians, each adapting his design to the inclinations of the people whom he planned to deceive. But when I consider, on the other hand, that it seems something so natural and sincere in the furious zeal and insurmountable obstinacy of most people, I am ready to conclude, with [Gerolama] Cardan that all this variety of religion depends on the varied influence of the stars and there is in each religion such an equal semblance of truth and falsity that I do not know which one I could opt for according to human reason. (*Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, 3:78)

We know that it was by these tricks and ploys that Numa Pompilius, king of the Romans, tamed the rough and wild ways of his people, softening up little by little, says an author, the hardness and ferocity of their hearts by the sweet and pious duties of religion, which he got them used to with festivals, dances, songs, sacrifices, processions, and other similar duties of religion that he made them do and that he himself did, on the pretext of honoring the gods. He also taught them the way to make sacrifices. For this he instituted very particular ceremonies that he called “holy” and “sacred,” and he set up priests to attend specifically to everything that would pertain to the honor and service of the gods, making them believe that everything he did and everything he ordered them to do came from the gods themselves, and that it was the nymph or goddess Egeria who revealed to him the gods’ will.

Likewise, we know that Sertorius, the famous chief of the armies of Spain, used a similar ploy to command his troops at will, which was easy for him when he persuaded them that his white deer, which he always kept at this side, brought to him from the gods all the counsel he took. Zoroaster, king of the Bactrians, did the same thing with respect to his people, persuading them that the laws he gave them came from the god Ahura Mazda. Trismegistus, king of the Egyptians, likewise gave them his laws under the name and authority of the god Mercury. Zamolxis, king of the Scythians, issued his under the name of the goddess Vesta.

Minos, king of Crete, issued his under the name of the god Jupiter (*Historical Dictionary*). Charondas, lawmaker of the Chalcidians, also issued his laws under the name of the god Saturn. Lycurgus, lawmaker of the Lacedaemonians, issued his under the name of Apollo. Draco and Solon, lawmakers of the Athenians, likewise issued their laws under the name of the goddess Minerva . . . and others the same. For, there was almost no nation in those times that did not have gods to their heart's content. Moses, lawmaker of the Jews, also issued his laws under the name of a god who, he said, appeared to him in a burning bush. Jesus, son of Mary, nicknamed the Christ and head of the Christian sect and religion that we profess, likewise assured his people, i.e., his disciples, that he did not come on his own but that he was sent by God, his father, and he said and did only what his father ordered him to say and do: *I have come out of God and I have come into this world; for, I have not come on my own, but it is he who sent me* (John 5:23, 8:42, 12:49, 14:3). Simon, called the Magician, abused the people of Samaria for a long time, persuading them as much by his words as by his tricks and enchantments that he was something great so that everyone who heard him speak, from the first to the last, called him “the great virtue of God”: *They followed him, from the highest to the lowest, and they said, “This one is the great virtue of God”* (Acts 8:10). Menander, his disciple, was said to be the savior sent from heaven to save men. Finally, without speaking of many others, it was also by the same ploy of trickery and imposture that the much-renowned false prophet Mohammed established his laws and religion throughout the East, making his people believe that they had been sent from heaven by the angel Gabriel, etc.

All these examples and many other similar ones that I could relate show clearly enough that all these different sorts of religion that we see or saw in the world are really only human inventions full of errors, lies, illusions, and impostures, which led the sensible Frenchman Montaigne to say that this way “was practiced by all lawmakers, so that there is no order or government that is not mixed up with ceremonious vanities or lying opinions that are used as a bridle to keep the people in line, which is why most have their fabulous origin and beginning enriched by supernatural mysteries. That is why they prefer these bastard religions to people of understanding” (*Essays*, 2:16).

## 5. REASONS WHY POLITICIANS USE THE ERRORS AND ABUSES OF RELIGION

In accordance with this, Cardinal de Richelieu remarks in his *Political Reflections*, “The princes work at nothing harder than at finding pretexts to make their demands plausible, and since religion makes more of an impression on minds than anything else, they figure they can get much farther ahead when they can cover up their plans with it. It is behind this mask that they have often hidden their most ambitious claims” (he could have added, “and their most detestable actions”); and with regard to the particular conduct that Numa Pompilius had toward his people, he says that “this king invented nothing better to make the Roman people accept his laws and actions than telling them that he was doing everything by the counsel of the nymph Egeria who communicated to him the will of the gods” (vol. 3). It is shown in the *Roman History* that the leaders of the city of Rome, after having uselessly tried all kinds of ploys to prevent the people from being raised to the magistracy,

finally had recourse to the pretext of religion and they made the people believe that after consulting the gods on the matter they attested that it was a profanation of the honors of the republic to give them to the populace. Being so, they immediately entreated them to renounce their claim, pretending to want it this way for the satisfaction of the gods rather than for their own personal interests. (Livy, 6:6–10)

And the reason why all the great politicians use religion against the people, according to Scaevola, the pontifex maximus, and Varro, a great theologian in those times, is because it is necessary for the people to be ignorant of many true things and to believe in many false things. “And the divine Plato,” Montaigne remarks, “said flat-out in his *Republic* that for the benefit of men it is often necessary to hoodwink them” (*Essays*, 2:12).

Yet, it seems that the first inventors of these holy and pious deceptions still had at least a little shame and modesty left or that they had not

yet dared to carry their ambition as far as they could, since they were content at that time only to say that they had the honor of being the depositaries and interpreters of the will of the gods, without laying claim to the greatest prerogatives. But many who came afterward carried their ambition much farther; it was not enough for them to say only that they had been sent or inspired by the gods—they wanted to be made gods themselves, or rather they grew so mad and presumptuous that they wanted to be considered and honored as gods.

At one time this was common enough for Roman emperors. Among others it is shown in the *Roman History* that the emperor Heliogabalus, who was the most dissolute, the most licentious, the most infamous and abominable who ever was, dared to be put in the ranks of the gods while he was still alive, ordering that among the names of the gods that the magistrates invoked in their sacrifices they also call out Heliogabalus, who was a new god that Rome had never known. The emperor Domitian had the same ambition: he wanted the Senate to erect gold statues of him and he also commanded by public ordinance that in all letters and mandates they call him lord and god. The emperor Caligula, who was also one of the most wicked, infamous, and detestable tyrants that ever was, also wanted to be worshipped as a god, and he made them put his statues in front of Jupiter's and remove the head from many of them to put on his own, and he even sent his statue to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem (*Historical Dictionary*). The emperor Commodus wanted to be called Hercules, son of Jupiter, the greatest of the gods, and so he often wore a lion's skin and held a club in his hands, imitating Hercules, and in this get-up he went prowling around day and night, killing many people.

It was not only emperors, but also many others of lesser status and even lowborn, poor men who had the insane vanity and ambition to want to be believed and considered gods. Among others they speak of a certain Psaphon, a Libyan, an unknown and lowborn man, who wanted to pass for a god, so he thought of this trick that worked well enough for a time: he gathered a bunch of birds from different regions and taught them with great care to often repeat the words, "Psaphon is a great god, Psaphon is a great god." Then, after the birds were released and set free, they scattered into all the provinces or neighboring areas, on all sides, and they started to say and repeat in their chirpings the words he had taught

them, twittering, "Psaphon is a great god, Psaphon is a great god." As a result, the people, hearing these birds speak in this way and unaware of the deceit, began to worship this new god and to offer sacrifices to him until finally they discovered the deceit and stopped worshipping him ("Alexander of Alexandria," I, 6, 4, *Historical Dictionary*).

They also say that a certain Annon, a Carthaginian, wanted to use a similar trick for the same purpose but was not as successful as Psaphon because the birds whom he taught to repeat, "Annon is a great god, Annon is a great god" forgot the words immediately after they were released. Cardinal Duperron, if I am not mistaken, speaks of two particular doctors of theology of whom he says one believed that he was the eternal Father and the other believed that he was the son of the eternal God.

I could cite many other examples of men who were stricken with a similar madness or recklessness, and it appears that the very beginning of the belief in gods came only from the fact that some vain and presumptuous men wanted to lay claim to the name and quality of god in this way. This agrees very well with what is related in the book of *Wisdom* about the beginning of the reign of idolatry, as we can see well enough throughout chapter 14 of this book.

## 6. THE ANCIENTS WERE USED TO PUTTING EMPERORS AND IMPORTANT MEN IN THE RANKS OF THE GODS. THE PRIDE OF RULERS, THE FLATTERY OF SOME MEN, AND THE IGNORANCE OF OTHERS INTRODUCED AND AUTHORIZED THIS ABUSE

**B**ut, if we find men who are vain enough, bold enough, and presumptuous enough to want to lay claim to the name and quality of God, then we certainly find even more who have been stupid enough to want to attribute it to them either through flattery, politics, or cowardice, because it is normally only through flattery, politics, or cowardice that men succumb to such base complacency. The flatterers of Alexander the Great wanted to persuade him that he belonged to the race and blood of the gods and even that he was the son of Jupiter. After Romulus, the first king of the Romans, had disappeared without anyone knowing what had become of him (although they believed that the senators had killed and cut him to pieces because he had become too odious), they put him in the ranks of the gods under the name of Quirinus, on the word of a man named Proculus who said he had appeared to him in all his glory, fully armed.

Likewise, the Roman Senate put the emperor Claudius second in the ranks of the gods and had a gold statue erected near Jupiter's. Marcus Aurelius, one of the best emperors there was, nevertheless had Lucius Verus, one of his colleagues, put in the ranks of the gods and also had a temple built for his wife Faustina, as shameless as she was; and when the Senate had conferred divine honors on him, he thanked them for it. The emperor Trajan, a very good and excellent prince, by order of the Senate was put in the ranks of the gods after his death. Antoninus Pius, the most just and moderate of the princes who ever held the empire, was missed by everyone after his death; the Senate conferred divine honors on him after his death and everyone considered that this glory had never

been awarded to any prince on earth who deserved it as much as he did on account of his kindness, piety, mercy, innocence, and moderation in governing the republic. Maesa, grandmother of the emperor Alexander Severus, was put in the ranks of the gods after her death. The emperor Hadrian suffered the death of Antinous, whom he loved affectionately, with so much grief that he had a city built, called Antinopolis, and he dedicated altars and statues to him as if to a god and he used all the pens of Greece to sing his praises. Indeed, the flattery went so far that, to gratify him after they had put him in the ranks of the gods, the Greeks proclaimed that he delivered oracles in the temple and to cap off the vanity they proclaimed that his soul had been changed into a star that was seen in the sky immediately after his death. That is why Hadrian, who was very happy to see them flatter his passion, named this star Antinous and greatly loved those who gave him this pathetic consolation for his grief (*Livy, Roman History*, 3).

In the time of the emperor Claudius, Simon the Magician came to Rome and won so much respect through his impostures and illusions that they erected a statue to him with this inscription: "To Simon, a holy god." "The emperor Augustus," says Montaigne, "had more temples than Jupiter and was worshipped with as much religion and belief in miracles" (*Essays*, 2:12). One day, King Herod was dressed in his royal robes and lectured to his people while sitting on his throne; the people were so charmed by his eloquence and the brilliance of his royal majesty that they looked upon him as a god and cried out, "This is the speech of a god, not a man" (Acts 12:21, 28). In short, it was normal for Roman emperors to be put in the ranks of the gods, even the most wicked and detestable were put there, as is shown in the *Roman History*.

## 7. THEY BELIEVED THAT MEN COULD BECOME GODS AFTER THEIR DEATH

Likewise, it was the custom in ancient times for people to deify and put in the ranks of the gods those who had excelled in some rare virtue or who had done some notable service or some significant benefit for their country. This is what led Montaigne to say very sensibly:

Man is completely crazy: he does not know how to fabricate a worm, but he fabricates gods by the dozen, and not only does he fabricate them by the dozen, but he fabricates them by the thousands and indicates exactly how far their power extends, which of the gods so pleasantly fabricated by Antiquity are old and worn-out; which are married, which are not; which are young and vigorous; which heal horses, men, scabies, a cough; which heal one kind of sore, which another; which produce grapes, which the waters; which are responsible for debauchery, which for commodities; for every type of artisan a god. And there are some very puny and vulgar ones (for, their number was once so large that it amounted to at least twenty-six thousand); they piled up five or six thousand to produce a single ear of wheat; they put three at a door: one on the door, one on the hinge, and one on the threshold; four for a child: one they made protector of his swaddling clothes, one of his drink, one of his food, and one of his sucking; all of which were worshipped in different ways, so that it is pitiful to see men deceive themselves with their own tricks and inventions like children who scare themselves with the faces they paint for their friends. They are afraid of their own creations. (*Essays*, 2:12)

There is nothing that better demonstrates the imbecility of men “than to want to assign some image or effigy to divinity,” says Pliny.

It is a great stupidity to believe that they have one; and an even greater madness to set up the gods according to the virtues and vices of men like chastity, harmony, hope, honor, mercy, truth, faith, etc.; but, all these deities come from the fact that weak men who are burdened with

work and see their poverty and infirmity before their very eyes worship with respect the things they need most. Thus it happened that the gods began to change names according to the devotion of different regions, and that in the same region there were countless gods among whom they put the gods of hell, of sicknesses, of all sorts of plagues, and of the fear they had of them. From these superstitions came the temple of Fever that was founded and consecrated in the palace, and the temple of Orbona, the goddess who makes little children die; near the temple of Genii and Familiar Spirits is the temple of Bad Luck, which is on the Esquiline Hill. And so it is no wonder that we find more gods in the heavens than men on the earth, considering that everyone fabricates for himself as many gods as his imagination fancies and that men take and choose many gods for patrons whom they give the names and titles of Jupiter, Juno, Saturn, Mars, and many others; for, in ancient times they had the custom to place in the ranks of the gods the men and women who were particularly devoted to doing good in the world, as a sign and recognition of their good deeds. (Pliny, *Natural History*, 2:7)

And thus comes all the different names of the gods and goddesses that the Romans worshipped under the names of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Apollo, Asclepius, etc., and under the names of Juno, Diana, Ceres, Minerva, Pallas, Venus, etc. For, it is certain that all these beautiful divinities are only productions of the vanity and folly of men.

There are even nations so extraordinarily blinded by superstition that they attributed divinity to nasty, filthy beasts like dogs, cats, cattle, snakes, etc., and even to inanimate things like fire, the sun, the moon, stars, rocks, wood, etc. Of all these vain opinions, Montaigne found nothing more foolish and ridiculous than to attribute divinity to man:

Why make gods of us like Antiquity did? It exceeds the utmost feebleness of speech. I would rather have followed those who worshipped snakes, dogs, or cattle, as far as their nature is less known to us and we have more right to imagine what pleases us in these beasts and to attribute to them extraordinary faculties. But to make gods of our paltry condition whose imperfections we should know, to attribute to them desire, anger, vengeance, generations, love, jealousy, our limbs, bones, fevers and pleasures, deaths and sepulchers, as also to have attributed divinity not only to faith, virtue, honor, peace, harmony, lib-

erty, victory, piety, etc., but also to pleasure, fraud, death, envy, old age, misery, fear, fever, misfortune, and other miseries of this frail and decrepit life, this must have come from a wondrous drunkenness of the human intelligence. (*Essays*, 2:12)

This is what Agesilaus the Great, king of Thessaly, pleasantly enough made fun of because the Thessalians came to him one day to show him that in recognition for the benefits that they received from him they would canonize him and put him in the ranks of the gods: "Does your country have the power to make a god of whomever seems good to it? If so, do it to one of you, just to see, and then when I have seen how well it has turned out, I will thank you very much for your service." The Egyptians forbade, under pain of death, anyone to say that Serapis and Isis, who were their gods, had once been men—and everyone knew they had been. Their effigy, represented with a finger over the mouth, signified, says Varro, that mysterious order to their priests to keep silent about the mortal origins so as not to destroy their veneration.

The Christians are of completely opposite sentiments: they glory in preaching the birth, poverty, misery, persecution, and even the shameful and ignominious death of their god, Christ.

## 8. ORIGIN OF IDOLATRY

**T**hey say that the first inventor of these false divinities was named Nisus, son of Bel, first king of the Assyrians, around the time of the birth of the patriarch Isaac, the year of the world 2101 according to the Hebrews. After the death of his father he erected an idol for him that later got the name Jupiter and that he wanted to be worshipped by everyone as a god, and from this, they say, originated all the idolatries that were spread throughout the world. Cecrops, the first king of the Athenians, was then the first who invoked this Jupiter, ordering sacrifices to be made to it in all his states; and so he was the author of all the other idolatries that were afterward accepted. Janus, who was a very ancient king of Italy, according to Macrobius was the first to dedicate temples to the gods and offer them sacrifices; and as he was the first to have given knowledge of the gods to his people, he was likewise recognized as one after his death and worshipped as a god, in such a way that the Romans never sacrifice to any god without first invoking Janus.

The authors that our Christ-cultists call “holy” and “sacred” speak pretty much in the same way about the invention and origin of all these false divinities, and not only do they attribute the origin and invention to men, but they even say that the invention and worship of these false divinities are the cause, source, and origin of all the wickedness that is spread throughout the world because it is said in their book of Genesis that it was Enos, son of Seth, grandson of Adam, according to them, who *began to invoke the name of God* (Gen. 4:26). And in their book of Wisdom, it is expressly said that *the invocation and the cult of idols or false divinities is the origin, the cause, the beginning, and the end of all the evils that are in the world* (Wis. 14:27).

Here is how these same so-called holy books speak of the invocation of these false divinities and their beginning:

*A father happened to be extremely grieved about the death of his son and had his image made to try to console himself for his loss; he looked at this image and, at first, considered it only an image of his beloved son whom*

*death had carried away, but a little later he let himself be blinded by an excess of love toward his son and toward the image and portrait that he had fashioned and began to regard and worship as a god what he once apparently only regarded as the image and portrait of a dead man, and he ordered his servants to honor it, to offer sacrifices to it and, finally, to give it divine honors. This evil practice was then communicated and spread everywhere else and soon grew into a custom, a private error becoming a public error; and finally, this custom grew into a force of law so strong that it was confirmed and authorized by the commandments of princes and tyrants who forced their subjects under rigorous penalties to worship the statues of those whom they put or made to be put in the ranks of the gods. (Wis. 14:15-16)*

*This idolatry spread so far that people far away from the prince were made to bring his image to them, consoling themselves for his absence by the presence of his image to which they gave the same honors and the same adoration that they would have given to their prince if he had been present. The vanity and dexterity of the painters and sculptors contributed quite a bit to the progress of this detestable idolatry.*

*For, as they tried to outdo each other in making beautiful statues, the beauty of their work attracted the admiration and adoration of the weak and ignorant, so that the people, whose simplicity was easy to abuse, letting themselves be easily seduced by the beauty of the products, imagined that a beautiful statue could be nothing but the representation of a god, and they thought that he whom they had until then considered only a man should be worshipped and served as a god. (Wis.14:17-20)*

That is how, says these holy and sacred books of our Christ-cultists,

*idolatry, which is the shame and disgrace of human reason, came into the world through the interest of the workers, the flattery of the subjects, the ignorance of the people, and the vanity of the princes and kings of the earth who, unable to keep their authority within proper limits, gave the name of god to idols of stone and wood or idols of gold and silver. To honor these idols they celebrated festivals full of extravagances and follies and they offered sacrifices full of inhumanity, cruelly immolating their own children, and they called their ignorance peace, although it made them more miserable and more unhappy than the most vicious war could have done—so many and so great evils they called peace. In*

*the end, the cult and worship of these detestable idols are the cause, the beginning, the progress, and the height of all vices and all kinds of wickedness.* (Wis. 14:27)

All this evidence clearly shows us not only that all the religions that exist or have existed in the world are and have always been nothing but human inventions, but also that all the divinities that we worship are nothing but fabrications and inventions of men and that it is from the very worship of these false divinities that all the greatest evils in life come, *the origin, the cause, the beginning and end of all evils that exist in the world* (Wis. 14:27). And what confirms this truth even more is that we do not see and have never seen anywhere any divinity publicly and openly show itself to men, nor have we ever seen any divinity publicly and openly give to men any law or make any precept or commandment by itself.

"Look at the register," says Montaigne, "that philosophy has kept for many thousands of years about celestial and divine affairs; the gods have never acted or spoken except through men, and even through some particular man only, and it was only in secret and *like in hiding*, and more often it was even only at night through fantasies and in dreams" (*Essays*, 2:12)—as is clearly shown in the books of Moses received and approved by our Christ-cultists.

Here is how they make their God talk: *If there is some prophet among you, I will appear to him at night and speak to him in dreams* (Num. 12:6). Indeed, this is how he spoke to Samuel when he called him (1 Sam. 1-3). This is how he appeared and spoke to many others, if we want to believe our superstitious god-cultists and Christ-cultists, who sing in one of their solemnities these words they took from their book of Wisdom: *During the night, when all is quiet, your Word, Lord, makes itself heard from the highest of heavens* (Wis. 18:14-15, Sunday in the octave of Christmas).

But, if it really were the gods speaking to men, as they want to make you believe, why did they always hide themselves when speaking? Why did not they reveal their glory, power, wisdom, and supreme authority everywhere instead? If they speak, is not it or at least should not it be to be heard? And if they want to give laws, precepts, and orders, should not it be to make men follow and observe them? Must they speak in secret

for this? In hiding? Do they not know how to do it without the mouth-piece and ministry of men? Do not they know how to speak? Or make themselves heard? By all men? Do not they know how to issue their laws or make men observe them immediately by themselves? If this is so, it is already a very sure sign of their weakness and powerlessness, since they cannot do without the help of men in what concerns them so intimately. And if it is because they do not want to or do not deign to reveal themselves or speak openly and publicly to men, then they give us good grounds to challenge them and doubt the truth of their words because all the so-called nocturnal visions and revelations with which our idolatrous god-cultists flatter themselves are certainly too suspicious and illusionary to deserve any faith, and it is not at all believable that gods who were perfectly good and wise would ever want to use such suspicious and deceitful means to make their will known to men. And not only do they give us good grounds to doubt the truth of their words, but also to doubt their very existence and to believe that they are not at all what they say they are, since, in fact, they are nothing. For, it is not at all believable that if there really were gods, they would be willing to allow so many impostors to abuse their names and authority to deceive men with such impunity.

Moreover, if it were only simple individuals saying that God had appeared to them in secret and in dreams and had spoken and revealed to them in secret such and such mysteries or given such and such laws and orders, if it were only a few individuals saying this and, if necessary, imagining some so-called miracles to convince people, it is clear and evident that there would be no impostor who could not do as much in their favor and say with as much assurance that they had visions and revelations from heaven and that God had spoken to them and revealed to them whatever they wanted to make others believe. So, those who claim to have had secret revelations, mysteries, laws, orders, or the will of God or the gods revealed to them are not at all credible in their words and they do not even deserve to be heard because it is not at all believable, as I said, that gods who were perfectly good and wise would ever want to use such a dubious and deceitful way as this to make their will known to men.

But how is it, you will ask, that so many errors and impostures can be spread so widely throughout the world? How can they have been

maintained for so long and so firmly in the minds of men? There are, indeed, good grounds to be astonished for those who judge human things only from the outside and who do not see all the hidden motives that move them. But for those who can judge otherwise and who look at things more closely, who see the motives of the shrewdest politicians at play and who know the tricks and ploys that the charlatans are capable of using to accomplish their designs, for them it is not a matter of astonishment: they are aware of all the cleverness and subtleties. They know, on the one hand, what pride and ambition are capable of doing in the minds of men; they know, on the other hand, that the rulers always find enough flatterers to agree with them by their cowardly complacency in everything they do and have planned to do. They know that the impostors and hypocrites employ all sorts of tricks and ploys to achieve their goals. And finally, they know that the people, as weak and ignorant as they are, cannot see or discover by themselves the tricks and ploys that are used to deceive them, and they cannot resist the power of the rulers who bend them to their will under the weight of their authority. And it is exactly by these means, i.e., by the authority of rulers, by the cowardly complacency of flatterers, by the tricks and ploys of charlatans and swindlers, and by the ignorance and weakness of the people, that all the errors, idolatries, and superstitions are spread throughout the earth. And it is by these very means that they are still maintained and strengthened today more and more.

But nothing plays a bigger role in the imposture and its progress in the world than that people are normally eager and curious to hear extraordinary and fantastic things talked about, and they quickly believe them. For, as we see that they are pleased to hear them, that they listen with astonishment and admiration and that they consider everything immutable truths, the hypocrites on their part and the charlatans on theirs take pleasure in making up stories and reciting them as much as they want.

Here is what Montaigne says about them (*Essays*, 1:32):

The true field and subject of the imposture are the things unknown, especially since in the first place the strangeness gives them credit and then, not speaking normally, they deprive us of the means to contend with them. To this purpose, says Plato, it is easier to satisfy men talking

about the nature of gods than of men because the ignorance of the listeners gives them free rein and liberty in the handling of a hidden subject. Thus the fact is that there is nothing so firmly believed as that which is known the least and no one more assured than those who tell us fables. And although the variety and continual discord of what they say often throws them into clear contradictions, nevertheless they follow their broken lines and draw both black and white with the same pencil.

There is no opinion so strange and bizarre, without speaking of the gross imposture of religions, that it has not intoxicated many great nations and many competent people. There is no opinion so strange and bizarre that custom and imposture has not planted and established it by laws in whatever regions seemed good. And I think that there is no fantasy so deranged that it has not fallen into the human imagination and found some public use and, consequently, that our reason has not ground on some appearance of reason, or on so-called miracles, for miracles depend on the ignorance we have of Nature and not on Nature itself.

In fact, there is no opinion, no matter how false and erroneous, that has not found instigators, and no practice so extravagant that it has not been authorized by some law (*Compendium of Conferences*, vol. 5). Omens are like this and the reason is that truth and lies are mirror images, they walk the same, they taste the same, they look alike; we look at them with the same eye. . . .

Why is it that most men love to lie? And why are not they satisfied just telling lies but are so pleased to hear them as well and gloat when they are dealing with things that are only nonsense or only they enjoy? They get something from it.

Many people, and even very great men, are pleased not only to deceive others, but also to deceive themselves, which astounds me and fills me with indignation, says Lucian. Leaving aside the poets, who tell almost nothing but fables, we have the historians like Ctesias and Herodotus and many others who were not satisfied with abusing their contemporaries but wished to bequeath their fables to posterity.

But can we allow, even in the poets, that Saturn castrated his father? That Venus was born from the foam of the sea, that Prometheus was bound to a cross on Mount Caucasus where an eagle continually

gnawed at his liver? That giants made war with gods? Let us not talk about their tragedies of Hades and all the transformations of Jupiter and the infinite number of similar reveries to frighten little children.

Those who had nothing better to tell us in those times passed for poets and ancient historians, but what are we to say or think of entire nations like the Cretans when they display the tomb of Jupiter and the Athenians when they say that Erichthonius and their ancestors were born of the earth like cabbage: they would have had to plant them! The Thebans are even more extravagant when they say they came from dragon's teeth.

However, those among them who do not believe in these and other such impudent things are considered impious, as if they were attacking the gods themselves and doubting their power, so much has the lie found credence among men. For me, I excuse the cities that do it to make their origins nobler. But to see philosophers searching for the truth, pleased to tell and hear fables of this kind as if they were infallible truths, is what I cannot understand and what I find absolutely ridiculous and insupportable. See, I have just come from someone's house where I heard so much nonsense that I had to leave because I could not stand them any longer, neither those who were speaking nor those who were listening. (Lucian, *The Liar*)

At the beginning of the Christian church, the sorcerers and heretics disturbed them a lot by different impostures, says the author of the Chronicles. It would take too long to repeat here all the evidence. What I have said is enough to show you clearly that all religions are really only human inventions and consequently everything they teach and force you to believe as supernatural and divine is only errors, lies, illusions, and imposture—errors for those who believe too easily in things that do not exist and have never existed or are different from what they believe them to be; illusions for those who imagine seeing or hearing things that do not exist; lies for those who talk about these kinds of things in spite of their own knowledge and learning; and, finally, imposture for those who invent them and tell them in order to impose them on others and make them believe. This is so doubtlessly and clearly true that our god-cultist and Christ-cultist idolaters themselves cannot deny it. That is why every one of them unanimously admits that they are, in fact, only errors, illusion, fraud, and imposture in all other religions but theirs. Here already,

as you most certainly see, most religions are recognized as false. Now it is only a matter of knowing if among so great a number of false sects and false religions in the world there is at least one that really is true, truer than the others and truly a divine institution.

But as there is no particular religious sect that claims to be entirely free of all the errors, illusions, deceits, and impostures that are found in the others, it is up to each of those who claim to establish and maintain the truth of their sect to show us that it is truly a divine institution. And each of them respectively should show us with proofs and evidence that are so clear, sure, and convincing that we cannot reasonably doubt them, because if the proofs and so-called evidence that they could give were not such, they would always be suspected of errors, illusions, and deceits, and consequently would not have sufficient evidence of truth and no one would have to put any faith in them. As a result, if those who say their religion is a divine institution cannot give clear, sure, and convincing evidence and proof of this, then these really are not divine institutions. Consequently, we must say and understand that they are all just human inventions full of errors, illusions, and deceits, since we cannot believe or presume that an all-powerful and, as they say, an infinitely good and wise God would have wanted to give men laws and orders that did not have signs and evidence of truth more sure and authentic than those of the impostors who are so numerous in the world.

Now, there is not one of our god-cultists or Christ-cultists from any group or sect of religion who can show us with clear, sure, and convincing proofs that their religion is truly a divine institution. Clear proof of this is that for a very long time, for centuries, they have fought and debated with each other on the subject, even to the point of persecuting each other with fire and blood to uphold their opinions. However, there has not been any single party who could convince and persuade the opposing parties by such evidence of truth, which certainly would not happen if they were right at all, i.e., if they had any clear, sure, and convincing proof and evidence of a divine institution. Since there is no one from any religious party or sect (I say no one who is wise and educated and who acts in good faith) who claims to support and encourage errors and lies, and on the contrary they each claim to uphold the truth, the true means to banish errors and to reunite all men in peace in the same sentiments and in the same form of religion, this would mean producing

these clear, sure, and convincing proofs and evidence of truth to show us that such and such religion is truly a divine institution and not the others. So, each of them or at least all the intelligent people would give in to this clear and convincing evidence of truth and no one would dare try to fight against it or support the party of error and imposture that would at the same time be confounded by this opposing evidence of truth.

But, that this clear, sure, and convincing evidence of a divine institution is not found in any religion is what gives rise to charlatans to boldly invent and support all kinds of lies and impostures. This is what causes those who believe blindly to be so fiercely stubborn in the defense of their religion and likewise this is a clear and convincing proof that all their religions are false and there is not one that is really a divine institution. Consequently, I have been right to tell you, my dear friends, that all the religions that exist in the world are only human inventions and that only error, abuse, vanity, illusion, fraud, lies, and imposture are spouted and practiced in the world by the cult and worship of gods.

There is the first proof I have to give you, which is certainly in its way as clear, strong, and convincing as it could be. But, there are still others here that will be no less convincing and that will make it no less clear to see the falsity of religions and particularly the falsity of our Christian religion. For, since it is by this, my dear friends, that they hold you captive in thousands of errors and superstitions and that I wish to reveal to you and cause your minds and consciences to be at rest about the unreal fears and hopes that they give you of the good or evil of another so-called life, which does not exist, I will principally take it upon myself to show you clearly the vanity and falsity of your religion, which they make you believe to be so pure, holy, and divine, so that you will easily enough judge the vanity and falsity of all the others.

## 9. SECOND PROOF: OF THE VANITY AND FALSITY OF SAID RELIGIONS: FAITH, WHICH IS A BLIND BELIEF THAT SERVES AS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL RELIGIONS, IS ONLY A PRINCIPLE OF ERRORS, ILLUSIONS, AND IMPOSTURES

**H**ere is what I have to say. Any religion that bases its mysteries and the rules of its doctrine and morality on a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures, and is also a deadly source of eternal troubles and divisions among men, cannot be a true religion or a truly divine institution. Now, all religions, and principally the Christian religion, base their mysteries and the rules of their doctrine and morality on a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures; therefore . . . etc.

I do not see how we can deny the first proposition of this argument: it is too clear and evident to be able to doubt the truth of it. I will go on, then, to the proof of the second proposition of the argument, which is that all religions, and principally the Christian religion, base their mysteries and the rules of their doctrine and morality on a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures. It seems easy enough to show you this clearly because it is obvious and indubitable that all religions, and principally the Christian religion, base their mysteries and the rules of their doctrine and morality on what they call faith, i.e., a blind, though firm and confident, belief in some divinity, as well as a blind, though firm and confident, belief in some laws and divine revelations. And it is necessary for them to allege this because it is this belief that gives them all the credibility and authority they have in the world, without which they certainly would not be able to count on teaching or ordering people to do or practice anything. That is also why there is no religion that does not urge all its followers above all else to be firm in their faith, i.e., firm and steadfast in their belief. Hence all the god-cultists, and principally our Christ-cultists, hold the maxim that faith is the beginning and the foun-

dation of salvation, and that it is the root of all justice and holiness, as was stated in their Council of Trent (*Sessions*, VI, chap. 7).

They say that without faith it is impossible to please God as much as is necessary, adding that he who wants to come to God has to believe firmly that there is a God and that it is he who rewards those who seek him (Heb. 11:6). So, it is obvious and indubitable, as I said, on what all religions base their mysteries and the rules of their doctrine and morality: faith, which is, as I said, a blind belief in some divinity and in some laws and divine revelations. These religions want this blind belief to be firm and steadfast in order that their followers not be allowed to change easily. This belief, nevertheless, is always blind because the said religions do not give and cannot give any clear, sure, and convincing proof of the truth of their so-called holy mysteries or of their so-called divine revelations. They want people to believe simply and absolutely everything they say, not only without having any doubt, but also without searching for or even desiring to know the reasons for it (*Catechisms of the Council of Trent*, art. 1) because it would be, according to them, a reckless daring and a crime of divine high treason to be curious to search for the reasons and proofs of what they teach you and force you to believe as coming from God, quoting as a reason this formidable sentence of one of their so-called holy books where it is said that *he who wants to examine and fathom too deeply the secrets of the divine majesty of God will be crushed by the brilliance of His glory* (*Proverbs*).

Faith, say our pious Christ-cultists, is the support of things they hope for and the persuasive reason of things they do not see (Heb. 11:1). Their faith, according to what they say, would be worth nothing if it relied on the experience of the senses or on human reason. The most insistent and the most powerful motive to believe in the most incomprehensible and the most incredible things is to have nothing but their faith, which is, as I said, a blind belief of everything a religion makes them believe. Thus they hold the maxim that it is necessary to renounce all the lights of reason and all the appearances of the senses to hold their mind captive in the obedience of their faith. In a word, they hold that to believe faithfully it is necessary to believe blindly without reasoning and without wanting to search for proofs.

Now, it is clear that a blind belief of everything that is offered under the name and authority of God is a principle of errors, illusions, and

impostures. Proof of this is that we actually see that there is no error, illusion, or imposture in the matter of religion that is not covered with the name and authority of God, and there is also no charlatan who does not especially like to pretend to be inspired and sent by God. Therefore, if all religions base their mysteries and the rules of their doctrine and morality on the necessity of blind belief in everything they claim comes from God, then they base their mysteries and the rules of their doctrine and morality on a principle of errors, lies, illusions, and impostures.

## 10. IT IS ALSO A SOURCE AND FATAL CAUSE OF ETERNAL TROUBLES AND DIVISIONS AMONG MEN

**A**nd not only is this blind faith or belief, which they set down as the foundation of their doctrine and morality, a principle of errors, illusions, lies, and impostures, but it is also a deadly source of eternal troubles and divisions among men, because it is not through reason but rather through stubbornness and obstinacy that they are all bound to their religions and their so-called holy mysteries. Each one blindly believes that they are as well founded as the others in their belief and support of their religion. And this blind belief that they each have in the so-called truth of their religion obliges them to regard all the other religions as false and it obliges each of them to maintain it at the peril of their lives and fortunes and at the expense of their most cherished things—this is why they cannot agree on the facts of their religions and why they never will agree. This is also the perpetual cause not only of their verbal arguments and disputes, but also of deadly troubles and divisions, and also why we see them every day persecute each other in fire and blood to maintain their follies and blind beliefs or religions. We see no evil or wickedness that they do not practice against each other on the good and specious pretext of defending and maintaining the so-called truth of their religions. Madmen! All of them, as many as they are!

See what Montaigne said on the subject:

There is no hostility greater than the Christian's; our zeal works wonders when it aids our decline into hate, cruelty, ambition, avarice, backbiting, rebellion. . . . But only as if by miracle does some rare nature carry some, not running or flying, against the grain toward kindness, mildness, temperance. Our religion seems to be made to extract vices, it covers, feeds, and stimulates them. (*Essays*, 2:12)

Indeed, we see no wars as bloody and cruel as those that are waged on the motive or pretext of religion because then everyone is carried

blindly away by zeal and fury and tries to make of his enemy a sacrifice to God. "The cause of this great fury is that each side abhors the gods of the other and figures that only its own should be held as deities" (Juvenal, *Satires*, 15:35–36). "To what point are men not carried in the interest of a religion that they are so little convinced of and that they practice so badly!" says de la Bruyère (*Characters*, "On Great Minds").

This argument seems very clear to me so far. Now, it is not believable that an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise god would ever want to use such deceitful ways or means as this to establish his laws and orders or make his will known to men, because this would clearly be wanting to mislead them and set traps for them so that they take the side of lies as quickly as truth, which is certainly not believable of an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise god.

Likewise, it is not believable that a god who loved unity and peace and who loved the good and health of men, like an infinitely perfect, good, and wise god would, and whom our Christ-cultists themselves call a god of peace, love, and charity, father of mercy and god of all consolations, etc. (1 Cor. 1:3)—it is not believable, I say, that such a god would ever have wanted to establish and set as a foundation of his religion so fatal and deadly a source of eternal troubles and divisions among men as is this blind belief, which is thousands of times more deadly than ever was that fatal golden apple that the goddess Discord maliciously threw into the assembly of gods at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis and was the unfortunate cause of the ruin of the city and kingdom of Troy, according to what the legendary poets say.

Therefore, religions that set down for a foundation of their mysteries and take as a rule of their doctrine and morality a blind belief that is a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures and also a fatal source of eternal troubles and divisions among men, cannot be true or have truly been established by God. And since all religions do this, it obviously follows that there is no true religion or any religion that is truly a divine institution, and, consequently, I was right to say that they are all only human inventions and that everything they want to persuade you about the gods, their laws, orders, mysteries, and so-called revelations is nothing but errors, illusions, lies, and deceptions.

But I know that our Christ-cultists will not fail here to run back to their so-called motives of credibility and say that although their faith and

belief may be blind in a sense, nevertheless it is based on and confirmed by so much very clear, sure, and convincing evidence of truth that it would be not only imprudence but also recklessness, obstinacy, and even a great madness to not want to surrender to it. They ordinarily reduce all these so-called motives of credibility to three or four main ones.

The first they take from the purity and so-called sanctity of their religion, which condemns, as they say, all vices and recommends the practice of all virtues. Its doctrine is so pure and so holy, according to what they say, that it is clear that it can come only from the purity and sanctity of an infinitely perfect god.

The second motive of credibility they take from the innocence and sanctity of the life of those who first embraced it with love, of those who heralded it with so much zeal, who maintained it so constantly, and who so unselfishly defended it at the peril of their lives to the point of spilling their blood and suffering death and the crudest tortures rather than abandoning it. It is unbelievable, say our Christ-cultists, that so many great, holy, wise, and educated people would have been fooled in their belief or would have renounced all pleasures, advantages, and commodities of life and even exposed themselves to so many pains and burdens and even to such severe and cruel tortures only to maintain errors, illusions, or impostures.

They take the third motive from the prophecies and oracles that have at different times and for a long time been given on behalf of their religion, all of which are, as they claim, so clearly and evidently fulfilled in their religion that it is impossible to doubt that these oracles and prophecies really came from a wholly divine inspiration and revelation since there is only one god who could so clearly and reliably predict the future.

Finally, their fourth motive of credibility, which is like the principal of all, is taken from the grandeur and multitude of extraordinary and supernatural miracles and prodigies that have been performed in all times and places on behalf of their religion, like making the blind see, the deaf hear, the mute speak, the lame walk, healing the paralyzed and the possessed, and in general healing all kinds of sicknesses and infirmities at any time and without using any natural cure, even raising the dead; and in the end doing all kinds of other miraculous and supernatural works that cannot be done except by a wholly divine power. These

miracles and prodigies, as our Christ-cultists say, are such clear, sure, and convincing motives and evidence of the truth of their belief and their religion that we need not search more to be totally persuaded of the truth of their religion. As a result, they consider it not only carelessness but also stubbornness and recklessness and even a great madness to even think about wanting to contradict so much clear and convincing evidence of truth.

"It is a great madness," says one of their famous characters,

to not believe the Gospel whose doctrine is so pure and holy, whose truth has been witnessed by so many great, learned, and holy men, which has been signed by the blood of so many glorious martyrs, which has been embraced by so many pious and wise scholars, and, finally, which has been confirmed by so many great and prodigious miracles that could not have been performed except by the omnipotence of a God. (Pico della Mirandola)

To this effect another famous character of theirs boldly addressed these words to his god: "Lord, if what we believe about you is wrong, it is yourself who deceived us. For, everything we believe has been confirmed by so many great and prodigious miracles that it is not possible to believe they could have been performed by another but you" (Richard of St. Victor).

## 11. WEAKNESS AND VANITY OF THE SO-CALLED MOTIVES OF CREDIBILITY TO ESTABLISH ANY TRUTH ABOUT RELIGION

**I**t is easy to refute all the vain arguments and to show you clearly the vanity of all the so-called motives of credibility and all the so-called great and prodigious miracles that our Christ-cultists call clear and decisive evidence of the truth of their religion because:

It is evident that it is an error to claim that arguments and proofs that can as easily and equally be used to establish or confirm a lie and imposture as to establish and confirm the truth can be decisive evidence of the truth. Now, the arguments and proofs that our Christ-cultists draw from their so-called motives of credibility can equally serve to establish and confirm a lie and imposture as the truth. Proof of this is that we actually see that there are no religions, as false as they may be, that do not claim to be based on similar motives of credibility and to have a pure and truthful doctrine and, in their way, to condemn all vices and commend the practice of all virtues and that have not had learned and zealous defenders who suffered severe persecutions and even death in the support and defense of their religions. Finally, there is not one that does not claim to have miracles and prodigies done in their favor. The Mohammedans, for example, allege them in favor of their false religion just as the Christians do in favor of theirs, the Indians in favor of theirs, and all the pagans allege many in favor of their false religions; just look at all the so-called marvelous and miraculous metamorphoses that Ovid talks about, which are like so many great and prodigious miracles that were done in favor of the pagan religions. If our Christ-cultists talk about oracles and prophecies that they claim had been done on behalf of their religion, it is not any less so in the pagan religions, and so the advantage they could hope to gain from these so-called motives of credibility are found almost equally in all kinds of religions.

This is what led the sensible Montaigne to say that

all religions look alike: hope, trust, phenomena, ceremonies, penitence, martyrs, etc. . . . God takes on, for the most part, the honor and reverence men give him, under whatever appearance, name, and manner it be. This zeal has been favorably looked upon from heaven everywhere. All forces have borne the fruit of their devotion, men and their impious actions have everywhere had convenient outcomes. Pagan stories recognize the dignity, order, justice, prodigies, and oracles used for their benefit and instruction in their fabulous religions. . . . Augustus had more temples than Jupiter and was worshipped with as much religion and belief in miracles. (*Essays*, 2:12)

At Delphi, a city in Boeotia, there was once a very famous temple dedicated to Apollo, which gave oracles and was therefore visited from all over the world, enriched and ornamented with countless, priceless vows and offerings. Likewise in Epidaurus, in the Peloponnesus, in Dalmatia, there was once a very famous temple dedicated to Asclepius, god of medicine, which gave oracles and where the Romans went when they were stricken with the plague; they brought this god back to Rome in the shape of a dragon and you could see in his temple in Epidaurus a number of pictures showing the miraculous cures they say he did (*Historical Dictionary*).

There are many examples that would be too long to relate here. Being so, as all the histories and the practice of all religions bear witness, it obviously follows that all the so-called motives of credibility that our Christ-cultists want to boast so much about are found equally in all religions and, consequently, cannot be used as decisive proof or evidence of the truth of their religion, any more than of another. The consequence of this is clear and evident.

## 12. UNCERTAINTY AND VANITY OF THE SO-CALLED MIRACLES TO AUTHORIZE ANY TRUTH OF RELIGION

**I**t is clear that it is an error to take as evidence of the truth and sanctity of a religion signs or effects that can come from error as likely as truth or that can be made as easily by impostors as by honest and pious people. Now, the so-called motives of credibility are signs and effects that can come from vice as likely as from virtue, from error as from truth; and they can be made as easily by swindlers, scoffers, and impostors as by honest and pious people. This is easy to prove with examples of the things they say were done in the past in false religions as much as by the testimony of what our Christ-cultists call "the word of God" and the very testimony of the one they worship as their divine Savior, which expressly shows us that these kinds of signs and so-called miracles were made and can still be made on behalf of errors and lies by false prophets and impostors.

First: For an example of these so-called miracles, we see, if we want to believe them, an almost infinite number in the false religions of paganism. We see thousands, so to speak, in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid and in all the other pagan fables. We see many that were related by Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, a city in Cappadocia. We see in the Acts of the Apostles that Simon the Magician in the city of Samaria did such wondrous works that everyone said he was *the great virtue of God* (Acts 8:10). Likewise, in Rome he performed so many miracles and prodigies that they erected a statue to him with the inscription, "To Simon, God." Livy related that Tutia, a vestal virgin, was accused of incest and proved her chastity by carrying from the Tiber to the temple of Vesta a sieve full of water. Ovid likewise related that Claudia, another vestal virgin, to prove her virginity, used only her belt to make a ship with a statue of Cybele on it sail to sea, which several thousand people could not do (*Fasti*, IV).

Tacitus relates that when the emperor Vespasian was in Alexandria,

he healed a blind man immediately upon touching his eyes and he also healed a cripple by touching the sole of his foot (*Histories*, 4:81). Aelius Spartianus says that the emperor Hadrian also healed a man born blind by touching his eyes. He says that the emperor Aurelian did similar marvelous cures with only his touch (*Conferences*, vol. 5). Pyrrhus, king of Epirus—says Plutarch—healed all the spleen problems only by touching the spleen with the big toe of his right foot and, he adds, when his body was burned after he had died, the big toe was found whole without suffering any damage from the fire. Strabo says that those who sacrificed to the goddess Feronia walked barefoot on hot coals without being burned; and there were just as many devotees of Diana who did the same (*Geography*). Coelius relates that the god Bacchus gave to the children of Anius, the high priest of Apollo, the power to change whatever they wanted into wheat, wine, oil, etc., only by touching it.

Ovid in his *Fasti*, Diodorus Siculus in his *Historical Library*, and Strabo relate that Jupiter gave to the nymphs who had fed him a goat's horn with the special power of supplying in abundance whatever they desired, which was therefore called the "horn of plenty" or "cornucopia."

If the waters of the Red Sea parted by themselves to allow the Israelites free passage when they were fleeing the Egyptians who were hot on their heels as is shown in the *History of the Jews* of Flavius Josephus, the same thing, he says, happened afterward to the Macedonians when they passed the sea of Pamphylia led by Alexander when he was going to conquer the Persians. Finally, the pharaoh's magicians, who are talked about in the books of Moses, did the same miracles as Moses. If Moses changed his rod into a serpent, the magicians did the same to theirs; if Moses could change water into blood, so could the magicians; if Moses had the power to generate a multitude of frogs, the magicians had the same power; if Moses had the power to bring forth vermin and flies, the magicians did too (Ex. 8:7). And if it is noted that the pharaoh's magicians were defeated by Moses in the art of performing these kinds of prodigies, there is no reason to be astonished or to guarantee that Moses acted by a supernatural and divine power, since we see every day that in all kinds of arts and sciences there are workers and experts who are more skillful, learned, and subtle than the last. When it comes to dancing and doing acrobatics on a rope or slyly playing the shell game, there is always someone who can be found more dexterous and subtler

than another at doing these amazing maneuvers. And so, if we suppose that Moses really did what the other magicians could not, it does not mean that he acted by a divine power but only that he was more skillful, learned, and dexterous and more experienced in his art than the others. I could report countless other examples to prove this, but it would be useless to say more here.

Our Christ-cultists would not like to say that all the so-called miracles of the pharaoh's magicians were clear and convincing proofs of truth or that they were done by holy people. So they have to recognize, in spite of themselves, that these kinds of signs or effects can come equally from vice as from virtue, from error as from truth, and that they can be done and have been done by swindlers and impostors as well as by honest men; and, consequently, they are not sure and decisive proofs or evidence of the truth of any religion. If they say that all the so-called miracles performed by the pharaoh's magicians or those they say were done in paganism on behalf of error or some false religion were only false miracles or fables and that we should not put any faith in them, we will respond first that it is also easy to say the same about theirs and there is no more reason to believe the one than the other, or at least it is certain that we cannot for sure tell whether there is more reason to believe the one than the other; and we could even say, with a doubt like this, that perhaps it would be more reasonable to believe the miracles they say were done in paganism than those they say were done at the beginning of Christianity. The reason for this is that those of paganism are reported, for the most part, by many famous historians who were well known and esteemed in their times, whereas those at the beginning of Christianity were reported by ignorant and lowly people who were not known or esteemed in their times and of whom we still today know nothing but their names; and it is not even certain that they had at that time the names that have been given to them.

We could say, for example, that it would be more reasonable to believe what Philostratus relates in the eight books of the *Life of Apollonius* than what all the evangelists together say about the miracles of their Jesus Christ, because at least we know that Philostratus was eloquent and articulate, a favorite and a secretary of the empress Julia, wife of the emperor Severus. That she insisted on him writing his eight books on the life and marvelous actions of Apollonius is a sure sign that this Apol-

Ionius had become famous by some great and marvelous actions, seeing that an empress was curious and desirous to have his life and actions in writing. This cannot at all be said about Jesus Christ or about those who wrote his life because they were, as I just said, ignorant men, the dregs of society, poor laborers and fishermen who did not even have the sense to tell things in succession and in order and who very often even contradicted themselves in their narratives. And with respect to what they described, the life and actions: if he really performed all the miracles they say, he surely would have become famous and illustrious by all his wonderful actions and he would not have failed to attract the glory and admiration of the people, as all great men have done whom people looked upon in their time as wholly divine men and to whom they erected statues like gods. But, instead of this, the Christ of the Christians during his life was looked upon as nothing but a worthless, despicable man, a fanatical madman, and, finally, a wretched and pitiful scoundrel. How, then, can we believe that he really performed so many wonderful miracles? On the contrary, we are more likely to believe that he was really only a fanatical madman and, consequently, that Christianity was in the beginning only pure fanaticism.

Second: We will answer them that the same books that speak, for example, of Moses, speak also of the miracles of the pharaoh's magicians and explicitly say that the magicians performed the same miracles, i.e., the same things as Moses (Ex. 8:7). Being so, our Christ-cultists cannot deny that these so-called miracles were done by the wicked as well as by the good, and that they were done as much on behalf of vice and lies as of truth and virtue, and, consequently, it is clear and evident that the so-called motives of credibility are not decisive proofs or evidence of truth. It is no use them saying, as they commonly do, that the pharaoh's magicians were finally overcome by Moses and they could not stand up to him. It well might be, but it does not follow, as I have already said, that his power was more supernatural and divine than the magicians', seeing that in all kinds of arts and sciences there are always more skillful and dexterous or more subtle workers than the last. Moreover, if Moses overcame the pharaoh's magicians on this occasion, maybe he could have been overcome by them on another occasion or overcome by some other more skillful magicians, if they could have been found at the time.

So, the proof that they draw from these so-called miracles is a feeble

proof of the truth and it is so very feeble that we would be wise to put no faith in what the authors say. That is why Flavius Josephus himself, the famous Jewish historian, after speaking about the greatest miracles that they said and believed were done in favor of their nation and religion, right away depreciates the belief and makes it suspect, saying that he leaves it free to everyone to believe what they want, which certainly shows that he himself did not put a great deal of faith in what they said. And this is also what leads more sensible men to regard the histories that speak of these sorts of things as fabulous narratives that do not deserve any faith.

Here is how the author of *Defense of Great Men* [Gabriel Nauré] spoke about it:

It would be a waste of time to cut the branches instead of the root. We must begin the destruction of all these fabulous narratives and show that everything they say about demons and magic cannot be proved by reason or experience; and as far as the ecstasies, evocations, and other miracles, we do not have to bother refuting them because they are self-negating easily enough by their own absurdities.

About these false miracles, possessions, and resurrections that are done among the Greek schismatics, we only have to look at the *Narrative* [by François Richard] of the missionaries of the Isle of Santorini; there are three chapters in a row.

Montaigne says,

It is amazing how many vain beginnings and frivolous causes normally give birth to such famous impressions as the belief in miracles; we often see strange images from afar that vanish as we approach; all these miracles and strange events now hide before me. . . . I have seen the birth of many miracles in my time and though they may be stifled at birth, it does not stop us from foreseeing the path they would have taken if they had matured: for it is only a matter of finding the end of the thread—unwind it as much as you want, it is a farther distance from nothing to the smallest thing than from that to the greatest. Now, the first who drank from the beginning of strangeness, coming to spread their stories, understand by the oppositions made against them where the difficulty of persuasion resides and they go sealing up these places

with false patches, or everyone adds his own and thus the individual error first creates the public error and in its turn afterward the public error creates the individual error, and so goes the whole building, expanding, and forming from hand to hand such that the farthest witness is more knowledgeable than the closest and the last informed is more persuaded than the first. This is natural progress. . . . There is nothing to which men are more commonly prone than to yield to their opinions when the common means fail; they add commandment, force, iron, and fire. It is unfortunate that the best touchstone of truth is the multitude of believers in a crowd where the fools far outnumber the wise. For me, if I do not believe one, I do not believe a hundred and I do not judge opinions by years. (*Essays*, 3:11)

Imposture cowers more comfortably under the veil of piety. It begets even more abuses in the world—or, to speak more boldly, all the abuses in the world are begotten from what they teach us to fear and to profess our ignorance of, and we are bound to accept everything that we cannot or dare not refute. All these examples and reasons clearly show that the so-called miracles can equally be performed on behalf of error and lie as of justice and truth and, consequently, we must not look upon them as sure and decisive proofs or evidence of truth.

## 13. UNCERTAINTY OF THE HISTORIES ON THE SUBJECT

**T**his is what I am going to prove clearly with the evidence our Christ-cultists themselves call "the word of God" and with the evidence of him whom they worship as their God and divine Savior. For, the books themselves, which they say contain the word of God, and the Christ himself, whom they worship as a god become man, expressly show us that there were not only false prophets—i.e., impostors who were falsely said to be sent from God and who spoke falsely in his name—but also that they performed such great and prodigious miracles that the righteous were very nearly seduced (Matt. 24:11, 24).

The famous grand apostle Paul says in one of his letters that God himself will send a spirit of deception that will persuade the unbelievers of the lie by powerful impostures and he says that impious seducers will come and make all kinds of deceiving prodigies, signs, and miracles to enlist the children of perdition in injustice (2 Thes. 2:9–12).

That is clear evidence. Our Christ-cultists cannot challenge it since it is taken strictly from the words of their divine Christ and from one of his foremost apostles who was a vessel of election. So, they have to recognize that these miracles and prodigies can be made equally on behalf of error and lie as of justice and truth and, consequently, they should recognize that they are not sure evidence of truth.

And we should say here as well that all these so-called miracle-makers want us to put faith in their words and miracles and do not want us to put faith in the others who are contrary and opposed to them. Likewise, all the so-called prophets want us to put faith in their words and look upon all the others as false prophets and impostors, whereby we clearly see that they condemn and destroy one another; thus, it is foolish to put faith in any of them.

One day one of these so-called prophets (called Zedekiah), being seen contradicting himself by another so-called prophet called Micah, who held an opposite opinion, right away slapped him across the face and said pleasantly enough, *By which way did the spirit of God go from me*

*to you?* (2 Chr. 18:23). The prophets of Samaria, who were the prophets of the god Baal, did not agree with the prophets of Judea and Jerusalem who also called themselves the prophets of their God, and when Jezebel had the prophets of the Lord killed, Elijah took vengeance by killing 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:40). The Christ of the Christians wanted everyone to believe his word and put faith in his miracles, but he did not want them to believe others or put faith in miracles that were opposed to him. Moses as well wanted his people to believe his word and miracles, but he did not want them to believe others or be seduced by other miracles and he commanded them to look upon all others as false prophets and seducers. Aaron, however, and his sister Mary did not say this and they wanted it believed that God spoke to them as well as to Moses: *Is it only through Moses that God speaks? Does he not speak through us as well?* (Num. 12:2). So, these are our so-called prophets and miracle-makers who clearly contradict and condemn each other? In the same way they confound and destroy each other, which is a certain and evident sign that their so-called miracles are not decisive proofs and evidence of truth and, consequently, it is not by these so-called motives of credibility that we should judge the truth of a religion.

But how could these so-called miracles be decisive proofs and evidence of the truth of a religion, seeing that it is not even certain that they were really done and seeing that there is no certainty in the narratives, since for there to be certainty in the narratives it would be necessary to know the following?

1—If those whom they say or believe to be the first authors of these kinds of writings and narratives are the real authors because it is sure that we very often falsely attribute to people many things that they did not do or say, and very often bad authors hide under the name of some famous person to give credit to their lies and impostures.

2—If those who are or really were the first authors of these kinds of narratives were honest and trustworthy, if they were learned and enlightened, and if they were not predisposed to those whom they speak of so positively, because it is sure that if the first authors were not honest, we should not put any faith in what they say. Likewise, if they were not learned and enlightened, they deserve no trust, because if they did not have all the necessary reason and prudence to judge things soundly, they could too easily be fooled. The same if they first came on behalf of those

whom they talk about or were interested in their cause—we should not put very much faith in what they say because it would prevent them from judging things soundly and very often would carry them away to say things other than they are and twist them around by flattery and favor. We see this in our everyday experience and we could prove it, if necessary, with countless examples.

3—It is necessary to know if those who report these so-called miracles have carefully examined all the circumstances of the deeds they report, if they have really understood and reported everything as it is, because it is certain that for as little as one may change the particular circumstances of a deed, either by design or by error, and for as little as one may remove or add some circumstance that is not true, one makes it appear wholly different than it is in itself. And that is what often makes us admire things that we would immediately stop admiring if we really knew what they were. Montaigne says very sensibly, "Miracles are in accordance with the ignorance we have of Nature and not with Nature itself" (*Essays*, 1:23). "It is amazing how many vain beginnings and frivolous causes normally give birth to such famous impressions as the belief in miracles. We often see strange images from afar that vanish as we approach" (*Essays*, 3:9).

4—It is necessary to know if the old books and histories that record all these deeds—i.e., all these great and prodigious miracles that they claim to have been done in past times—have not been falsified and corrupted in the course of time, like so many other books and histories that were undoubtedly falsified and corrupted and that people still falsify all the time in our day.

Now, it is unquestionable that there is no certainty that these so-called miracles really had been performed, no certainty of the honesty and sincerity of those who recorded them or said they had seen them, no certainty that they had well understood and noted down all the circumstances, no certainty that the histories really belong to those to whom we attribute them, and finally, no certainty that these histories have not been corrupted and falsified, as we see happen to so many others. There is no certainty, I say, about all these different points. For, although we know, for example, the name of Moses, we do not know for sure that he was an honest man and did not want to write fables or lies instead of writing the truth. "Timon the philosopher calls the divine

Plato a great forger of miracles because he was fearless at working in divine revelations and operations where human force was missing" (Montaigne, *Essays*, 2:16).

What certainty do we have that the famous Moses did not do the same and that he was not a skillful forger of miracles like Plato? We certainly have no assurance. Far from it, it seems, on the contrary, that there would be much more reason to regard him as a notorious brigand and impostor than as a true prophet. Here is how a sensible author spoke about him and his Jewish nation:

If we go back to their origin and to their exodus from Egypt, which their histories make such a noise about and attach so many fabulous miracles to, we will find that the authors of Egypt and other nations, people of great authority like [Flavius] Josephus or every other Jewish historian, scorn them greatly and do not give a very good picture of them. Maneton, an Egyptian priest, calls them "a bunch of filthy, leprous people" and he says that they were chased from the country of Amenhotep, who was king then, and went to Syria led by Moses, an Egyptian priest. Charemont, a famous author among the Greeks, relates almost the same thing and says that under the reign of Amenhotep 250,000 lepers were banished from Egypt and they left, led by Ktithen and Noteseth, i.e., Moses and Aaron. Though the authors differ as to the name of the reigning king, nevertheless all unanimously agree that the Israelites were a nasty people covered with gall and pustules, infected and considered the dross and trash of the Egyptian nation.

Tacitus, a Roman historian of unquestionable authority, adds that Moses, one of the leprous exiles, being of strong mind and good reputation among them, saw the devastation and confusion of his brothers and begged them to have courage and not to trust the Egyptian gods or the Egyptians themselves, but to have faith only in him and to obey him because he was sent from heaven to be their leader and deliver them from the calamity under which they groaned. Not knowing what to do, the people gave themselves up entirely to his leadership and from then on he was their captain and lawmaker. He made them go through the Arabian deserts where they committed great thefts and robberies, stabbing men, women, and children, burning towns and destroying every place they set foot in. What worse can be said of a

gang of robbers and bandits? Magic and astrology were then the only fashionable sciences. And as Moses was perfectly versed in all the mysteries and secrets of the wisdom of the Egyptians, it was not difficult for him to inspire the veneration and devotion of the uneducated rustic children of Jacob and in their present misery to make them embrace the discipline he wanted to give them. (*Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, 4:83)

Now that is quite different than what the Jews and Christ-cultists want us to believe. For what reason should we trust the one rather than the other? There is certainly no reason at all.

## 14. UNCERTAINTY OF THE SO-CALLED HOLY SCRIPTURES, WHICH WERE FALSIFIED AND CORRUPTED

Likewise, there is also as little certainty and credibility concerning the so-called miracles of the New Testament as of the Old Testament. For example, what assurance and what certainty do we have that the four Gospels that report the so-called miracles of Jesus Christ were really the work of those to whom they are attributed? And if they really were their work, what certainty do we have that they were honest and trustworthy men? Just because we know their names—one was called Matthew, another Mark, another Luke, and another John—does not mean that we know whether they were honest and trustworthy, wise and enlightened, whether they were not fooled themselves or wanted to fool others, as so many do. There are good grounds for entirely distrusting their testimony, since it has already been agreed that they were only crude and ignorant men whom it would have been easy to influence. And finally, what certainty do we have that the four Gospels that appear under their names were not corrupted and falsified, as we see happen to so many other books even today? We can hardly trust the reports they make of things that happen in our day and almost before our very eyes: if twenty people report an event, sometimes there will not be even two who will accurately say what happened. What certainty can we have, then, in reports of things that are so old and that happened so many centuries ago, even thousands of years ago? And were not these things that are so extraordinary, incredible, or rather unbelievable reported to us only by strangers, unknown men, without character and authority? Surely, there is no certainty or even probability in what they tell us, no more than in our old novels and in the stories of fairies; and so, they do not deserve to be trusted.

There is no use saying here, as people sometimes do, that the histories that report these kinds of deeds have always been regarded as holy and sacred histories and, consequently, that they have always been faithfully

and inviolably preserved without any alteration of the truths that they contain. There is no use, I say, to allege this reason in their favor since it is for this very reason, perhaps, as well as many others, that they should be more doubtful and that they would have been even more falsified and corrupted by those who claimed to profit from them or who feared that they would not be successful enough. It is common practice for authors who transcribe or print these kinds of stories to add to them and change them or even remove from them whatever serves their purpose.

Here is how a sensible writer of the last century expressed his thought and sentiment on the matter:

Man is a born liar; he loves only his own work, fiction and fable. See the people: they fabricate, augment, overload with coarseness and stupidity; ask the most honest man if he always tells the truth, if he never sometimes camouflages or engages in vanity and levity, if to tell a better story he does not often add something to his story that was not there. Something happens today, even almost before our eyes; one hundred witnesses tell it in a hundred different ways. And if someone is listened to, he will tell it again in a completely different way. What credence could I give to deeds that are so old and far away? What foundation should I lay on the most serious historians? What becomes of History? Was Caesar, for example, assassinated in the middle of the Senate? Was there a Caesar? What is the result? What doubt? What need? You will go and figure that I do not deserve an answer and even I think you are right: Yet I suppose the book that mentions Caesar is not a profane book written by men, who are liars, found by chance in some library among other manuscripts that contain true or false histories; on the contrary, I suppose the book was inspired by God, holy and divine, for almost two thousand years in the midst of a populous society that did not make the slightest change and even made it a religion to preserve it intact and even made it a religious and indispensable commitment to have faith in everything contained in this book that speaks of Caesar and his dictatorship; admit it and you will never doubt that there ever was a Caesar. (de la Bruyère, *Characters*, "On Great Minds")

There is a true image of the idea that we should have about the uncertainty of histories, and not only profane histories, but even more so those that they want to pass off as the holiest and most sacred because these are more interesting than the others. In the matter of religion all

try to claim superiority and strengthen their side as much as they can, and for this they can produce truths or falsehoods and then add, remove, and change whatever seems best to make them as favorable as possible for their side.

## 15. UNCERTAINTY OF THE GOSPELS

This is what our Christ-cultists themselves cannot deny, since, without mentioning many other esteemed authors who recognized the additions, removals, and falsifications that were made at different times to what they call their “Holy Scriptures,” their St. Jerome, a famous scholar of theirs in these kinds of writings, said categorically in several places of his writings and especially in his prologues to the so-called Holy Scriptures that they were corrupted and falsified in many places. Already in his time they had passed through the hands of all kinds of people who added to them, he says, and removed from them whatever they wanted so that there were as many different exemplars as there were copies:

Everyone in the world is involved in their own work—the artisans, laborers, masons, merchants, carpenters, wool-dressers and fullers, and the other workers do not get involved in these arts without an apprenticeship—but the art of reading, explaining, or interpreting “Holy Scripture” is the only art that everyone wants to meddle with. The ignorant as well as the learned, doting old men, gossipy old women, and blabbering sophists tear it apart every day and meddle in teaching it before learning it; and what is even more shameful is that women want to teach men and both are presumptuous enough to want to teach others what they have not learned themselves. . . . And others who, on the pretext of having studied human sciences and knowing how to tickle the ears of their listeners with pretty words, imagine that everything they say is the law and word of God, although they do not deign to learn what the prophets or apostles thought, but they only know how to adapt or apply it to their fantasy of evidence that does not at all fit the subject. . . . These are vain puerilities and mummeries like pranks and jokes; to teach what you do not know and even to not know that you do not know it. (St. Jerome, *Letter to Paulinus*) (Cf. *Prologue to Galatians*)

And in his *Preface to the Paralipomena to Domnio and Rogatian* he says:

This book is so corrupt in the Greek and Latin versions that there are fewer Hebrew names than barbarous and unknown names, which should not be attributed to the seventy translators who were filled with the Holy Spirit, but is the fault of writers and copyists who did not write correctly and often made one word from two or three by removing some syllables in the middle and, on the other hand, often made two or three words from only one because it was too long to pronounce.

And in his *Preface to Joshua*:

In Latin there are as many exemplars as volumes; everyone adds or removes what seems good to him, being sure that what is contradictory cannot be true. What madness to add what is false after saying what is true.

And in his *Preface to Job*:

I hope that my dogs [that is how he calls his enemies] learn and know that if I have worked on this volume, it is not because there was something wrong with the old version, but to clarify with my translation what was obscure and what had been omitted or even perverted and corrupted because of writers.

And in his *Preface to the Gospels to Pope Damasus*:

A great abuse has certainly slipped into our books since where one gospel says something more than another and the translators or interpreters believed they should add what was missing and correct them on the model of what was first read; hence it happened that everything is mixed up and there are many things in Mark that are from Luke and Matthew and in Matthew from John and Mark and in others that belong to others. (Cf. *Preface to the Psalms*)

And concerning the books of the Old Testament in particular, Ezra himself, a priestly scribe, admitted that he had corrected and put back together the so-called holy books of his law, which were, he said, partly lost and partly corrupted. He divided them into twenty-two books, according to the number of Hebrew letters, and composed several other

books whose doctrine could not be communicated except to the learned (4 Ezra 14).

If these books had been partly lost and partly corrupted, as Ezra admits like St. Jerome in many places, there is definitely no certainty about what they contain; and as for Ezra correcting them by the inspiration of God himself, there is no certainty of this and there is no impostor who could not have said the same.

All the books of the law and prophets that could be found were burned in the time of Antiochus. The Talmud, which is considered by the Jews as a holy and sacred book—containing all the laws and divine orders together with the words and sayings and explanations of the most renowned rabbis on the divine and human laws as well as countless other secrets and mysteries of the Hebrew language—is considered by the Christians as a book stuffed with reveries, fables, impostures, and impiety. In the year 1559, twelve thousand copies of the Talmud found in a library of Cremona were burned in Rome by order of the Inquisition (*Historical Dictionary*).

The Pharisees, a famous Jewish sect, accepted only the five books of Moses and rejected all the prophets. Among the Christians, Marcion and his followers rejected the books of Moses and the prophets and introduced other writings to their liking. Carpocrates and his followers did the same and rejected the entire Old Testament and maintained that Jesus Christ was only a man like other men. The Marcionites and Severians also condemned the entire Old Testament as evil and also rejected most of the four Gospels and Epistles of St. Paul. The Ebionites only accepted St. Matthew's Gospel. The Marcionites published a Gospel under the name of St. Matthias to confirm their doctrine.

Likewise, the Apostolic Fathers introduced other "Scriptures" to maintain their errors and used certain Acts attributed to St. Andrew and St. Thomas. The Manichaeans wrote a Gospel for themselves and rejected the writings of the prophets and the apostles (Eusebius, *Chronicle*). The Elesaites spouted a certain book they said came from heaven and cut up the other Gospels to their fancy (Nicephorus Callistus).

Origen himself, despite his intelligence, could not stop from corrupting the "scriptures" and he fabricated irrelevant allegories in a single stroke and straightway turned away from the true sense of the prophets and apostles and even corrupted some of the principal points of the doc-

trine. His books are now mutilated and falsified and only pieced together by others who came after and so we find only obvious errors and faults (Eusebius). The Alogi attributed the Gospel and Apocalypse of St. John to the heretic Cerinthus, which is why they rejected them. Heretics in the last centuries rejected many books, like the Book of Tobit, Judith, Esther, Baruch, the Canticle of the Three Children in the Furnace, the History of Susanna, and the Idol of Baal, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and the First and Second Maccabees, which all were regarded as apocryphal by our recent heretics and are regarded as holy and sacred by our Roman Catholics.

To these uncertain and doubtful books we could still add several others of little worth, which they formerly attributed to other apostles, as, for example, the Acts of St. Thomas, his Circuits, his Gospel, and his Apocalypse. Likewise the Gospel of St. Bartholomew, of St. Matthias, of St. James, of St. Peter, and other apostles, as also the Acts and the Preaching of St. Peter, as also his Apocalypses. And also the Infancy Gospel and others cut from the same cloth, which were all rejected as apocrypha by the Roman Catholics, by Pope Gelasius, and by the holy fathers.

Being so, and since our Christ-cultists themselves cannot deny it, it is sure, clear, and evident that there is no basis and no certainty concerning the authority they give to these books or of the truth of the deeds reported in them; and if there is no basis and no certainty, it is sure, clear, and evident that the so-called miracles that are reported in them cannot serve as proofs or decisive evidence of the truth of any religion.

And what confirms this truth even more is that those who most strongly maintain the divine authority of these so-called holy and sacred books and who most strongly support the truth of these so-called miracles that are reported are forced to recognize and confess that they would have no certainty of the divine authority of their books or of the truth of the deeds they contain if their faith did not assure them of it and force them to believe it. Now, this faith being, as I said, a blind belief in things unseen and unknown, it is, as I also said, a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures so that it is clear and evident that the so-called miracles and the holy and sacred books (as even those who support them admit they do not have any other certainty of truth than what they believe with a blind belief) cannot serve as sure and decisive evidence of the truth of any religion.

## 16. THE WISDOM AND LEARNING CONTAINED IN THE SO-CALLED HOLY SCRIPTURES ARE ONLY HUMAN

**B**ut let us see whether the so-called Holy and Sacred Books contain in themselves any particular nature of divinity, as for example, learning, science, wisdom, and holiness or some other perfection, which would be suitable to God, and if the so-called miracles that are reported therein perfectly agree with what we would expect from the infinite grandeur, bounty, wisdom, and justice of an all-powerful and infinitely perfect God. For, we would think that books that had really been made through the instruction and inspiration of a god ought to contain a very perfect science, wisdom, and learning; or, at least, we would think that we would not find in them the same faults, errors, and imperfections that we ordinarily find in other books, either from the negligence, ignorance, or incompetence of the authors.

Likewise, we would think that the miracles reported in these books should agree with and be entirely appropriate to what we would expect from the infinite grandeur, bounty, justice, and wisdom of the god who performed them, because it is clear and evident enough that we cannot attribute to an infinitely perfect being things that would not be proper to the sovereign perfection of its nature or to the sovereign perfection of its will.

Now, it is clear and evident that the aforementioned so-called holy and divine books contain in themselves no particular nature of divinity, learning, knowledge, wisdom, holiness, or any other perfection that could be said to come only from a god. Far from it, we clearly find the same faults, errors, and imperfections that are ordinarily found in other books from the negligence, ignorance, or incompetence of the authors.

Consequently, it does not seem that these kinds of books really came from God or that they had really been made through a particular inspiration of his spirit. Likewise, the so-called miracles reported in them do not agree at all with what we should think of the infinite grandeur, bounty, justice, and wisdom of a god. Therefore, it is not necessary to

attribute them to the omnipotence of a god or even believe that they were performed at all.

First, these so-called holy and divine books contain in themselves no nature and mark of authority or inspiration of divinity. It is easy to convince everybody of this, no matter how little enlightened. You only have to read them and you will see that there is no learning, no scientific knowledge, no sublime thought, no mental production that surpasses the natural and ordinary forces of the human mind.

On the one hand, you will see that the histories or fabulous narratives like of the so-called creation of the world; the formation and multiplication of the so-called first men; the so-called earthly paradise; the serpent who talks, reasons, and was even slyer and craftier than man; the talking donkey who reprimands its master for his untimely mistreatment; the so-called universal flood and the ark where all species of animals were enclosed; the confusion of languages and the division of nations; without speaking of all the other vain stories about vain subjects, base and frivolous, which serious authors would have loathed to report—these histories or narratives certainly have only the air of fables like those invented about the deeds of Prometheus, Pandora's box, or the war of the giants against the gods, and many others that the ancient poets invented to amuse men in their time.

On the other hand, you will see a motley heap of laws and orders or vain practices and superstitions concerning the sacrifices and purifications of the ancient law and the vain concept of animals, some of which they supposed were pure and others impure and unclean. These laws and orders are no more respectable or less vain and superstitious than those of the most idolatrous nations. You will see, moreover, only simple stories, true or false, of several kings, princes, or other individuals who lived well or badly, who did good or bad deeds and many others, base, indifferent, or frivolous, that are also reported. It is obvious that it would not take a great genius to make up these stories as they were reported in these so-called holy books, in the Old as much as in the New Testament; and, consequently, for this there is no need for divine revelations and inspiration. It is not doing honor to a god to want to make of him only an author of so many base, stupid, vain, and ridiculous stories; he certainly was easily amused if he seriously enjoyed reveling in such vain, frivolous, and ridiculous things.

Finally, in these so-called holy and sacred books you will see the speech, conduct, and actions of many renowned and famous prophets who each said they were inspired and sent by God. You will see their mannerisms and speech, their dreams, illusions, and reveries, and it will be easy to judge by their speech and actions that they were much more like dreamers and fanatics than like wise and enlightened people. Although in some of these books there were a few good lessons and some really good maxims of morality, like in the Proverbs of Solomon, in Wisdom and Ecclesiastes, nevertheless there is nothing, anywhere, that surpasses the range and capacity of the human mind or human wisdom. Far from it, we normally see that there is more intelligence, civility, knowledge, eloquence, order, clarity, coherence, precision, and even more wisdom and solid instruction in the books of philosophers, historians, and profane orators than in any of the so-called holy, sacred books whose principal wisdom consists in making people piously believe errors and religiously observe vain superstitions. As a result, without speaking in particular about many esteemed authors who composed a number of books about the human sciences as well as about morality and who are full of good examples, good opinions, and good instruction, I think I can say that if we think only, for example, of the fables of Aesop, they are certainly more ingenious and instructive than all the base and crude parables that are reported in the so-called Holy Gospels.

## 17. CONTRADICTIONS AMONG THE GOSPELS

**B**ut what shows us even more clearly that these kinds of books cannot come from any divine inspiration is that, besides the crudeness and baseness of style in which they were composed and besides the faults of order and sequence in the narration of particular events that are reported and very poorly detailed, we do not see that their authors agree very well with each other, seeing that some tell their stories in one way and others in another. We even see that they clearly contradict each other in many things, which clearly shows that they were not inspired by God and that they did not have enough reason or natural talent to know how to edit a story well. Here are some examples of the contradictions found among them:

1—St. Matthew makes Jesus Christ descend from King David through his son Solomon and his descendants up to Joseph, putative father of this Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:1). And St. Luke makes him descend from the same David through his son Nathan and his descendants up to Joseph (Luke 3:31). There is a clear contradiction in this because it is clear and evident that if this Joseph and Jesus Christ were descended from David through Solomon and his descendants, they could not be descended through Nathan and his descendants, who were obviously completely different. Moreover, what is the point in making a genealogy of this Joseph and making him descend from King David to show that Jesus Christ was the son of David seeing that Jesus Christ was not really the son of Joseph? It is clear that neither evangelist could prove that Jesus Christ was the son of David unless he were the son of Joseph, whom they made a descendant of David, although in different ways. Now, our Christ-cultists do not want their Jesus Christ to have really been the son of Joseph, so it is wrong for the evangelists to have made a genealogy of this Joseph to falsely show that Jesus Christ was the son of David. Or if one or the other of these two genealogies proved that he really was the son of David, they would have to recognize that he really was the son of Joseph, wherein it obviously seems that there is an error somewhere. But what? It is obviously about the vanity of these genealo-

gies that their St. Paul is talking when he said to his disciple Timothy that he should not focus on these fables or endless genealogies that are a matter of dispute rather than edification (1 Tim. 1:4); and when he said to his other disciple Titus that *you must escape from impertinent questions and vain genealogies, disputes and arguments about the law since they are vain and useless* (Titus 3:9).

2—There is contradiction in what they say about what happened right after the birth of Jesus Christ. Matthew said the news immediately spread through Jerusalem that a new king of the Jews was born and the magicians came looking to worship him, then King Herod, fearing that this so-called new king might someday take the crown, cut the throats and massacred all the newborn infants up to two years old around Bethlehem; and Joseph and Mary, mother of Jesus, were warned in a dream by an angel of this evil design of King Herod to kill their child, so they fled right away into Egypt, where they stayed until this king died a few years later (Matt. 2).

On the other hand, Luke explicitly says that this Joseph and the mother of Jesus stayed peacefully for six months where their son was born (Luke 2), that he was circumcised according to the Jewish law eight days after his birth and when the time prescribed for the purification of his mother ended, she and Joseph carried him to Jerusalem to present him to God in the temple and at the same time offer as a sacrifice what was ordained by the Jewish law. After this Joseph and Mary returned to their city of Nazareth in Galilee, where their son grew every day in grace and wisdom and his father and mother went every year to Jerusalem on the holy day of Passover. So, this evangelist makes no mention of their flight to Egypt or the so-called cruelty of King Herod toward the children of Bethlehem. From this it is clear and evident that there is contradiction in what they say, so one of them must be false, seeing that Joseph and Mary could not have returned to Nazareth and gone every year to Jerusalem for Passover, as the latter says, if they had been forced to flee to Egypt and stay there a long time, as the former says.

With respect to the cruelty of King Herod toward the children of Bethlehem, since the historians of these times do not talk about it, like [Flavius] Josephus himself, the famous Jewish historian, says nothing at all about it, although he describes the life and viciousness of this king in

some detail, and the other evangelists do not even make mention of it in their Gospels, there are good grounds to believe that what is reported in the Gospel of St. Matthew is only imposture and what is said about the flight to Egypt is a lie because it is not believable that Josephus, a Jewish historian who reproached and described the vices and viciousness of King Herod, would have passed over in silence such a dark and detestable action as this inhuman massacre of so many innocent children, if what the evangelist said were true.

3—There is contradiction among the evangelists about the duration of the public life of Jesus Christ. For, according to the first three evangelists it could not have been much more than three months from his baptism to his death, supposing that he was thirty (or almost) when he was baptized by John (Luke 3:21-3) and that he was born on December 25, according to the common opinion of our Christ-cultists. For, from his baptism (in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar and the year that Annus and Caiaphus were high priests) to the first Passover afterward, which was in the month of March, was around three months and according to the first three evangelists (Luke 22:1ff), he was crucified the day of the Passover after his baptism, the first time he went to Jerusalem with his disciples. For, everything these evangelists say about his baptism, his travels, preaching, miracles, and about his passion and death, had to happen in the same year of his baptism because they do not talk about any other following year and it even seems, by what they narrate about his actions, that he did them all immediately after his baptism, one after another in a very short time during which we see only an interval of six days before his transfiguration, when we do not see what he did or if he did anything. So we clearly see that after his baptism he lived only around three months, during which time, if we remove the six weeks of forty days and forty nights that he lived in the desert immediately after his baptism, we will find that the time of his public life, from his first preaching up to his death, lasted only around six weeks (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28). But according to John, he would have lasted at least three years and three months since it appears in reading this Gospel (2:13, 6:4, 7:2, 13:1, and 10, 11:55, 12:12) that in the course of his public life he had been in Jerusalem three or four times during the holy feast of Passover, which only happens once a year. So it is unquestionable that there is a visible contradiction.

But whether they really contradict each other or just do not explain themselves well enough in the narratives, we can still draw this conclusion: they were not inspired by God when they wrote their histories. For, if they had really been inspired by God, they would not be contradicting each other and they would all have had enough sense and reason to explain well and write down in succession and order all the circumstances and particularities of their histories without omitting any of the main points and without confusing or perverting the order, as they do in many places. We cannot deny that they contradict themselves on many other occasions. They are contradictory:

1—about the first thing they say Jesus Christ did right after his baptism. For, the first three evangelists (Matt. 4:1, Mark 1:12, Luke 4:2) say that he was right away transported by the spirit of God into a desert where he fasted for forty days and forty nights and was several times tempted by the devil. And according to what John said (1:35–2:11) he left two days after his baptism to go to Galilee, more than thirty leagues from where he was, and three days after he left he was at a wedding that took place at Cana in Galilee, where he performed his first miracle, changing water into wine.

There is a clear enough contradiction because if he really were fasting in the desert, it is not believable that he was thirty leagues away at a wedding at the same time.

2—about where he stayed after he left the desert. Matthew the evangelist (4:13) says he came into Galilee and afterward went to Nazareth and then stayed in Capernaum by the water. But Luke the evangelist says he came first to Nazareth and afterward went to Capernaum (4:16).

3—about when and how his apostles started following him. The first three evangelists say that Jesus Christ passed along the shore of Galilee and saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, fishing in the sea and a little farther on saw James and John, his brother, with their father, Zebedee, who were preparing their nets because they were also fishermen, and when he called them they left their nets right away and followed him (Matt. 4:18, Mark 1:16, Luke 5:11). But on the other hand, John the evangelist said that it was Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, who first joined Jesus Christ with another disciple of John the Baptist when they were with their master and saw him passing by the banks of Jordan; they joined him when their master John said to them, “Look, the Lamb of

God who will take away the sin of the world." When Andrew found his brother Simon he brought him to Jesus and afterward when Jesus wanted to go to Galilee he found Philip and then Nathanael (John 1:36, 40, 44-45). There is a contradiction here because if these disciples joined him like John said, then they did not join him like the other evangelists said.

4—about what happened at the Last Supper. For, the first three evangelists report that he instituted the sacrament of his body and blood under the visible appearance of bread and wine, as our Roman Christ-cultists say. And John makes no mention of the institution of this so-called holy and mysterious sacrament. John says that after this supper, Jesus washed the feet of his apostles and he explicitly told them to do the same to each other and he talked to them while doing this for a long time (John 13:5-11). But the other evangelists say nothing about this feet washing or any long speech. On the contrary, they testify that right after the supper he went with his apostles to the Mount of Olives, where he prayed alone to abandon his soul to sadness and finally he fell down in agony while his apostles slept apart from him.

There is a contradiction here. For, if what the three evangelists say is true, it seems that he did not wash anybody's feet and he did not have time to make a long speech since it was already night before they finished the supper (John 13:30) and they went right away after grace to the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:45, Mark 14:37, Luke 22:45), where he prayed alone and was struck with sadness while his apostles were struck with sleep. How is it, then, that after so many years John remembered so well so many words that he reported in the speech, though he made no mention of so many other more remarkable things or of other parables that he should have heard about like the other apostles? Where does such a great diversity among them come from if not from the fact that it was not the spirit of truth that guided them but the spirit of error and lie? Indeed, we see that the very style of their narrations is only the style of fables, poorly designed, ill-sustained, badly reported fables.

5—about the day they say Jesus Christ had the Last Supper (Matt. 26:17, Mark 14:12, Luke 22:7). On the one hand, they say that it was done on the night before Passover, i.e., the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when according to the Jewish law it was necessary to eat the paschal lamb and the unleavened bread as is indicated in Exodus

12:18, Leviticus 23:5, and Numbers 28:16. On the other hand, they say that he was crucified the day after the supper around noon after the Jews tried him during the night and morning. Now, according to what they say, the day after he had the supper should not have been the day before Passover, but the first day of the great feast. Therefore, if he died the day before Passover around noon, he did not have the supper the night before Passover (Matt. 26:5); or if he had the supper the night before the feast, he was crucified on the very day of this feast. There is clearly an error somewhere, i.e., he was not crucified the day before the feast or he did not have the Last Supper the night before the feast, which was, however, the day he should have had it, even though the evangelists say that he had it the day he should have and he was crucified the next day. In this also the evangelists contradict themselves (John 29:31).

6—about the women who followed Jesus Christ from Galilee. The first three evangelists say that all these women (among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's children) watched from a distance what happened when he was hanged and nailed to the cross (Matt. 27:55, Mark 15:40, Luke 23:49). But on the contrary, John says that the mother of Jesus, her mother's sister, and Mary Magdalene were standing near the cross with John his apostle; when Jesus saw his mother and his beloved disciple near her, he said to her, *Woman, here is your son*, and to his disciple, *Here is your mother* (John 29:25–27). There is a contradiction here because if these women and this disciple were near him, as this evangelist says, they were not at a distance, as the others say; or vice versa.

7—about the so-called apparitions after the so-called resurrection of Jesus Christ. For, Matthew speaks only about two apparitions: one when he appeared to Mary Magdalene and another woman also called Mary, and the other when he appeared to his eleven apostles who went to Galilee to the mountain where he told them they would see him (28:16). Mark speaks of three apparitions: the first when he appeared to Mary Magdalene (16:9), the second when he appeared to two disciples who were going to Emmaus (16:12), and the third and final when he appeared to his eleven disciples whom he rebuked for not believing (16:14). Luke speaks only of two (24:13, 36), knowing the one to his two disciples going to Emmaus and the one to his eleven disciples gathered with others in Jerusalem. And John speaks of four apparitions,

knowing the first to Mary Magdalene (20:14), the second to his ten or eleven disciples together in Jerusalem in a house with the doors closed (20:19), a third made eight days later to the same disciples gathered in a house in the same way (20:26), and finally the fourth apparition to seven or eight of his disciples who were fishing on the Tiberias (20:4).

8—about the location of these apparitions. Matthew says it was in Galilee that his disciples saw Jesus on a mountain where he had told them they would see him (28:16). Mark says he appeared when they were eating (16:14). Luke says he brought them out of Jerusalem to Bethany, where he rose to heaven (24:50). And John says it was in Jerusalem that he appeared in a house with the doors closed and another time on the Tiberias (20:19, 21:4).

There are quite a few contradictions in the telling of these so-called apparitions! They cannot all be true because if it were true, as John the evangelist says, that he appeared the evening of the very day of his resurrection to his disciples in Jerusalem, how could it be true what Matthew said, that it was in Galilee that he appeared to his apostles on a mountain and they really had gone there as soon as the women told them that he was resurrected? If it really was in Jerusalem as John said, then why did he have to quickly send them more than thirty leagues away to see him? And why did he say that it was there that they would see him, as Matthew reports? Since it was in Jerusalem that he was going to appear to them that day, he did not need to send them thirty leagues away. Or if it was in Galilee that he was going to appear to them and they left right after his resurrection to go there, how did he appear to them in Jerusalem that same night? And how could the apostles be gathered together in a house in Jerusalem that night, seeing that they had left to go to Galilee and should have already been well on their way?

It is clear that there is a contradiction here and they had to multiply the miracles to make them agree. But how is it that Matthew, who was one of the apostles and, consequently, had been with the other apostles in the house in Jerusalem where Jesus Christ came, how is it that he who had witnessed this apparition could have said and reported in his Gospel that it was in Galilee that he would appear and they left quickly to go there, without mentioning that he had seen him already in Jerusalem? It seems he could not have said what he said without mentioning the so-called apparition in Jerusalem if it were real.

Likewise, how could John (who was also an apostle and, consequently, also in Galilee with the other apostles) have seen Jesus Christ resurrected without mentioning this trip and this apparition (which destroys the truth of what he reports)? It does not seem that he would have made the trip and seen the apparition of his divine master without mentioning it in his Gospel if it really did happen. So, there must be *error and lies on one side or the other.*

9—about the so-called ascension into heaven. Luke and Mark say positively that he rose up into heaven in the presence of his eleven apostles. But Matthew and John make no mention of this so-called ascension. Moreover, Matthew testifies clearly enough that he did not rise into heaven since he positively says that Jesus Christ assured his apostles (in the apparition he reports) that he would be or remain with them forever until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). And Luke contradicts himself because he says in his Gospel that he rose into heaven in the presence of his apostles at Bethany (24:50), but in his Acts of the Apostles (if we consider him the author as they say) he says that it was on the Mount of Olives (1:12). He contradicts himself about other circumstances as well because he testifies in his Gospel (24:29, 51) that he rose into heaven on the same day as the resurrection or the following night, but in his Acts (1:3) it was forty days after his resurrection, which certainly is conflicting.

If all the apostles had really seen their master rise into heaven, how is it that Matthew and John, who saw him rise up gloriously like the others, passed over such a glorious mystery in silence and spoke not a word about it, seeing that elsewhere they reported many other circumstances of his life much less remarkable than this?

And remarkably, how could Matthew have said that Jesus Christ assured his apostles when he appeared to them that he would be with them forever until the end of the age, if it were true that he saw him rise into heaven? If he really did see him rise into heaven, he should have, like a trustworthy historian, expressly mentioned this ascension; and not only expressly mentioned it, but also clearly explained how he would remain with them forever even though he visibly left them to rise into heaven because it is not easy to understand by what secret way he could have remained forever with those whom he left. However, this evangelist did not do either. This is what clearly shows that there is error and con-

tradiction in their so-called histories and, consequently, they are false and nothing but fables.

I will not mention the numerous other similar contradictions that are found in the so-called holy and divine books because it would be too long to record them all. What I have just said is enough to show clearly that these books do not come from any divine inspiration or even any real human wisdom and, consequently, they do not deserve any faith. But still, by what right do these four Gospels and other similar writings pass for holy and divine rather than the many others that have the name of "Gospel" like them or that were once published like them under the name of some other apostle? For, there are many other Gospels and other writings that formerly could have passed for canonical, I mean for divinely inspired, holy books, like the Gospel "according to the apostles," which St. Augustine talks about (*Contra Adimantum*, 1:7) and was accepted by the Manichaeans. Another of the Nazareans was "according to St. Peter," which Theodoret talks about (*Heretical Accounts*, 2). There was also "according to St. Andrew," "St. James," "St. Thomas," and "St. Matthias" that St. Innocent talks about (Letter 3) and St. Ambrose in his preface to the Gospel according to Luke. Another "according to the Egyptians" that Clement of Alexandria used (*Stromata*, 7, chap. 6). Another "according to the Hebrews" that again Theodoret talks about. Another "according to Judas Iscariot" (Theodoret, *Heretical Accounts*, 7), "Philip the Apostle," and "St. Bartholomew." And finally "according to St. Basilides" that St. Ambrose talks about and several other similar books that once could have passed for canonical and divine. By what right, I say, were these first four evangelists preferred to all the others? By what rule and what point of view? By what evidence do we know that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were really inspired by God when they wrote their Gospels? And that the other apostles were not when they wrote theirs?

If you say that the other Gospels were falsely attributed to the apostles whose names they bear, we would have the right to demand how and why we know that these four Gospels were not. Certainly if some of those apostles boasted falsely about being inspired by God when they wrote their Gospels, the others also could have boasted as falsely as their friends. And if certain of the Gospels were falsely attributed to apostles, the other four could have been in the same way. And finally, if certain of

the Gospels were falsified and corrupted so easily, the others could have been too. So, there is no decisive rule, proof, or evidence whereby we can distinguish the ones from the others.

But, you will say, it is the church itself that made this judgment and removed all doubt from the matter by declaring as it did in its council which books had been inspired by God and which not, accepting the former as authentic and rejecting the others as apocrypha. This is what they declared in the Third Council of Carthage under Pope Siricius, in the forty-seventh canon, around 397, where we read these words of the priests of the council: "It pleases us to ordain that only the canonical books under the name of 'Holy and Sacred Scriptures' will be read in the Church." Now, the canonical books, say these priests, are the following Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, etc. The same thing was sorted out, specified, and confirmed in the Council of Trent (Session 4), which drew up a catalogue of all the books that the church regards as holy and divine, pronouncing anathema on all who did not recognize them as such.

Indeed it is true that the church judged and decided in this way, but does this really mean that we can say and be persuaded that the books it chose and regards as holy and divine have truly been inspired by God? Especially in view of the fact that it supplied no proof or reason or evidence other than this: it pleased us, so we decided.

Who does not see that in all religions, all sects, and all societies men could just as easily make and fabricate similar so-called holy and divine books? They could without a doubt and, in fact, this is what they do. But as sensible people know that men can only make and fabricate false divinities, like the ones they all worship, they also know that they can only make and fabricate books that are falsely holy and divine or falsely inspired by God, like all the ones our Christ-cultists consider or want to make you consider divine.

So, it is in vain that they claim to take advantage of the authority that they themselves give to these books and to draw from them decisive proofs or evidence of the truth of their religion, since they carry in themselves no characteristic of divinity nor any extraordinary mark of human wisdom and they have no other authority but what they want to give them.

## 18. THE MIRACLES REPORTED ARE UNBELIEVABLE AND THE REASON WHY

I said that the so-called miracles reported in the so-called holy and divine books do not agree with what we should think of the grandeur, bounty, wisdom, and justice of an infinitely perfect being, and, consequently, that they were unbelievable in themselves. This is what I will make you see clearly enough.

We should not think of the grandeur, bounty, wisdom, and justice of an infinitely perfect being except what is appropriate for all these divine perfections. Now, for example, would it be appropriate for a sovereign bounty, wisdom, and justice to want to feed on flesh and blood through cruel and bloody sacrifices? Would it be appropriate to make an unjust and despicable exception of peoples? Would it be appropriate to want to cold-bloodedly and intentionally destroy some people and crush them with evils and miseries in order to favor others for nothing and to heap upon them all the goods? No, without a doubt, because these books that I am talking about, which are considered holy and divine among our Christ-cultists, expressly forbid all injustices and iniquities and especially all unjust exceptions of peoples (Deut. 1:17, Lev. 19:15).

The same books testify and expressly say in many places that there is no iniquity in God, that he makes no exception of anyone, and that he has no consideration for bribes: this is expressly marked in the so-called holy and sacred books (Deut. 10:17, 2 Chr. 19:7, Ecclesiasticus 35:16, Acts 10:34, Rom. 2:11, Gal. 2:6, Eph. 6:9, etc.).

These same holy and divine books say that God does not fear the grand and does not scorn the lowly, but cares equally for the both. They say that he loves all his creatures and he hates nothing of what he made (Wis. 6:8, 11:24). Indeed, if God were God, i.e., if there really were a God as our Christ-cultists understand and say, he would be equally the author of all his creatures, all men, and all peoples. He would be not only the god of the Jews or the god of the Greeks, but also the god of all people and all nations of the earth, and he would be the protector and benefactor of all people everywhere.

Now, the so-called miracles that are related in the so-called holy and divine books and particularly those in the Old Testament were done, according to them, only to make an unjust and despicable exception of persons and peoples on behalf of God and to destroy and overwhelm the others with evils and miseries, intentionally and in cold blood. For, this exception of persons and peoples favored over others is clearly seen in the so-called holy books of the Old Testament and especially in relating the calling and choice they say God made of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in order to make their posterity especially sanctified and blessed above all other peoples of the earth. For these books expressly say that God called the first of these patriarchs, Abraham, and promised to multiply and bless his posterity forever (Gen. 17:1; 13:16-17; 17:10; 15:18).

God repeated these same promises to the two other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, who were the first descendants of Abraham, and told them, according to the books, that he would make their posterity as numerous as the stars in the sky and the grains of sand of the sea. And he said he would bless them and love them and curse those who were their enemies. These promises were made many times on behalf of God himself (Gen. 12:1-3, 15, 18; 18:17; 26:4; 22:17; 28, etc.). They were even confirmed by the sworn oath of God (Gen. 22:16; Ps. 105:9; Heb. 6:13).

It is in consequence of all these lovely, so-called divine promises that the Jewish people, otherwise called the people of Israel, who were descended from these three patriarchs, are called in many places of these books "the chosen people," "the people of God," "the holy people," and "the blessed people" (Ex. 19:5; 23:20, 26; Deut. 7:5-7; 14:2).

You cannot deny that in such a choice there is a real exception of peoples on behalf of God, seeing that he chose only one above all others. And you cannot deny that there is injustice in such an exception, seeing that it was done only as a favor and not because they deserved it. And finally, you cannot deny that such an exception was or should have been despicable to all other people, seeing that it was a prejudice against them and strove for their utter desolation, ruin, and destruction.

Therefore, since it would not be appropriate for a sovereign bounty, wisdom, and justice to want to do any injustice or make a despicable exception of people, we should not think that an infinitely good and just god would ever have wanted to make such an exception of the Jewish

people to the prejudice of all other people of the earth or that he would have wanted to use his omnipotence to favor and confirm such an exception. And for this reason it seems clear enough that the so-called miracles they say were done for this are not at all believable.

You cannot claim to say here that it is not an injustice in God to choose some persons or entire peoples like this in preference to others since God, being the absolute master of his graces and blessings, can grant them as he wants and allocate them to whomever he wants without anyone having the right to complain or reproach or blame him for any injustice. You cannot allege such a vain reason, because if God really is the author of Nature and if he really is the author and father of all men and peoples, as our Christ-cultists say, then he should love them all equally as his own works and, consequently, he should be their equal protector and benefactor, since "he who gives being should also (according to the true maxim) give the necessary outcomes and effects for well-being," unless our Christ-cultists want to say that their god intentionally created some creatures to make them miserable and unhappy, which would certainly be disgraceful to think of an infinitely good being. Consequently, if it is a god who gave being to all through his divine benevolence and his good graces, he should also give well-being equally to all and, consequently, he should also favor all equally with his divine benevolence and his good graces without making any unjust and despicable exception of persons or peoples, as they claim he did in favor of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their posterity that is the Jewish people.

If you say that God indeed would love and favor all men and peoples equally if they equally deserved to be loved and favored with his graces and blessings, but since they do not all deserve this favor and, on the contrary, most men and peoples earn the disgrace and punishment of God through their vices and viciousness, we should not be surprised, you will say, if God loves some more than others and chooses some over others to communicate his favors more particularly, whereby there is no injustice in such an exception.

It is easy to respond to this that if all men and all peoples were equally the work of God, they would all be such as he made them and wanted to make them and, as such, they would have as much virtue, merit, and perfection as he wanted to give them. As a result, if he wanted

to give to some more virtue, merit, and perfection than to others to favor them more particularly with his graces and friendship, or, as St. Paul says, to display in them the richness of his grandeur and mercy like in vessels of predestination and benediction that he had destined for his glory (Rom. 9:23) and, on the other hand, to give others less virtue, merit, and perfection or even totally deprive them of all benefits in order to exclude them from his friendship and good graces or, as St. Paul says, to show in them the effects of his anger and power like in vessels of abjection and reprobation that he had destined to be eternally unhappy—it is clear that there would always be an unjust and despicable exception of people in this.

And as it is not appropriate to attribute an unjust and despicable exception of people to an infinitely perfect being, it surely follows that the miracles they suppose he did in consequence and in favor of such an exception do not agree with what we should consider the grandeur, bounty, wisdom, and justice of an infinitely perfect being and, consequently, these so-called miracles are not at all believable in themselves.

Moreover, as we should not think this would be appropriate for these divine perfections, so we should not think that a god who was infinitely perfect would particularly want to use his omnipotence to perform miracles on small occasions and for inconsequential matters and that he would not want to perform them on occasions and in matters that were much more important. For, it would not be appropriate for a sovereign wisdom to want to invest more in the accessory of a thing than its principle. It would not be appropriate for a sovereign justice to severely punish lesser faults and let great and abominable crimes go unpunished. And finally, it would not be appropriate for a sovereign bounty and wisdom not to want to be as good and kind to men in their most pressing needs as in their least, because it is sure and unquestionable that a sovereign bounty would render and show itself at least as good and beneficent in the most pressing needs as in the least. I say “at least” because it is in the most pressing needs that the bounty of an all-powerful and infinitely wise God could not fail to show itself to men.

Now, if the miracles that were reported in the so-called holy and divine books were real, we could truly say that God wanted to employ his omnipotence and wisdom especially in little things and he did not want to do anything in the greatest and most important things.

We could truly say that he took care to provide for the least good of men rather than for the greatest and principal good. We could truly say that he wanted to punish certain people more severely for trivial faults than others for very serious and wicked vices or crimes. And finally, we could truly say that he did not want to show himself as beneficent to men in their most pressing needs as in the least of their needs. This is easy to see by the miracles they claim were done as much as by those that were not done, which he very certainly would have done rather than any others, if it were true that he had ever done any.

First, as to the miracles they claim were done through Moses, his prophet, what do they consist of? Changing, for example, a rod into a serpent and back again? Changing water into blood? Bringing forth a great number of frogs? Of locusts? Of flies and other vile, harmful insects throughout a kingdom? Infecting animals with contagious disease? Bringing forth ugly ulcers on the bodies of men and beasts, laying waste, if you want to believe them, to an entire kingdom with hail and wild storms? And all this simply for the love and interest of the vile and miserable little people of Israel?

What else is there? Dividing the waters of the sea to make way for this vile little people who were fleeing and swallowing up in the waters the other people who were pursuing these runaways? Dropping manna from the sky to feed this people who were wandering for forty years in the desert? Bringing water out of a rock to slake their thirst? Bringing a prodigious multitude of quail from beyond the seas to satisfy the greed and sensuality of this people who wanted to eat flesh? Miraculously preventing the clothes and shoes of all these people from being worn away during the so-called forty years in the desert? And finally, in the days of Joshua, bringing down the walls of a city by the sound of a trumpet and stopping the sun in its course for an entire day to give them time to fight and conquer their enemies (*Jos. 6:4, 21; 10:13*)?

There you have it, the better part of these great and prodigious miracles of the Old Testament that they pretend to make such a big deal about.

But what is the point of all these lovely so-called miracles? For what reason do they claim that God performed them? It is for no other end but to deliver this vile little people of Israel from the servitude they suppose existed in Egypt and to bring them into possession of a country they claim God had promised to their fathers to give them.

There are too many examples to report here (cf. Gen. 16, 20:2–18, 19:1–14; Judges 13:2–7; 2 Kings 19:35; 1 Sam. 6:19), but it is easy to see in the Old Testament that God on occasion really wanted to use his omnipotence to do harm rather than good, seeing that these so-called miracles only tend to afflict people; ravage provinces, cities, and kingdoms; and destroy entire nations and armies. It is easy to see by these miracles that he took more care to provide for the bodily comfort of the Jewish people than for their veritable perfection, which would have been his greatest good since all the so-called miracles of Egypt were done only to bring them into possession of a foreign country without making them the wisest or the most perfect people in anything. For, although they were more favored by God than all other peoples, they did not become the wisest and most perfect or even the most grateful to their benefactor god, as the same books testify by the reproach they say Moses himself made: *Unto this day the Lord has not given you a heart that has intelligence, eyes that can see and ears that can hear* (Deut. 29:4). Yet, this spirit of understanding and wisdom would have been more appropriate and more advantageous for them than all the so-called great and prodigious miracles.

It is also easy to see by these miracles that God actually punished more severely certain individuals, and even innocent people, for trivial faults and even for faults these innocent people did not commit, than he did the wicked for very serious vices and very vicious crimes. For example, he very strictly punished a nation for the trivial fault that a king committed in making a census of his subjects through curiosity or vain-glory, and he punished the Bethsamites very severely for such a trivial fault while he allowed elsewhere and still allows every day a number of very vicious crimes to go unpunished.

Finally, it is easy to see by these miracles that he showed himself more beneficent on trivial occasions than he did on countless other occasions, incomparably more pressing and more important, seeing that he was, on the one hand, so good as to send an angel to console and help a simple servant, while he let, and still leaves every day, countless innocent people to languish and die in misery without help and without the assistance of anybody in their needs. And on the other hand, he took great care to miraculously preserve old clothes and shoes in their entirety for forty years, while he left, and still leaves every day, so many goods

and riches to perish in fires and shipwrecks or other detrimental accidents that happen so often in the world.

What? A sovereign bounty and wisdom, an infinitely perfect being would have wanted to miraculously preserve the clothes and shoes of a vile little people for forty years by preventing them from being worn away on their backs and feet? And it would not have wanted and still even today would not want to watch over the natural preservation of so many goods and riches that would have been or could be so useful and necessary for the subsistence of people and that were lost and are still lost every day in different kinds of detrimental accidents? And he would not have even preserved the most precious and richest ornaments of his temples or even the temples themselves when they were set on fire? These so-called miracles are not at all believable!

What? A sovereign bounty and wisdom, an infinitely perfect being would have intentionally sent his angels to preserve and keep from danger a few women, children, or other individuals? It would have sent angels to Tobit and other individuals to lead them in their travels? To keep them from danger and give them good counsel in their needs? And it would have sent a devil in the shape of a serpent to our first parents, to Adam and Eve, to seduce them? And thereby lose the entire human race? This is not at all believable!

What? It would have wanted, by a special grace of its providence, to prevent the king of Gerar from committing a slight offense with his foreign wife, a fault that would have been inconsequential and unimportant, and it would not have wanted to use this providence to prevent Adam and Eve from committing the sin of disobedience through the seduction of a devil, the chief enemy of all men, which fault, according to the Christ-cultists, was so deadly for all men and brought upon the fall of the entire human race? And it would not even now want to use this providence to prevent so many vicious and detestable crimes that are committed in the world? This is not believable! It is madness to say or even think such a thing!

It is said in these so-called holy books that God leads the righteous by right paths and he shows them the kingdom of God and gives knowledge of holy things, etc. (Wis. 10:10). What righteous men should he have led in this way if not the first leaders of the human race whom he had created, our Christ-cultists say, in justice and holiness? It would cer-

tainly have been the first righteous people whom he would have principally led on right paths and to whom he would have shown the kingdom of heaven and given sacred knowledge, since all the happiness and unhappiness of the human race depended on their good or bad conduct. Yet, this is what God did not do, seeing that the first leaders of the human race immediately fell into sin by the seduction of a vicious devil disguised as a serpent.

What more? A sovereign bounty and wisdom, an infinitely perfect and just God would have wanted to so severely punish the Bethsamites and innocent people in the time of David for slight offenses and even offenses they were innocent of? And he would have wanted and still every day today wants to let so many abominable crimes go unpunished? And so much abominable viciousness that was committed and still is committed every day in the world? This is not believable!

What? A sovereign bounty and wisdom, an infinitely perfect God would have wanted to choose a particular people to sanctify? To protect? To bless? And to use his omnipotence especially in their favor? And he would not have wanted to give them the spirit of kindness, understanding, and wisdom to know how to conduct and govern themselves well? Or even to know how to sufficiently recognize the graces and favors of their beneficent god? It is not believable!

What? An all-powerful and infinitely good god would have wanted to engrave with his finger the commandments of his law on tablets of stone? And he would not have wanted to engrave them internally on the hearts and minds of people to make them obey them with pleasure and love, although he had chosen these people to sanctify and heap with his graces and blessings? This is not at all believable!

What, finally? A sovereign bounty and wisdom, an infinitely perfect God would have wanted to harden the hearts and blind the spirit of kings and other powerful people in order to have an excuse to ruin and destroy them in favor of the miserable little people of Israel? It is unbelievable. Where is the bounty? Where is the wisdom? Where is the justice of an infinitely perfect being in such behavior? There certainly is not any—it is self-negating.

Now we come to the so-called miracles of the New Testament. These miracles, as they claim, consist primarily in Jesus Christ and his apostles miraculously healing all sorts of illnesses and disabilities: they

give, for example, whenever they want, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute; they make the lame walk straight, they heal the paralyzed, they chase demons from possessed bodies, they resurrect the dead. We see many of these so-called miracles in the Gospels, but we see an even greater number of other kinds of miraculous works in the books that our Christ-cultists wrote about the admirable lives of their so-called saints. For, we see in these lovely books, if we want to believe them, an almost infinite number of wholly miraculous and divine things done in all kinds of ways.

We see how they healed all kinds of illnesses and disabilities and chased away demons almost every time they met them using only the name of Jesus or the sign of the cross. They commanded the elements, so to speak, and they obeyed. They only had to speak and everything was done. God favored them so strongly with this sovereign power to perform miracles that he preserved it in them even after death, healing those who piously came to honor their tombs and bones and ashes. Furthermore, if we believe everything reported in these books, the power to perform miracles was passed on to the scraps of their clothing and even to the shadow of their bodies and to the most shameful instruments of their death and suffering. It is said, for example, that they carried the sick into the streets where St. Peter was about to pass so that his shadow might cover at least some of them so that they were delivered from their illness (Acts 5:15). It is said that his chains from the prison in Jerusalem performed many miracles. And what is not said about the wood of the cross on which Jesus was crucified! It is said that this cross was miraculously found three hundred years after his death among several other crosses on which thieves had been crucified with him by means of miracles, and even the resurrection of the dead whom they touched with it. It is said that they preciously preserved the wood of this cross and gave some pieces as precious relics to all the pilgrims who came to honor him in Jerusalem, yet it never diminished but remained always in its entirety as if nothing had been removed, which is, say our Christ-cultists, absolutely miraculous since we see all over the world so many pieces of this so-called true cross that if we were to put all of them together we would have enough to make a lot of really huge crosses. See May 3 in the *Lives of the Saints*.

It is said in the *Lives of the Saints* that the sock of St. Honoratus res-

urrected a dead man (Jan. 6). The staffs of St. Peter, St. James, and St. Bernard worked miracles, as also the cord of St. Francis, the staff of St. John of God, and the belt of St. Melanie. It is said that St. Gracilien was divinely instructed about what he should believe and teach and by the power and dignity of his prayer he moved back a mountain that was in the way of a church being built. It is said that St. Homobonus changed water into wine and that the doors of the church opened by themselves when he came. It is said that the tomb of St. Andrew constantly poured out a liquor that healed all kinds of sicknesses; that the soul of St. Benedict was seen rising to heaven dressed in a precious robe and surrounded by burning lamps. When St. Christopher drove his staff into the ground it grew green again and blossomed into a tree. When Pope St. Clement was thrown into the sea with an anchor around his neck he died, but angels built a chapel at the bottom of the sea. When St. John of Damascus had his hand cut off it miraculously grew back as good as new. St. Dominic said that God never rejected anything he asked of him. Saints Ferreolus and Ferrutio spoke after their tongues had been cut out. The body of St. Etheidreda was found whole one hundred years after her death; that of St. Theresa stayed always uncorrupted and they dressed and undressed it as if it were alive, it even remained standing up with almost no support. They say the same about the body of St. Rose of Viterbo.

It is said that everyone who drank the water where St. Godelina drowned was healed of their sickness. When St. Hedwig was praying before a crucifix it raised its hand and blessed her, thus assuring her that it would answer her prayer. Likewise, when the Angelical Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, was praying at Naples, a crucifix spoke to him several times, saying, "He wrote well about me." St. Idelfonsus of Toledo miraculously received from heaven a beautiful white tunic that the Virgin Mary gave him for having defended so well the belief in her virginity. St. Andrew also received a beautiful cope from heaven. It is said that St. Laurence and many other saints healed the blind and other infirm only by making the sign of the cross. After St. Lucian was beheaded his body got up and carried his head more than half a league to Beauvais and they were afterward miraculously joined together. The image in Notre Dame of Liesse was miraculously made and sent from heaven by angels. St. Mellon resurrected a sheep that had been inadvertently killed by its

master. It is also said that he changed water into wine and a pebble into bread and worked many other miracles. When St. Paul and St. Pantaleon had their heads cut off they bled milk instead of blood. It is said in the life of Peter of Luxemburg that in the first two years after his death (1388 and 1389) he worked 2,400 miracles among which were 48 resurrections, not counting more than 3,000 other miracles he worked afterward and still does today. When the five hundred philosophers whom St. Catherine converted were thrown into the fire, their bodies were later found unharmed and not a single hair was burned. And it is said that St. Catherine's body was taken by angels after her death and buried by them on Mount Sinai.

It is said that when St. Quentin was beheaded they threw his body on one side of the river Somme and his head on the other, and they were miraculously found fifty years later put back together. When St. Regina was beheaded her soul was carried to heaven by the angels in view of everyone and a pigeon placed a precious crown on her head. St. Vincent Ferrer resurrected a dead man who had been hacked to pieces, parts of which were half roasted. It is said that his coat had the power to chase away devils and heal all kinds of sicknesses. St. Julian of Le Mans made baskets that had the power to heal the sicknesses of those who handled them. When St. Ivo was going to preach one day and found a broken bridge that he had to cross, he made the sign of the cross over the waters and they immediately parted for him to go through, coming back together again when he had passed. The old men who had honorably buried the body of St. Julian of Brioude immediately recovered the force and vigor of their blooming youth. On the day of the canonization of St. Anthony of Padua, all the clocks in Lisbon sounded by themselves without anybody knowing where it came from. When this saint went to the sea one day to preach, the fish all came to him in crowds, stuck their heads above water, and listened to him attentively.

It is said that St. Francis performed countless miracles during his life and after his death. They say he chased many devils from possessed bodies, he made the blind see, healed the lame and afflicted, resurrected the dead, gave children to barren women. The bread that this saint blessed, the scraps of his patched-up clothes, the cord that he used as a belt, the water in which he washed his hands and feet, in short everything he touched worked as a cure and relief for sickness and misfortune.

He spoke familiarly with animals like they were people and called them all "his brothers and sisters," and they obeyed everything he told them to do. Just look at the ewe and the cicada whom he called "his sisters" and the birds whom he called "his brothers" to whom he preached as if they understood what he was telling them. His corpse always remained upright on his feet without support from either side; his eyes open like a man with full sight, looking up to heaven. Likewise, they say his corpse was healthy and whole, uncorrupted, beautiful, and ruddy as if he were still alive.

It is also said that God favored St. Francis of Paulo with such an abundance of graces that he seemed to be lord of all creatures, who entirely obeyed him: fire, air, water, earth, sickness, death, animals, men, and devils submitted to the will of this holy person. They say he freed many possessed people, made the blind see, the mute speak, healed the incurably sick, resurrected the dead. The elements themselves obeyed him. Fire lost its force against him: he walked on it and held it in his hands without being burned; he walked into a burning furnace and extinguished the flames that dared not touch him. He crossed the sea of Calabria to Sicily with a friend on his robe that he had stretched out on the water to act as a steady boat. He also had the gift of prophecy and worked countless other miracles that would be too long to report here.

There is no subject so vain and frivolous and even so ridiculous that the authors of the *Lives of the Saints* do not take pleasure in forging and heaping miracle upon miracle on it, being such skillful forgers of such beautiful lies.

Here is how a sensible author spoke about these pious and fabulous stories of the lives of the saints. Our Christ-cultists cannot doubt his authority because he was one of them in their so-called holy, apostolic, Catholic and Roman religion:

All historians, except those who are perfectly heroic, never report to us pure things but bend them and disguise them to get what they want from them and to give credit to their judgment and attract others to it, freely borrowing something here or there, extending and amplifying it, biased and masking it as they want. Experience teaches us that almost all histories over the last seven or eight centuries (the more ancient they are, the more we see it) have been so crude and bloated with lies that it seems that their authors were competing to see who would win the

prize for fabricating more lies. It is unquestionable that all our old novels originated from the pipe dreams of the bishop of Turpin, the Salvation of Trajan, Jean Levite, and the opinion that Virgil was a sorcerer from the monk Helinand. The fact that people are so easily and quickly led to believe all things and all kinds of lies has given rise to the composition of a great number of fabulous stories, one after another, because the stupidity and folly of men has gone so far, as Agobard the bishop of Lyon said in 833, that there is now nothing too absurd or ridiculous for Christians to believe more easily than the pagans ever did in their errors and idolatries. Thus, we can say that all the ridiculous histories, all the stories fabricated at will, and all the obvious falsities that the authors so easily slipped into their books turn against them and, what is worse, they turn scornfully against the truth of the matter when some curious minds examine them on a whim with more diligence and caution than they were written. All the heretics we have seen in the last hundred years use our own stories as arms against us, like the Golden Legend; the Lives of the Saints; the Vision of Tundale; the Sermons of Maillard, Menot, and Barlette; and other similar pieces written with as much superstition as simplicity to uphold their opinion that they nullify and falsify our miracles. (*Gabriel Naudé, Defense of Great Men Falsely Accused of Magic*)

## 19. ACCORDANCE OF THE SO-CALLED MIRACLES OF CHRISTIANITY WITH THE SO-CALLED MIRACLES OF PAGANISM

**I**t is not without reason, in fact, that one can consider all these so-called miracles falsities and lies because it is easy to see that they were only invented in imitation of the fables and fictions of pagan poets. This is seen clearly enough in the accordance there is between the two. If our Christ-cultists say, for example, that God gave to his saints the power to perform all these miracles that are related in their *Lives*, so also did the pagans and idolaters say that the daughters of Onius, i.e., Kronos, grandfather of Apollo, had really received from the god Bacchus the favor and power to change everything they wanted into wheat, wine, oil, etc.

Likewise, they say that Jupiter really gave to the nymphs who raised him a horn of the goat that had nursed him in his infancy, which had the power to supply them plentifully with whatever they desired. Are not these lovely miracles? If our Christ-cultists say that their so-called saints resurrected the dead and had divine revelations, so likewise had the pagans already said the same thing of Aithalides, son of Mercury, who got from his father the gift of the power of life, death, and resurrection and also had knowledge of everything that was done in this world and the other.

Likewise they said that Asclepius, son of Apollo, resurrected the dead, including Hyppolitus, son of Theseus, at the behest of Diana, and that Hercules resurrected Alcestis, wife of Admetus, king of Thessaly, to bring her to her husband.

If our Christ-cultists say that their Jesus Christ was born miraculously from a virgin who had known no man, likewise the pagans had already said that Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, were miraculously born of a vestal virgin named Ilia, Sylvia, or Rhea Sylvia. They had already said that Mars, Vulcan, Argus, and others were born of Juno who had no knowledge of men; they had already said that Min-

erva, goddess of the sciences, was born from the brain of Jupiter and emerged armed to the teeth when he punched himself in the head.

If our Christ-cultists say that their saints made fountains of water spring from rocks, likewise the pagans had already said that Minerva made a fountain of oil spring forth as a reward for a temple dedicated to her.

If our Christ-cultists boast of having miraculously received images and other presents from heaven, like at Notre Dame of Lorette and Liesse or like the so-called holy flask at Reims, etc., so too had the pagans boasted of having received from heaven a sacred shield as a sign of preservation for Rome, and the Trojans miraculously received from heaven their Palladium, their statue of Pallas that took its place, they said, in the temple dedicated in her honor.

If our Christ-cultists say that their Jesus Christ was seen by his apostles to rise up gloriously into heaven and that many souls of their so-called saints were seen gloriously carried away into heaven by the angels, so too had the Roman pagans already said that Romulus, their founder, was seen in all his glory after death. Likewise they say that Ganymede, son of Tros, king of Troy, was carried away by Jupiter into heaven to be his cupbearer; they also say that the hair of Berenice was consecrated in the temple of Venus and afterward carried away into heaven; so too about Cassiopeia and Andromeda and even about the ass of Silene.

If our Christ-cultists say that many saints' bodies were miraculously kept uncorrupted after their death and discovered by divine revelations after they had been long lost, the pagans said the same thing about the body of Orestes, which was miraculously found through an oracle.

If the seven sleeping brothers miraculously slept for 177 years shut up in a cave, so also did Epimenides the philosopher sleep for 57 years in a cave.

If many saints miraculously spoke after their tongues or heads were cut off, so also did the head of Gabienus sing a long poem after it had been severed from his body.

If our Christ-cultists brag about their temples and churches being decorated with many paintings and precious gifts that demonstrate the miraculous cures that were done through the intercession of their saints, we also see, or at least we once saw, in the temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus a great number of paintings and precious gifts that demonstrate the miraculous cures done through this god's invocation.

If our Christ-cultists say that many saints were miraculously pre-

served in burning flames without suffering any damage to their bodies or clothes, likewise the pagans said that the priests of the temple of Diana walked barefoot on burning coals without being burned or hurting their feet; they say the same thing about the priests of Feronia and of the Hyperions, who did it in honor of Apollo.

If the angels built a chapel to St. Clement at the bottom of the sea as our Christ-cultists say, the pagans also said that the cottage of Baucis and Philemon was miraculously changed into a magnificent temple as a reward for their piety.

If our Christ-cultists brag about having their saints as protectors and that many of them, like St. James, St. Maurice, etc., appeared in their armies many times, fully armed on horseback, fighting on their side against their enemies, the pagans had also said before them that Castor and Pollux had appeared many times in battle fighting for the Romans.

If a ram was miraculously found in place of Isaac when Abraham wanted to sacrifice him, so also did the goddess Vesta miraculously send a cow to be sacrificed in place of Metella, daughter of Metellus. Likewise the goddess Diana sent a doe in place of Iphigenia when she was on the stake to be immolated, whereby Iphigenia was miraculously delivered.

If St. Joseph fled to Egypt at the warning of an angel from heaven, so also did Semonides the poet escape many mortal dangers at the miraculous warnings given to him.

If Moses made water spring from a rock by striking it with his rod, Pegasus the horse did as much when he struck a rock with his hoof and a fountain sprang up.

If St. Vincent Ferrer resurrected a dead man who had been hacked to pieces and half roasted, so also Pelops, son of Tantalus, king of Phrygia, after he had been cut to pieces by his father to be served up in a stew to the gods who recognized this barbarous cruelty of a father toward his son, was all gathered together, put back together, and given his life back.

If many of their crucifixes and other holy images miraculously spoke, so also did the pagan oracles divinely speak. The head of Orpheus and also of Polycrates gave oracles after their death.

If God announced with a voice from heaven that Jesus Christ was his son, as our evangelists say, so the pagans said that Vulcan showed that Coeculus was really his son with the apparition of a miraculous flame.

If our Christ-cultists say that God had sometimes miraculously fed some of his saints, likewise the poets said that Triptolemus was miraculously fed with the divine milk of Ceres, who also gave him a chariot harnessed to two dragons. So too they say that Phiceus [Aphneios], son of Mars, coming out of the belly of his dead mother, miraculously fed on her milk.

If our Christ-cultists say that many of their saints miraculously soothed the cruelty and ferocity of the cruellest and most ferocious beasts, the pagans also say that Orpheus, through the gentleness of his song and the harmony of his instruments, lured lions, bears, and tigers and soothed the ferocity of these cruellest and most ferocious beasts by the gentleness of his harmony. Likewise they say that he lured rocks and trees, and even rivers stopped in their course to listen to him sing.

Finally—to cut this short and pass over in silence a great many other similar examples I could report—if our Christ-cultists say that the walls of Jericho miraculously fell to the ground at the sound of the besiegers' trumpets, so did the pagans say something even more marvelous, for they said that the walls of Thebes were built by the harmonious sound of the musical instruments touched by Amphion, which is certainly even more marvelous and more admirable than only to see the walls fall.

There is certainly a very strong accordance of miracles on both sides, i.e., our Christ-cultists and the pagans. There is certainly no more semblance of truth on either side and since it would be a very great stupidity to put faith now in the so-called miracles of paganism, so likewise is it a very great stupidity to put faith in those of Christianity, seeing that they both come from the same principle of errors, illusions, lies, and impostures.

That is why the Manichaeans and Aryans, who existed around the beginning of Christianity, mocked these so-called miracles performed at the invocation of saints and reproached anyone invoking them after their death or honoring their relics. It very well seems that Fenelon, archbishop of Cambrai, did not care much about these so-called miracles and did not put much faith in them since he did not deign to say a word about them in his book *On the Existence of God*. As this writer claimed to give in this book the strongest proofs that could be given of the existence of God and he did not once speak about them (which would have been one of the strongest proofs if these miracles were really true), this

is surely a clear enough indication that he did not care much about them or put much faith in everything they say about them. And so the proof that our Christ-cultists claim to take from these so-called miracles to show the truth of their religion is but a very feeble proof.

## 20. NEITHER ONE IS MORE CREDIBLE THAN THE OTHER

**B**ut, to discover even better the vanity, falsity, and absurdity of these so-called miracles of Christianity, let us examine them a little more closely and see if they answer to the principal end that a sovereign bounty, wisdom, and power would intend in doing them and if it is believable that an infinitely good and wise god would have wanted to limit himself only to doing such a slight thing as performing such miracles in favor of men whom he wanted to redeem at the price of his blood!

But to judge well we have to always keep in mind what our Christ-cultists themselves claim as the principal foundation of all their doctrine and religion, because it is on this foundation that we must now reason in order to judge soundly if their so-called miracles truly answer to the principal end that their god and their divine savior Jesus Christ would have intended in becoming man, and if it is believable that he would have wanted to confine himself only to doing such miracles. For, if these so-called miracles do not answer perfectly to the principal end that an infinitely good and wise god would have intended, it is not believable that he did them or that they would have been done by the omnipotence of a god.

Now, here is the principal foundation of the whole doctrine, belief, and religion of our Christ-cultists: they claim that their divine Jesus Christ, whom they call "their divine Savior," is an all-powerful god, eternal son of an all-powerful god, who by excess of his love and of his infinite kindness for men wanted to become a man like them, to redeem and to save them all, i.e., to deliver them all from sin and the eternal damnation that they say all men have earned by their sins, particularly by the sin of their first father, Adam; and not only to deliver all men from their sins and from eternal damnation, but also to make perfect peace with them and restore them all to the grace of God, his all-powerful father, and, moreover, to get for them all, after this life, eternal happiness and beatitude in heaven. And this is what our Christ-cultists say their divine Jesus Christ really did in giving his life for all men and dying

shamefully, as he did, on a cross for their salvation. (Cf. John 1:29, 3:17; 10:11; Matt. 18:11; Titus 2:12; Eph. 5:15-27.) That is why we sing every day in our so-called holy mysteries these lovely words as a symbol of our faith, *who for love of us men and for love of our salvation came down from heaven* (Credo), and *you who took away the sins of the world, hear our prayer* (Gloria).

Being so, it is obvious that the principal end that their god and their divine savior Jesus Christ intended, the one in sending his divine son into the world and the other in becoming man like other men, their principal end was to save the world and for this to remove the sin of the world and to entirely destroy the works of the devil, i.e., to entirely remove all vices, malice, iniquities, and viciousness. Moreover, their principal end was to sanctify a people in order that they be without stain or wrinkle, i.e., without any vice or fault. And finally the principal end or intention of Jesus Christ and of God, his all-powerful father, as is so clearly shown in all their so-called holy books, was to save souls and to deliver them happily from the unhappy state of sin, redeeming them from eternal damnation and getting for them an eternal, happy life in heaven. Our Christ-cultists cannot deny that these are the principal ends that their God and their divine savior Jesus Christ intended in becoming a man like them and wanting to die, as they say, for love of them.

Now, we see absolutely no effect or even any real appearance of this so-called redemption of man, we see no appearance that sin is in any way removed from the world, as it should be, or even that it is in any way diminished. On the contrary, it would seem rather that it has increased and multiplied and that it will continue to multiply every day, since men become every day more and more vicious and mean and the world is flooded with vices and iniquity. We do not even see that our Christ-cultists can boast of being holier, wiser, more virtuous, or well ordered in their manners and morals than other peoples of the earth. And finally, we do not see any appearance that there are more saved souls and fewer damned than there used to be by this so-called redemption, since there are not more people taking the road to heaven and fewer taking the road to hell—if, nevertheless, we understand that vice is the road to hell and virtue is truly the road to heaven, as our Christ-cultists say.

So, it is clear that the so-called miracles in no way answer to the principal end that the sovereign kindness and wisdom of an all-powerful god

would have intended in doing them, and it is not at all believable that a god who would have wanted to become man to save all men would have wanted to limit himself to doing only such miracles as these without doing the principal one for which, through an excess of love, he would have wanted to do in becoming man.

What? An all-powerful, infinitely good and wise god who wanted to be made mortal man for the love, even an excess of love, of men and wanted to spill out his blood unto the last drop to save them, would have wanted to limit himself and his bounty, wisdom, and omnipotence only to healing some sicknesses or infirmities of the body and only for the few people who happened to be present? And he would not have wanted to use his omnipotence, bounty, and sovereign wisdom to heal all men of the sicknesses and infirmities of their souls? I.e., that he would not have wanted to heal and deliver all men from all their vices and all their wickedness, which are a thousand times worse than the sicknesses of their bodies? This is not believable.

What? An all-powerful god, so good and so wise, would have wanted to miraculously preserve dead bodies from decay and corruption and he would not have wanted to use his omnipotence and wisdom to preserve from the contagion and corruption of vice and sin the countless souls he had come to redeem at the price of his blood and to sanctify with his graces? This is not at all believable.

What? An all-powerful god, so good and so wise, would have wanted to miraculously give sight to some blind people, hearing to some deaf, speech to some mute, to make some lame walk, and heal some paralyzed? And he would not have wanted to enlighten all sinners with the lights of his grace? Or to really take them away from errors and the confusion of their vices to bring them happily onto the road of virtue and make them walk straight in the way of his divine commandments? This is not at all believable.

What? An all-powerful god, so good and so wise, would have wanted, by a particular favor, to resurrect some dead only to put them back for a short time into a mortal life, full of miseries? And he would not have wanted to take away from the eternal death of sin countless souls whom he had created for heaven, whom he had come to redeem at the price of his blood, and whom he should have sanctified with his grace? This is not at all believable!

What? An all-powerful god, so good and so wise, would have wanted to miraculously save a few people from shipwrecks in the seas or rivers? And he would not have wanted to save from the shipwrecks of hell countless souls who haplessly fall into it every day, according to what our Christ-cultists say? This is not at all believable!

What? An all-powerful god, so good and so wise, would have wanted, by a special grace, to preserve the bodies of some saints and even their scraps of clothing and their hair from being damaged by fire, and he would not have wanted and still even today does not want to preserve countless souls from the dreadful and eternal flames of hell? This is not at all believable because, as their apostle St. Paul said (Rom. 8:32), if God did not spare his own son whom he gave to all men for their salvation, how could he not have given all other things necessary for them? And if this so-called divine son of God had wanted to give his life for the salvation of men, how could he then refuse them any grace or good?

What? He would have wanted, through an excess of love, to die for the salvation of all men and he would not have wanted to favor them with just a thimbleful of grace? This cannot be!

What again? An all-powerful god would have wanted to miraculously sound the bells of some clocks in one city or another to honor some death or burial? He would have wanted to use his omnipotence to miraculously feed a few thousand people with a few pieces of bread and fish and to miraculously attract some wild beasts, birds, and even fish to come to listen to some saints' preaching?

And finally (to be brief), he would have wanted to use his omnipotence in thousands and thousands of other frivolous ways and on lesser occasions to change the order and normal course of Nature and he would not have wanted and still today does not want to do anything in particular to effectively bring about and procure the conversion, sanctification, and eternal salvation of so many thousands, even millions of sinners who would praise and bless him eternally in heaven if he wanted to favor them with just a thimbleful of grace, i.e., if he only wanted to benignly touch their hearts and to charitably open their minds to make them know and love their true god?

It is not believable that an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise god would have wanted to do this to men whom he loved so much that he wanted to give his blood and his life for them. It is not believable that

he would have ever wanted to neglect his principal plan in order to attach himself only to some lesser accessories like these so-called miraculous healings of a few bodily disabilities or other similar so-called miracles, which are only of very minor consequence in comparison with the principal one, which was the total destruction of sin and the salvation of all men.

Did he not come to heal all men from all the sicknesses and disabilities of their souls as well as of their bodies? Did he not come to deliver them all from the slavery of vice and sin? Did he not come to make them all wise and virtuous and to sanctify them all, seeing that he came primarily to redeem and save them all?

This so-called divine savior testified one day that he had compassion for his followers because they did not have anything to eat (Mark 8:2). And to keep them from danger, say our Christ-cultists, he wanted to work a miracle of his omnipotence by miraculously multiplying bread to feed them all and prevent them from falling weak on the road. And he did not want and still today does not want to perform similar miracles of his omnipotence to sanctify and save all sinners? He saw their weakness and infirmity every day and he did not want to strengthen them with the potent help of his all-powerful grace to prevent them from falling into vice and sin? He saw them fall every day by the thousands into the dreadful flames of a hapless hell and he did not have compassion for their fall, as terrible and dreadful as it was? This is not at all believable and it is disgraceful even to have this thought of an infinitely good and wise being.

Therefore, the first of his miracles, the greatest and most glorious for him and at the same time the most necessary and the most advantageous for men, whom he came to redeem, would certainly have been to really cure them of all the sicknesses and disabilities of their souls, which are the vices and vicious passions. The first, the most beautiful and the most admirable of his miracles, would have been to make men virtuous, wise, and perfect in body and mind. The first and the principal of his miracles would have been to remove and completely banish from the world all vices, sins, injustices, iniquities, and wickedness. The first and the best would have been to truly sanctify all men and to really save them, in making them all perfectly happy on earth or in heaven. This, gentlemen Christ-cultists, was certainly the first, the best, the greatest, the most

glorious, the most advantageous, the primary, and the most necessary of all the miracles that your so-called divine savior would have done, since it was for this very reason that he would have descended from heaven and come into the world, as he himself said: *When I am lifted from earth, I will draw all men to me* (John 12:32).

But, as it is clear and entirely certain that he did not do these kinds of miracles, there is no reason to believe that he or his apostles or his so-called saints really did any of the other miracles they talk so much about.

And so it is in vain that our Christ-cultists claim to prove the truth of their religion by the certainty of their so-called miracles, which are really, as I said, only errors, illusions, lies, and impostures. Everything I just said shows this clearly enough so as to have no more doubt, and this is the second conclusive proof of what I proposed above concerning the vanity and falsity of all religions.

## 21. THIRD PROOF: OF THE VANITY AND FALSITY OF RELIGIONS, DRAWN FROM THE VANITY AND FALSITY OF THE SO-CALLED VISIONS AND DIVINE REVELATIONS

We come to the third proof and the so-called visions and divine revelations on which our Christ-cultists claim to base and establish the truth and certitude of their religion. To give a fair and truthful idea of these so-called visions and divine revelations, I do not think I can do better than to say in general that if someone today dared to brag about having similar visions and divine revelations, we would surely look upon him as a fool, a lunatic, or a fanatic madman.

God appeared and spoke to Abraham (Gen. 12:1; 15:17–18; 17:1ff; 22:17–18) and Isaac (Gen. 26:2, 24) and Jacob (Gen. 28:11–22; 31:12; 32:24–28).

Now, what appearance of divinity is there in these vulgar dreams and vain illusions? If some rude, redneck hillbilly or country bumpkin, like that Jacob in the Old Testament, came to tell us that he had made an agreement with his father-in-law or some other individual to guard their flocks on the condition that all the fruits that came from them and could be found of various colors would be his as a reward for his service, and as evidence that God wanted to favor him in particular and to get for him a plentiful reward for his service, God appeared to him in a dream and spoke to him and told him all these things (*I am the God who appeared to you already in Bethel, in such a place, I saw the deceit and injustice that they did to you; you will not be cheated of your reward, I will accomplish your desires; look and see how the males of the flock mate with the females, they will bring forth for you all their fruits of various colors and thus your reward will be great*)—if, I say, somebody came today to tell us this nonsense and that he really believed he had some vision and divine revelation, we would certainly look upon him as a fool, a lunatic, or an idiot. And if this same person went on and told us that he had met some stranger during the night with whom he had to fight and that when this stranger

could not conquer him he said that he was fighting against God, and if in such a vision this man saw this imaginary victory as a divine presage and pledge of the victorious force with which he would someday fight against his enemies, would not we laugh at the silly imagination of this poor man? We certainly would do nothing but laugh.

Likewise, if some foreigners—Germans, for example, or Swiss—came into France and saw all the beautiful provinces of the realm and said that God had appeared to them in their country and told them to leave and end up in France and that he would give them and all their descendants forever all the beautiful lands, municipalities, and provinces of the realm that exist from the great rivers of the Rhine and Rhone to the Atlantic Sea, and that he made an eternal alliance with them and with all their descendants that he would multiply their race, make their posterity as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand of the sea, and, finally, that it would be in them that God would bless all the nations of the earth and that as a mark of this eternal alliance with them and all their descendants he had ordered them to be circumcised and to circumcise all the male children who were born—now, who is there who would not laugh at such nonsense and look upon these foreigners as fools, lunatics, and fanatic madmen? There is certainly no one who would not look upon them as such and who would not laugh and make fun of all the lovely visions and all the lovely so-called divine revelations.

Now, that is a true image of the visions and divine revelations that those good old patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had or believed they had. There is no reason to judge differently or to think more favorably of what they said concerning their so-called visions and divine revelations than of what foreigners would say in a similar case today. And it is certain that if those three good patriarchs came back now to tell us themselves that they had had such visions and divine revelations, today we would only laugh and certainly not hesitate to look upon all of them as nothing but errors and illusions, or as lies and impostures.

I say “errors and illusions” if these people seemed to us to really believe that they had such visions and revelations, and in this case we will regard them as lunatics and feeble-minded. But, we will regard them as liars, swindlers, and charlatans if we judge them differently from their personalities and their intentions.

But whether these patriarchs had planned to deceive others or they

themselves were first deceived, it is easy to find the vanity and falsity of all their so-called visions and divine revelations: it is already found clearly enough in the unjust and despicable exception of persons and peoples that I talked about before and in favor of which they claim these revelations were made, because it is not believable that an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise god would ever have wanted or ever want to do or authorize such an unjust and despicable thing as this exception. But again the vanity and falsity of the so-called visions and divine revelations are found clearly enough in three different places:

1—In that vile, ridiculous, despicable, and shameful mark of the so-called alliance that God made with men,

2—By the cruel and barbaric institution of bloody sacrifices of innocent beasts that Moses attributed to this same God, and especially by the cruel and barbaric commandment that God is supposed to have made to Abraham to sacrifice his son,

3—By the obvious failure to accomplish the lovely and advantageous promises that God is supposed to have made to the three patriarchs.

That the mark of this so-called divine alliance was absolutely vile, despicable, and ridiculous; that the institution of bloody sacrifices of innocent beasts was cruel and barbaric, like the commandment to a father to sacrifice his son; and finally that the great, magnificent, and advantageous so-called promises made by God to the patriarchs were without effects and without accomplishment and never have been accomplished—these are all unquestionable and clear proofs of the vanity and falsity of all the so-called visions and divine revelations.

First, as to the mark of this so-called alliance of God with the patriarchs and all their descendants, it is obviously ridiculous and despicable since it consists of a vain and ridiculous cutting off of flesh and skin in the most private part of the human body. What? An all-powerful and infinitely wise god would amuse himself in wanting to make all men bear the mark of his alliance in the most private part of their body? And he would want to make this mark consist of such a vain and ridiculous cutting off of skin and flesh? This is not at all believable. If an all-powerful god really wanted to choose a people in particular and to make them bear a mark of his alliance on their body, he undoubtedly would have chosen a worthier, more suitable, and more honorable mark than this! He undoubtedly would also have placed it in a better, more important,

and more visible part of the body in order to make his people more beautiful, perfect, honorable, and eminent than all other people by this particular gratification of his kindness. But no, he wanted to choose such a vain and vile mark as this and he wanted to place it in the most private part of the body? This is unworthy of the grandeur, wisdom, and sovereign majesty of a god and it is disgraceful to think that he ever would have wanted to do this.

## 22. MADNESS OF MEN TO ATTRIBUTE TO GOD THE INSTITUTION OF CRUEL AND BARBARIC SACRIFICES OF INNOCENT BEASTS AND TO BELIEVE THAT THESE KINDS OF SACRIFICES WERE PLEASING TO HIM

**S**econd, with respect to the institution of bloody sacrifices of innocent beasts, the so-called holy books, which contain these revelations, clearly attribute it to God, just like the institution of altars and the consecration of priests to offer to him the sacrifices on these altars. These same books and so-called divine revelations say that God commanded the priests to pour out around his altar the blood of the animals offered as a sacrifice to him; to skin the animals, cut them in pieces, and burn their flesh on the altar; and God promised, on his part, to be pleased, even very pleased with the smell of the smoke of the victims that they offered to him in this way. (Cf. Gen. 8:20; Ex. 25:2, 8, 27:1, 29:1-39; Lev. 1:1-12, 14:15-21, 5:15; Num. 15:1-12.)

All this evidence from the so-called Holy Scriptures and from the so-called divine revelations expressly and clearly says that the bloody sacrifices of innocent beasts that men perform were a divine institution, at least in the Jewish law, and were, at least at one time, very pleasing to God. Now, how can we imagine and be persuaded that a god who was infinitely perfect, good, and wise would ever have wanted to establish and authorize such cruel and barbaric sacrifices? I say “such cruel and barbaric sacrifices” because it is cruelty and barbarism to kill, bludgeon, and cut the throats of animals who do no harm, since they are sensitive to injury and pain as much as we are, despite what our new Cartesians vainly, falsely, and ridiculously say. They consider them pure machines without souls and without feeling, and for this reason and on the vain argument of the nature of thought, which they claim material things are incapable of, they say that animals are entirely deprived of all knowledge and all feelings of pleasure and pain.

Ridiculous opinion, pernicious maxim, and detestable doctrine,

seeing that it obviously tends to stifle in the heart of man all feelings of kindness, gentleness, and humanity that they could have for these poor animals and leads them to have fun and pleasure in tormenting them and tyrannizing them without pity, on the pretext that they have no more feeling of pain than machines that they throw in the fire or break into a thousand pieces. This is obviously a detestable cruelty toward these poor animals who are alive and mortal like us, made of flesh, blood, and bone, who have all the organs of life and feeling: eyes to see, ears to hear, nostrils to sniff and distinguish odors, a tongue and a palate in the mouth to distinguish the taste of meat and food that is good or not for them, and they have feet to walk, and, moreover, since we see in them all the signs and all the effects of the passions that we feel in ourselves, we must undoubtedly believe as well that they are as sensitive as we are to good and evil, i.e., to pleasure and pain. They are our pets and faithful companions in life and work, and for this we must treat them with gentleness.

Blessed be the nations who treat them humanely and favorably, and who take pity on their misery and pain. But, cursed be the nations who treat them cruelly, who tyrannize them, who love to spill their blood and who are hungry for their flesh.

It is said somewhere in the "Apocrypha" of our Christ-cultists that *in the beginning a certain grain of bad seed had been sown in the heart of Adam* (Esdras 4:30). It seems, in fact, that this grain of bad seed can still be found today in the hearts of all men and that it is this bad seed of viciousness that makes them still take pleasure every day in hurting and exercising their cruelty, as they do, on these poor, sweet, and innocent beasts, tyrannizing them, killing them, bludgeoning them, and slitting their throats without pity, as they do every day, to have the pleasure of eating their flesh.

For me, although I feel in myself the bad impressions or the bad effects of this cursed grain of bad seed, nevertheless, I can say I have never done anything with so much repugnance as when on certain occasions I had to cut or make someone else cut the throat of some chicken or pigeon or make someone kill a pig.

I declare that I have never done this except with a great deal of repugnance and with extreme disgust, and if ever I had been even a little superstitious or inclined to the bigotry of religion, I would have surely

joined the party of those who make it a religion to never kill innocent beasts and never eat their flesh.

I even hate to see butcher shops and butchers. And I have never been able to think without horror of that abominable carnage and sacrifice of innocent beasts that King Solomon made to dedicate his temple when he slit the throats of 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats (1 Kings 3-8:63). What carnage! What bloodshed! What innocent beasts to skin! What flesh to roast and boil! How to imagine and be convinced that a god, infinite in grandeur, majesty, gentleness, and wisdom, would want to have only butchers, cut-throats, and skin-flayers for his sacrificers, and that he would want to make an ugly slaughterhouse of his temple and tabernacle? How to imagine and be convinced that he would take pleasure in seeing and cruelly making the throats of so many innocent beasts bleed? How to imagine that he would take pleasure in seeing their blood flow and seeing them so pitifully die? And finally, how to imagine and be convinced that he would take pleasure in smelling the odor and smoke of so much burnt flesh?

If this was so, as the so-called holy books and the so-called holy and divine revelations claim, it would be true to say that there was never a tyrant so bloodthirsty or a wild beast so carnivorous as this god! This is clearly and completely disgraceful to think of a being that was infinitely perfect, i.e., infinitely good and wise. From this it obviously follows that the institution of such sacrifices is falsely attributed to a god and that the so-called revelations that they attribute to him are naught but false revelations, i.e., they are nothing but errors and illusions or lies and impostures. From this we can clearly see that these kinds of sacrifices, just like all the others, are only the institution or invention of human frauds who are only seeking to deceive others.

## 23. ORIGINS OF THESE KINDS OF SACRIFICES

**H**ere is how a sensible author wrote about the origin of these abominable sacrifices of innocent beasts:

The historians say that the first men or inhabitants of the Earth lived for two thousand years growing vegetables, i.e., the fruits of the land, of which they offered the first to God, declaring it an inexpiable crime to spill the blood of any animal, even in sacrifice, and even worse to eat its flesh. They say it was at Athens that the first bull was killed. The priest of the city, named Diomus, was making the customary oblation of first fruits on the altar (they did not speak about temples back then) when a bull left a herd that was passing by and came and ate the consecrated food. The priest Diomus, angered by this so-called sacrilege, took someone's sword and killed the bull. But his anger did not pass and after considering the enormous crime he had committed he feared the people's fury and made them believe that God had appeared to him and commanded him to offer the bull as a sacrifice and burn its flesh on the altar to expiate the sin of eating the consecrated fruits. The stupid and ignorant populace believed its sacrificer like an oracle, so that the bull was skinned and the fire started on the altar and the people watched this new sacrifice. Since then the Athenians have sacrificed a bull every year and this pious cruelty has been performed not only by all of Greece, but even throughout the world.

It happened then that a certain priest during his bloody sacrifice, having taken a piece of boiled flesh that had fallen off the altar onto the ground and burned his fingers, put his hand right away into his mouth to lessen the pain. As soon as he had tasted the sweetness and fat on his fingers, not only did he want more, but he even gave a piece to his partner, who then gave some to others who were all delighted at discovering this delicacy and started greedily eating the flesh. And it is from this that mortals got the cruel and bloody sweet tooth for killing animals to eat them. The Jews say, against all evidence of fact, that the sons of Adam have sacrificed living creatures since the beginning of the

world. But we know that a great many errors slipped into the written law from which they got this information.

The Ancients say that the first goat that fell at the hands of men was killed in vengeance for having nibbled at a vine, since such an impious act was never heard of before. It is certain that the Egyptians, the wisest and most ancient people of the world, received from the first inhabitants of the Earth a tradition that forbade men to kill any living creature. To give more force to this first law of nature, they represented the Gods in the forms of beasts so that the common people, in respect for the sacred symbols, learn not to take the life of animals or do them any harm. The Brahmins of India, instead of sacrificing beasts, build hospitals for them just like for men, which is considered an action of very great virtue. There are many philosophers in every city who spend their whole life taking care of sick or wounded animals. This is not a new institution among them; it is a tradition since time immemorial. Etc. (*Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*)

Though there is no evidence or complete certainty about what this author says concerning the origin, commencement, and progress of the bloody sacrifices of domestic animals, we cannot deny that there is at least a very great semblance of truth in what he says. And as far as what he says about the gentleness and humanity of the first men toward animals and the prohibition to kill or harm them, we cannot doubt that they were in compliance with good judgment and natural justice and even with what is said by the Jews themselves in Genesis where it is said that God at first gave men permission to eat only the herbs and fruits of the earth. But there is no semblance of truth in these so-called divine revelations or any basis of reason and justice in these cruel and barbaric sacrifices of innocent beasts; there is only cruelty and barbarism. And this clearly shows that their establishment comes only from the madness and viciousness of men and not from any divine command.

But were not men very foolish and blind to believe they pleased and honored their god like this? Were they not foolish and blind to believe that a god took pleasure in seeing blood flow from these poor beasts and seeing their flesh burn? Were they not foolish and blind to believe they appeased his anger and earned his good grace by such abominable sacrifices? Instead it would have been a way of irritating his anger and drawing his vengeance and curses upon them. Who would ever think of

pleasing and honoring an excellent, skilled worker by tearing apart and burning in front of him his most beautiful works on the pretext of wanting to make a sacrifice to him? Who would ever think of pleasing and honoring a sovereign, prince, or king by tearing apart and burning in front of him his most beautiful, precious, and magnificent things in the palace on the pretext of wanting to make a sacrifice to him? There is certainly no one who would ever be crazy enough to ever want to do such a thing or even only think it! So, how is it that men are so crazy to believe that they please and honor their god by tearing apart, killing, bludgeoning, and burning his own creatures and works on the pretext of making sacrifices to him?

Now again, how is it that our Christ-cultists are so crazy and blind as to believe they greatly honor and please their "God the Father" by offering to him every day his divine son as a sacrifice, in memory of him being shamefully and miserably hanged on a cross after he had been tortured to death? How is it that they can even think or believe they honor and please a god by offering him his own son as a sacrifice? And this after he wrote in their law that *cursed by God is he who is hanged on a cross* (Deut. 21:23). Certainly this can only come from an extreme blindness of the mind.

The Chinese sacrificed not only to their gods but to the devil, although they knew that it was wicked and sinful, so that it not do any harm to their people or goods. In Calcutta they did the same. In Narsingh they worshipped devils, although they knew they were the authors of all evils—they offered them sacrifices and built temples to them more beautiful than to the Creator himself. The Japanese also worshipped the devil just like in America and they performed sacrifices, not to get some grace from it, but so that it not harm them. Our ancient Gauls, inhabitants of this country, were no wiser than other nations in this, seeing that they sacrificed men to their gods. Whoever was stricken with a serious illness sacrificed men or vowed to do so and such sacrifices were done by the druids, their priests at the time, and they were convinced that the gods were appeased by the life of a man to save another. Sometimes they burned them alive and sometimes they killed them with arrows. That is why when some ruler was sick, at the end they called one of the druids to come to them in order to sacrifice to Drya, god of hell and enemy of life, some man who deserved death or, lacking this, some poor wretch,

believing that this god, greedy for human blood, would be sated by the death of such a man and the life of the sick man would be prolonged.

Concerning this, Plutarch was very right to say that it were better that men had no knowledge of the gods than to believe, as they do, that there are some who are hungry and greedy for human blood.

Indeed, as Montaigne said:

It is a strange fantasy in men to want to pay for divine kindness with our affliction—like the Carthaginians did by sacrificing their own children to Saturn, and whoever did not have any bought them. And they burned them alive while they made the parents attend this cruel and bloody sacrifice with a cheerful and satisfied countenance. And like the Lacedaemonians who pampered their Diana by torturing young men whom they whipped in her favor, often unto death. As religion is capable of inspiring such great and cruel viciousness in men, so it has been able to inspire so many crimes. It was a truly wild humor to want to gratify the architect by the subversion of his building and to want to guarantee the punishment due to the guilty by punishing the innocent. Like the poor Iphigenia who, by her death and immolation, unburdened the Greeks of the offenses they had committed; and the two beautiful and generous souls of the Decii, father and son, who threw themselves into the thick of the enemy to propitiate the gods on behalf of the Romans! What can this monstrous iniquity of the gods be if it only wants to be appeased by the Romans at the price of such men? (*Essays*, 2:12)

What madness in men to believe that gods could or wanted to be appeased by the violent death of innocents? What madness, I say, and what blindness in them to think and believe they act religiously in so many detestable cruelties. Yet that is what religion inspires in men, that is what the crazy belief in gods makes them do; so true it is to say that religion often teaches men a lot of wickedness and makes them perform many impious and detestable actions on the pretext of piety; as Lucretius said, “Very often in the past religion inspired impious and criminal actions” (*On the Nature of Things* 1.82), and “So much has religion been able to incite crimes” (1.101). Plutarch was right to say that it would have been better if men had never had any knowledge of gods than to act with so much madness and viciousness on the pretext of honoring

and serving them. Those who force their worship are the cause of all these detestable evils and we should not be surprised since it is written that *it is from the very prophets of Jerusalem that corruption has spread throughout the land* (Jer. 23:15).

Our Christ-cultists are not completely free of this crazy conviction of the merit, virtue, and effectiveness of these cruel and bloody sacrifices. For, although they no longer make the same kind of sacrifices of men or beasts, nevertheless they do not stop approving what the Jews once did and the law that commanded them. And they even believe they have all been delivered from sin and restored to grace or reconciled with their god through the countless merits of the blood of their divine savior Jesus Christ who, they say, gave himself up as a sacrifice on the wood of the cross to atone for their sins. Thus they say that this so-called divine savior *washed them of the filth of their sins in his blood* (Apoc. 1:5) and reconciled them to God by the merits of his blood and his death and they even go so far as to say that according to their divine law *everything should be purified in blood and there is no forgiveness or salvation for men without spilling the blood* of their so-called divine savior (Heb. 9:22), attributing to their god even the will to sacrifice his divine son at the hands of men who had so grievously offended him by their sins in order to appease him for all the offenses they did or should do until the end of days.

And if it was a great madness among pagans to believe that gods could or wanted to be appeased by the guilty only through the punishment and death of the not guilty, was not it an even greater madness for our Christ-cultists to believe that their “God the Father” wanted to be appeased by men only through the punishment and death of his own divine son? And he did not want to be appeased unless they persecuted, outraged, and shamefully killed his precious and only divine son, their god and savior? What madness, I say, to have such a thought! And if it was such a monstrous iniquity for the gods to not want to be appeased by the guilty except through the punishment of the innocent, how much more monstrous was the iniquity and madness in God the Father to want to be appeased by guilty men and sinners only through the punishment and even the bloody, cruel, and shameful death of his innocent and divine son? What madness only to have such a thought! I cannot find the words to express how crazy this is!

But that is what religion makes our Christ-cultists believe so that if it no longer makes them perform the cruel and bloody sacrifices of the past, it still makes them approve the old ones and believe in the most absurd and ridiculous things that can be imagined, as we will see more fully later on.

## 24. OF THE SO-CALLED COMMANDMENT GOD MADE TO ABRAHAM TO SACRIFICE HIS SON

**L**et us go back to the so-called commandment they say God made to Abraham to sacrifice his only son. I admit this should not seem too strange to our Christ-cultists, since they believe that this God had commanded his own divine son to be sacrificed and delivered to death for the salvation of men and they believe this commandment was really accomplished. But basically, was not this commandment horrible? How can a father or any person with common sense imagine that such an inspiration or commandment came from a god, i.e., an infinitely perfect, good, and wise being? It is inconceivable unless you see that superstition is capable of inspiring the cruelest and most inhuman sentiments in men and there is nothing they are not capable of doing blindly on this vain, false, pathetic, cursed pretext of religion, seeing that in doing the most blameworthy and detestable actions they imagine they are doing the most praiseworthy and virtuous actions.

And here is an example in this Abraham, who without thinking twice about such a commandment (or rather, dream or vision, if you want) right away intended to fulfill this commandment by cleverly (or rather, stupidly and tactlessly) giving a specious interpretation of piety to an action that should have horrified him (Gen. 22).

Here is certainly a lovely and favorable interpretation, a lovely and favorable pretext to carry out a commandment of this nature religiously and piously. But here also is how ignorant and simple minds are easily deceived and take the bad for the good when it is covered with some deceitful semblance of piety and virtue. This is how our pious Christ-cultists cover all the vain and superstitious practices and ceremonies of their religion with the loveliest semblance of piety. It is with similar speeches of vain and deceitful piety that they exalt over the so-called sanctity of their mysteries and their vain sacraments because it is by similar vain and ridiculous interpretations that they twist around their so-

called Holy Scriptures as they want, that they give whatever meaning they want, that they find mysteries where there are none, that they make white what is black and black what is white. This is what they do especially with the lovely and subtle invention of their mystical and figurative meaning that they use like a saddle for every horse or like a shoe for every foot, like Theramenes' shoe. For, with this subtle invention of their spiritual and mystical meaning, they give whatever meaning they want to their so-called Holy Scriptures and make them say allegorically and figuratively whatever they want, like children who make bells say everything they want when they hear them.

As it would be stupid for adults to take seriously what children make their dolls say or what they say when they are joking and playing together, so it would be stupid for learned and enlightened men to take seriously these vain explanations and interpretations that our Christ-cultists make their "Holy Scriptures" say mystically, allegorically, and figuratively, since these kinds of explanations and interpretations are basically only fictions of their minds and hollow imaginations.

If a man, for example, had it in mind today that God had appeared to him and commanded him the same as Abraham, i.e., to sacrifice his son, and he went to consult our most learned and religious scholars and casuists, I am sure there would not be one of them who would not be horrified at such an imagination and consider it an illusion, a temptation of the devil, and a damnable thought that he should keep far from his mind and be carefully on guard against.

And if notwithstanding this warning this man was still ill advised enough to really do what he believed this so-called commandment of God had ordered him to do, you can imagine what we would say about him and what justice would do with him! You can judge by this if we should consider these commandments to make sacrifices of this nature as divine revelations!

If today our Christ-cultists themselves are absolutely forced to consider such a vision, imagination, or so-called divine revelation as an illusion and temptation of the devil, which they consider an abominable thing and a crime worthy of exemplary punishment in a father who was crazy enough to cut the throat of his son on the pretext of offering him as a sacrifice to God who commanded him to do this intentionally, how can they consider that commandment that Abraham claimed was made

to him as a truly divine revelation? And how can they consider his blind obedience as the greatest, most heroic action and, consequently, the most worthy of the graces and blessings of God? It is confused and self-negating and there is no need to say more to show the falsity of these so-called divine revelations, in view of the fact that it is mentioned in many of these so-called holy books of the prophets that God began to condemn these kinds of cruel and bloody sacrifices (Is. 1:11; Jer. 6:20; Amos 5:22; Ps. 50:13–16).

Those are certainly some so-called divine revelations that are opposed to what God had said to Abraham and Moses, seeing that they condemn and reject what was established by these others. Where does such a change come from in a god and being who is unchanging and infinitely perfect in its nature? Did he dare reform what he had established after thousands of years? Will we say of him what we normally say of a fickle and thoughtless man, “He does and undoes then does again what he did not do.” Let our Christ-cultists think this if they want; we will pass over this folly if it seems good to them, unless they do not like it and they recognize the vanity and falsity of these so-called divine revelations because they contradict and negate one another and are so little appropriate to the sovereign majesty and infinite perfection of a god such as our Christ-cultists suppose. Even more wisely did Numa Pompilius, second king of the Romans, establish the sacrifice of wine, milk, flour, flowers, and other frivolous things along with amusing song and dance to entertain his people peaceably (*Gabriel Nauré, Defense of Great Men Falsely Accused of Magic*).

## 25. VANITY AND FALSITY OF THE SO-CALLED PROMISES MADE BY GOD TO THE PATRIARCHS ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB

**H**ere again is an obvious proof of the vanity and falsity of the so-called divine revelations: it is the failure to accomplish the great and magnificent promises that came with the so-called divine revelations. For, it is not believable that an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise god would not have wanted to fulfill the promises he had really made and repeated many times and confirmed by vows and oaths as he did. Now, it is unquestionable and clearly seen, as much by the evidence of history as by their so-called holy books and by everyday experience, that the promises supposed to have been made by God to the patriarchs have never been fulfilled. Therefore, these promises are falsely attributed to God and it is an error to think they were based on divine revelations. To clearly see the failure to accomplish these promises and the force of this proof, it has to be said that they consisted primarily in three things:

1—To make the posterity of the patriarchs more numerous than all the other peoples of the earth (Gen. 12:2, 22:17, 26:4).

2—To make them the holiest, happiest, most powerful, and most triumphant of all peoples of the earth (Ex. 23:23, 27; Deut. 7:14, 26:19).

3—To make an eternal alliance with their posterity (Gen. 17:7, 13:15, 48:4). Now, it is unquestionable that these promises have never been accomplished.

First, it is certain that the Jewish people or the people of Israel, who are the only people who can be considered as descended from these patriarchs and the only ones in whom the said promises should have been accomplished, have never been as numerous as other people of the earth and much less could they rival the grains of sand in the sea or motes of dust on the earth. And if they really had multiplied as they should have according to the so-called divine promises, they would certainly inhabit no less than the entire earth. And we see that even when they were at their most numerous and flourishing, they never inhabited more than a tiny

province of Palestine and its surroundings, which is almost nothing compared with the vast expanse of many provinces, kingdoms, and empires flourishing in all corners of the earth. Even only in France it would be like the province of Champagne or Picardy compared with the whole country. Therefore, it is evident that this people has never been very numerous and has always been very small compared with other peoples of the earth. And so the so-called divine promises concerning their prodigious and innumerable multiplication have never been accomplished.

Second, they have never been accomplished concerning the grand and overabundant blessings with which they should have been favored above all other peoples of the earth. For, although they have had some victories over their enemies and ravaged countries and seized many cities and even conquered or usurped the provinces of Palestine at sword-point, nevertheless, this did not prevent them from being almost always more often conquered by their enemies and miserably reduced to slavery. And although for some time they were in a peaceful and prosperous enough state under some of their kings, this did not prevent their kingdom from being destroyed and from their being carried away into captivity and their entire nation from being almost completely destroyed by the Roman army under the emperors Titus and Vespasian.

Third, they have not been accomplished with respect to that so-called eternal alliance that God made with them according to these promises, since we do not see now and have never seen any sure sign of this so-called alliance; on the contrary, we have clearly seen them *shut out for many centuries from the possession of the lands and country that they claim had been promised*, and had been given to them by God *to enjoy forever* (Gen. 13:15).

And so, since these so-called promises have not been effective or accomplished on either side, as we clearly see, it is a sign, an evident and decisive proof of their falsity and, consequently, that they did not come from God, which clearly proves again that the so-called holy and sacred books that contain them were not made through the inspiration of God, since they contain promises that are clearly false. And since these books were not made through the inspiration of God, they cannot at all serve as decisive evidence of truth. Thus, it is in vain that our Christ-cultists claim to use them as infallible evidence to prove the so-called truth of their religion.

## 26. FOURTH PROOF: OF THE FALSITY OF THE SAID RELIGIONS, DRAWN FROM THE VANITY AND FALSITY OF THE SO-CALLED PROPHECIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Our Christ-cultists also put in the ranks of their motives of credibility and sure proofs of the truth of their religion the prophecies that they claim are decisive evidence of the truth of the revelations and inspiration of God, since, they say, only God alone who can foresee and predict future things with such certainty so long before they happen (cf. 2 Pet. 1:19, 21).

Let us see, then, who these so-called holy men of God are and these so-called prophets who spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and whether we should make such a big deal of them as our Christ-cultists do. These men, properly speaking, were certainly only lunatics and fanatics who acted and spoke following the impulses or transports of their fantasies or their ruling passions, but imagined it was by the spirit of God that they acted and spoke. Or else they were "imposters" and "scoffers" who counterfeited the prophets and who, in order to more easily fool the ignorant and simple people, bragged about acting and speaking by the spirit of God, though they knew very well that it was not the spirit of God but the spirit of lies and imposture that made them act and speak as they did.

There is no doubt that there were, in fact, many of both kinds. For, just as we see many who pretend to be insane madmen although they are not, so also there were sometimes many who pretended in the past to be prophets. It would be nice to see these so-called prophets today! It would be nice to hear them say their "thus spoke the Lord": we would mock them! And our Christ-cultists themselves would certainly mock them.

They cannot deny that among these so-called prophets in the past, there were many who were really only lunatics and fanatics or wicked impostors who intentionally abused the name and authority of God to

fool men or for some other purpose in this deceitful ploy. This, I say, our Christ-cultists cannot deny because we clearly see in their so-called holy and divine books that there were many false prophets among the people of Israel who made it their business to speak in the name of God and said the "thus spoke the Lord" with boldness and assurance as if God had really spoken to them and put the words in their mouths. We see this clearly in the violent reproaches that these prophets made against one another for speaking falsely in the name of God, saying their reproaches also came from God (cf. Ezek. 13:3-9; Jer. 23:11-15, 27:9-15; Lam. 2:14).

And Jesus Christ, as I have already said, expressly said to his disciples that there would come many false prophets who would seduce many people and would work great miracles and prodigies so they should watch out for them and not be fooled (Matt. 22:21).

And as to the manner in which these books testify that God spoke and revealed himself to his prophets, here is what they say. God came down in a column of cloud. . . . *If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known to him in a vision and I will speak to him in dreams* (Num. 12:6-8). Thus it was in a nocturnal vision and in dreams that he appeared to Abraham when he commanded him to leave his country (Gen. 15:1, 17) and to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22:2). Thus he appeared to Jacob when he told him to go down into Egypt (Gen. 46:2) and to Nathan and Samuel (1 Ch. 17:3). Isaiah called his prophecies "visions" (Is. 1:1) and Jeremiah called them "false visions and deceitful divinations" (Jer. 14:14).

Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, and all the other so-called prophets called them "visions," which almost always came at night during sleep. That is why it is said in Job that God spoke through dreams in nocturnal visions when men were in bed, knocked out by sleep; that is when he opens their ears and tells them what he wants them to hear (Job 33:15). And the great St. Paul, Christ's vessel of election, speaking of his rapture from heaven, said that he did not know if it was in his body or spirit that he was enraptured, but he saw and heard such great and admirable things that there was no way to express them in words (2 Cor. 12:3-4).

And as to the manner in which these so-called prophets received and publicized their so-called divine visions and revelations, it was usually with the same transports and grimaces and movements that we are used

to seeing in fanatics. The priests and the sibyls, as well as all the other prophets or prophetesses of the pagans, were seized by a kind of madness and uttered their oracles with an impetuous voice and violent contortions just like those who are possessed (*Collection of Conferences*, 5:200). It was the same for most of the so-called holy prophets, because when this mania to prophesize seized them, they were like in transports and they made strange and ridiculous gestures and movements just like real fanatics do. Just take the example of Saul, the first king of the Jews (1 Sam. 19:20–24).

And finally, most of them were only impostors, seeing that there were so many prophesizing falsely in the name of God to deceive the simple and ignorant people and that they even condemned each other with great animosity for this fraud. I say that most of them were impostors or fanatics because our Christ-cultists themselves cannot deny that the number of false prophets was much greater than those who could have claimed to be true prophets, seeing that one of these so-called true prophets (Elijah) had 450 of these false prophets killed one day (1 Kings 18:40), not including many others that Jehu and Josiah had killed in their time (2 Kings), whereas the so-called true prophets at the time of the Mosaic Law is numbered by our Christ-cultists at only two dozen, which clearly shows the great difference between the two. So, it is easy to estimate that the number of false prophets was incomparably greater than that of real prophets. And with respect to the reproaches they made against one another with so much animosity, blaming and accusing each other of prophesizing falsely in the name of God, we could, it seems to me, suitably enough say that it is the pot calling the kettle black, or the kettle calling the pot black. It seems obvious enough that in this respect not one of them was hardly less false or less deceitful than the others. And since our Christ-cultists have to recognize that most, even almost all of the so-called prophets were, in fact, only lunatics, fanatics, and impostors, it would now be up to them to show with clear, sure, and convincing reasons and proofs that those who they claim are exempt were not false prophets like the others but were real prophets, divinely inspired by God; and this is what we can defy them to be able to do with any true and solid reason.

But, on the contrary, I am going to prove with a clear and solid reason that they were also false prophets like the others. Here is my

reason and proof of this: every prophet who is said to be inspired by God and is not found true or who is found false in what he preaches on the part of God, is not a real prophet; on the contrary, he is a false prophet. This is the true mark and even the mark that our Christ-cultists themselves claim God himself gave to them to know false prophets (Deut. 18:22; Jer. 28:9). According to what is said, then, the true mark of the false prophets is when they predict falsely in the name of God and that the things they predict in his name do not happen as they predicted.

Now, supposing this, it is easy to see that the so-called holy prophets were only false prophets since we obviously see in them—i.e., in their writings and prophecies—the true mark of false prophets; the principal and most important things they prophesized in the name of God did not happen as they predicted, and, on the contrary, everything was turned to their disadvantage and confusion.

To prove this, all we have to do is report word for word what they prophesized so gloriously and advantageously for their nation and then make a comparison of what they predicted with what we see happened; and in this way we will easily and clearly see whether their prophets were true or false. (Cf. Gen. 12:5–6; 15:18–21; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:17–19; 30:1–10; Ps. 130:8; 96:11–13; Is., Jer., Ezek., Dan., etc.)

## ALL THE BEAUTIFUL AND MAGNIFICENT PROMISES ARE OBVIOUSLY FALSE

We certainly have prophecies and promises here that are very clear, articulate, purposeful, and that are the most advantageous and glorious that one could think of or desire for the people of Israel, i.e., for the Jewish people, and for the city of Jerusalem, which was their capital. And if these promises and prophecies were, in fact, true and effective, already for a long time the Jewish people would have been not only the most populous, strongest, and most powerful of all the nations of the earth; but also the richest, most glorious, holiest, most blessed, wisest, most perfect, happiest, and most accomplished of all the peoples of the earth seeing that they would all be pure and holy and there would be no impurity among them and no one of them would be unjust or wicked, no one

would harm his neighbor, and no one would even tell a lie. Likewise, if these promises and prophecies were true and effective, the city of Jerusalem would have been for a long time and would be forever the most illustrious, most beautiful, biggest, richest, nicest, holiest, most glorious, most triumphant, and happiest of all the cities in the world, seeing that God himself had chosen it to establish there the throne of his glory and sanctity forever, so that nothing impure and foul would enter and all parts of the world would crowd into it carrying all sorts of goods and riches in abundance.

But, as much as it is certain and evident that these promises and prophesies were not at all accomplished (and there is surely no sign that they ever will be), so it is certain and evident that they are false, vain, and deceitful and, consequently, that those who invented and fabricated them were, as I said, only lunatics and fanatics who spoke following their driving passion or they were impostors who wanted to have fun and foist them upon the people in order to deceive and seduce them.

## 27. FALSITY OF THE SO-CALLED PROMISES AND PROPHECIES OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

**I**t is the same with the promises and so-called prophecies that are contained in the so-called holy Gospels. And it is necessary to form the same judgment of those who first propounded them.

It would be too long to record here all empty visions, false revelations, and deceitful prophecies or promises that are in the so-called holy and sacred books they call the New Testament. Yet, there is not one of these so-called prophecies, visions, revelations, or promises that was not absolutely false or vain or even ridiculous and absurd, and it is easy to see clearly the vanity and falsity.

1—It was said that the Christ—i.e., Jesus Christ, son of Mary—would deliver his people from their sins. We do not see in any people any sign of this so-called deliverance since they were always and still are today subject to all kinds of vices and sins and also slaves of their evil passions just as all other people, and they are no less vicious than they would have been before this so-called deliverance and coming of this so-called redeemer or savior. And in this sense it is evident that they have not been delivered from their vices and sins and, consequently, it is evident that this promise or prophecy is false since it has not been accomplished.

Perhaps you will say that this deliverance is only understood as a deliverance from the eternal pain and punishment that men have earned by their sins and that Jesus Christ really did deliver them from this through his death and passion. To this I will respond firstly that this interpretation of the so-called deliverance from sins does not agree with what the ancient prophets said when they spoke of it, because they clearly and expressly said that they would all be washed of all the stains and filth of their sins. They said that they would all be holy and sanctified, they would not harm one another, they would no longer commit iniquities, they would no longer tell lies or have lying tongues in their

mouths, etc., but that they would all love the Lord with all their heart and walk faithfully in the way of his commandments. And finally, there would be no one impure or wicked among them.

Being so, it is evident that our Christ-cultists, who call themselves the redeemed of the Lord their God, should all be holy and sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2). They should all be free from vices and sins. They should not do any wrong or harm to one another. They should say nothing impure or deceitful to one another. Finally, they should all be walking faithfully in the way of the commandments of their God and loving it with all their heart, etc. But, it is every bit certain and evident that it is not like this and that the said promise or prophecy concerning this so-called deliverance from sin is false and, consequently, vain.

2—I say that if this so-called deliverance should only be understood as the deliverance from the eternal punishments for sins and not to the present deliverance from the vices and sins themselves, then this prophecy or promise should not say that Jesus Christ would deliver his people from their sins but only from the punishment they deserve or would deserve in the future for their sins. If a lord, for example, wanted to release some criminals from the death penalty who really deserved death, it seems to me we would not be right to say that this lord had freed them from their vices and viciousness since their vices and viciousness could still be in them, but we could say that he had freed them from the gallows and the wheel, if they deserved it, because they would really have been hanged or tortured if he had not released them.

Likewise, it would not be right to say that Jesus Christ delivered his people from their sins if he had to leave them always in their vices and sins and only redeem them from the eternal punishment they earned by their sins. For, to deliver someone from punishment does not really deliver him from vice. When a doctor heals the sick who have fevers or pleurisy and these symptoms totally disappear, we can truly say that he delivered them from their fever and pleurisy; but it is also sure that as much as the sickness has not disappeared, we cannot really say that he delivered them from their fevers and pleurisy because they still have them.

So, as much as men are and will be subject, as they are, to their vices and sins, we cannot really say that they have been delivered and, consequently, the prophecy or promise that Jesus Christ would deliver his

people from their sins is not true, it is really false, or we have to wait for another Christ to see if he will deliver men more truly from their vices and sins. It would be good to hope that someone will really come who could do a great benefit for men like this, because they really need it just like they need a powerful redeemer to deliver them from the tyrannical yoke of the rulers of the earth and from the slavery of all the vain and crazy superstitions of religion. And what confirms that this so-called deliverance from sins should not be understood like this is that it was said in many other similar promises or prophecies that they would all be holy and that no one of them would commit iniquity or tell a lie; just look at their "Holy Scriptures."

Moreover, if this so-called divine savior had wanted to do this favor of delivering men from their sins, as our Christ-cultists say, he would have also made them all wise and perfect. It is not believable that he would have left them slaves to their vices and sins forever, but he would have really delivered them from all these vicious sicknesses and made them safe and healthy. Without this, the so-called deliverance from sins is of no use since they remain forever slaves to their vices and sins.

Now, the first Christians did not claim this: they believed that they really were delivered and washed of all the stains of sin and that they were entirely pure and holy. That is also why they called themselves holy, sanctified, and beloved by God (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; 5:27; Phil. 1:1).

As St. Paul said, Jesus Christ loved his church since he was sent to sanctify it and purify it in the water of baptism with the word of life and to make it glorious, without stain or wrinkle or any flaw, but to make it holy and pure. This clearly shows that all our Christ-cultists should really have been holy, pure, and without the stain of sin. It is like this that their so-called divine savior should have delivered them from their sins, which is clearly false and therefore the said promise and prophecy is clearly vain and false.

3—It is not true that the so-called Christ really delivered men from the eternal punishment of their sins since, according to our Christ-cultists, there will always be an almost infinite number of souls, including theirs, that will haplessly fall into the eternal flames of hell to suffer the punishment of their sins forever.

For, they hold for certain that all those who die in a state of mortal

sin, as they call it, will be eternally condemned to the flames of hell. Now, it is certain that there are more wicked men than good and, according to our Christ-cultists, many more who die in mortal sin than in the good grace of their God. It follows from their own doctrine that there are incomparably more who are *not* delivered from their punishment for sin than who truly are (Matt. 22:14; Luke 2:34). And so there is more reason to say that he came to lose men rather than to save them, which, however, our Christ-cultists do not want to say.

But if according to them there are so few delivered, i.e., so few delivered from the eternal damnation that they earned by their sins, then it was not true to say that he would deliver his people from their sins, i.e., the eternal punishment for their sins, unless our Christ-cultists want to understand by "his people" only a few elect whom they claim to be delivered. This cannot be because these few people compared with all the people are not and should not be called "the people"; for, as few is considered nothing compared with many, it is the greatest number or the greatest part that gives a name to a thing. A dozen or two dozen Spaniards or Frenchmen is not the Spanish or French people. And if an army, for example, of 100,000 or 620,000 men was made prisoners of war by a stronger, more powerful army and if the king or chief of this imprisoned army bought back only a few men of his army (maybe ten or twelve soldiers or officers by paying their ransom) and left all the others prisoners forever, we would not say that he had delivered and redeemed his army; it would be false and ridiculous to say this if he had only delivered such a small number of men.

Therefore, it would also be false and ridiculous to say that Jesus Christ had delivered his people from eternal damnation if there were only a few who were delivered by him. Still our Christ-cultists, as many as they are, cannot show there is only "one" who really enjoys the benefit of this so-called deliverance. For, as the so-called eternal punishment is not seen and the so-called deliverance is only imaginary and not at all visible or perceptible, they cannot show that there has been even one soul or one person truly delivered or even one truly condemned to suffer the so-called eternal punishments of this hell. To respond, as our Christ-cultists normally do, that we must not search or ask for visible or perceptible proofs or evidence for matters of faith and we must blindly believe them without seeing them, on the pretext that they are still very

real and certain in themselves even though no visible or perceivable proof can be given, is a weak reason and entirely vain since it sets down a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures as a basis of certainty. Now, it is certain that a principle like this cannot be used as a basis to establish or reveal any truth and, consequently, cannot be used to maintain or prove that there has been only one man who really enjoyed this so-called benefit of this so-called deliverance, which is certainly only an imaginary deliverance and an imaginary redemption.

Likewise, it is no use for our Christ-cultists to say, as they still do, that their divine Jesus Christ had really satisfied God for all the sins of men and if they have not really been delivered from punishment and eternal damnation, it is not the fault of their redeemer but the fault of sinners who willingly abandon themselves to vices and die in their sins without being converted to God and without wanting to bear the worthy fruits of penitence, which is absolutely necessary, as they say, to live in virtue and die in the grace of God. It is no use for them to allege these reasons because if it were like this, it would be:

1—A manifest injustice on the part of God if he punished anyone's sins for which he had already received total satisfaction. For, just as it would be an injustice for a creditor to make the debtor pay for a debt that his friend had already paid, so it would clearly be an injustice and a kind of cruelty for God to so severely punish men with dreadful and eternal torments for sins that their divine Jesus Christ had already entirely satisfied. For, this is demanding two full payments for the same offenses, which is not at all suitable to the justice or bounty of an infinitely good and merciful god.

2—If men always have to live in virtue, as our Christ-cultists say, and do worthy penance for their sins before dying in order to take advantage of this so-called benefit of deliverance or redemption of Christ, it follows that this so-called deliverance or redemption relieved men of nothing for God and alleviated nothing and, consequently, it was completely vain and useless. Our Christ-cultists certainly do not want to admit this. However, it clearly follows from what they say concerning the so-called implementation of this benefit made for men. For, it is indisputable and good judgment clearly shows that an infinitely good, just, and merciful god could only justly and benignly demand of men who had not offended him to do what they could to render to him all the honors and

duties owed to him, like, for example, to love him, worship him, fear and serve him, live in virtue, and faithfully obey all his divine commandments. Likewise, good judgment clearly shows that he could only justly demand of sinners who had offended him to do all they could to pay for their sins, like, for example, to convert their entire heart to him, to ask very humbly for pardon of their sins, to regret having committed them, to hate and detest their vices and sins, to completely stop and to do worthy penance in the way God prescribed—this, indeed, is everything they claim God demanded in his law (Deut. 28:1, 11:23; Ezek. 28:22).

If, then, God demanded only this from men before the coming of Jesus Christ and he still demands as much or even more after his coming, after he had delivered men from their sins and redeemed them, as our Christ-cultists say, it is evident that this so-called redemption and satisfaction of Jesus Christ relieved men of nothing for God and alleviated nothing, seeing that men have to do no less now to get grace and mercy than they had to do before and that before this so-called deliverance it was just as easy or maybe even easier than afterward to find grace and mercy.

I say it was “easier before than afterward” because before this so-called deliverance, God demanded from sinners only a real conversion of their heart along with the practice of good deeds of justice and mercy and a faithful obedience to his commandments; whereas afterward sinners not only had to do what they did before, but also, according to the maxims of Christianity, to renounce themselves, wearily carry their cross, love their enemies, forgive injuries, and do great penance and strict mortification of the flesh, which they did not have to do before the so-called deliverance of their Christ. Being so, it is evident that this so-called deliverance relieved men of nothing and was completely vain and useless in whatever way you want to take it.

3—It was said that he would be called “the Son of the Most High,” that God would give him the throne of David, his father, that he would reign forever over the house of Jacob and that his kingdom would never end (Luke 1:32). Let us pass over, if you want, that he is called “the Son of the Most High,” because our Christ-cultists at least really consider him the all-powerful son of an all-powerful god, even though he was considered in his time as nothing but a miserable fanatic. But, that God

gave him the throne of David and that he reigns or ever reigned over the house of Jacob, i.e., the people of Israel that is here understood by "the house of Jacob," and that his kingdom should have no end, is what is clearly false. For, it is unquestionable that he was never on the throne of David and never reigned over the Jewish people. And we see now that he does not reign anywhere, unless you want to take the worship and adoration that our Christ-cultists render him as a kind of reign and Christianity as a kind of kingdom. But in this sense, there would be no impostors who could not flatter themselves to reign similarly if we wanted to put faith in their impostures and worship them as divinities.

Moreover, the promise or so-called prophecy of the angel clearly and expressly said that God would give Jesus Christ the throne of his father David and he would reign over the house of Jacob forever. Now, Christianity is not and never has been the throne of David. Likewise, the Christian people are not and never have been the house of Jacob. And so, since Jesus Christ has never been on the throne of David and has never ruled, except imaginarily, over the house of Jacob, it is evident that this promise or so-called prophecy is completely false.

4—It was said that Jesus Christ would be *like a light to enlighten the nations* and *the glory of the people of Israel* (Luke 2:32). This promise or prophecy is again absolutely false since he seemed to be only an object of scorn and his doctrine, life, and death were only considered madness to nations and a subject of scandal to the Jews. And if today he is held in honor and glory among the Christians who worship and revere him, it is not by persuasion or by the light of his doctrine or by knowledge of truth that this happens, but rather by the seduction of falsity and by obstinacy like in all other religions. Proof of this is that instead of being the glory of the people of Israel as was predicted and promised, we clearly see that he became their shame and confusion, which clearly shows the falsity of this promise.

5—It was said that Jesus began to preach and say, "*Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near*" (Matt. 4:17). If this so-called kingdom of heaven was really near as he said, it has been a long time coming. For, it has been almost two thousand years since he promised and preached its near arrival and if it were true, we should have seen its accomplishment long ago. But since for a long time we did not see and still today do not see any appearance of it, it is an obvious proof of the falsity of the

promise and prediction and we would have to be amazingly seduced and abused, blind and naïve, to still believe that this so-called kingdom will come.

To say, as some of our Christ-cultists do, that this kingdom of heaven is nothing but the doctrine and policy or government of the church that really leads souls to the kingdom of heaven is a pure illusion, seeing that there is no people that could not call its religion, policies, and government a kingdom of heaven and there is no impostor who could not also promise the coming of such a kingdom. If we knew that they understood nothing but this by their so-called kingdom of heaven, then we certainly would not make such a big deal about it—it would only be considered a purely imaginary kingdom.

6—Jesus Christ himself said that we should not worry or bother about the food, drink, or clothing we needed in life, but that we should completely trust the providence of his heavenly father who feeds the birds of the sky though they do not sow or build granaries, and who clothes the flowers and lilies of the field though they do not work or sew; he assured his disciples that if the heavenly father took such great care of the birds and the flowers, he would take even greater care of men and not let them lack anything, provided that they first search for the kingdom of heaven and justice (Matt. 6:25–33).

It would certainly be great to see men trust a promise like this! What would become of them if they went only one or two years without working? Without laboring? Without sowing? Without harvesting? And without building granaries? To imitate the birds? They could then do their devotions well and search piously for this so-called kingdom of heaven and its justice! Would the heavenly father provide for all their needs? Would he come miraculously down to bring them something to drink and eat when they were hungry and thirsty? And clothes to wear when they needed? They could invoke and cry out to their heavenly father as loud and long as did the prophets of Baal when they cried out for help and assistance from their god, he would certainly be no less deaf to their cries than this god was to those of his prophets (1 Kings 18:26). That is why we do not see anybody, even among our Christ-cultists, stupid enough to trust such a promise. And if among the Christians or others there are some individuals or families or even some communities of priests, monks, or nuns who do not work and only attend to the vain

worship and service of their false divinities, it is only because they know that there are others who are doing the useful work for them, without whom they would definitely have to get to work like the others.

7—Jesus Christ said that we only had to ask in order to receive, only search in order to find; he guaranteed that we would get everything we asked of God in his name and that if we had only a mustard seed of faith we would be able to move mountains (Matt. 7:7; 17:19; Mark 11:24; Luke 11:9; 17:6; John 14:13). If this promise were true and effective, no one, especially among our Christ-cultists, should ever lack anything necessary to him: he would only have to ask and he would receive it, he would only have to search and he would find it. Likewise, nothing should be impossible to our Christ-cultists since they have faith in their Christ. However, we see no effect of these lovely promises. On the contrary, we see among them every day an infinite number of wretched and needy poor, who are destitute of everything, who ask but receive nothing, who search but find nothing. We even see the whole Christian church eager to ask God in their oft-repeated public prayers many things that it has not been able to get. For a thousand years and more it has asked God in its public and private prayers for the eradication of heresies, for example, for the conversion of infidels and all sinners, for the healthy souls and bodies of all children, the unity and peace of all believers, the spirit of obedience to his divine commandments to serve him forever with fear and love, the spirit of wisdom to choose what is best and most salutary in all things and to reject everything opposed to his glory and to the health of the soul. They ask and make their children ask that the will of God be done on earth as in heaven. And many other similar things that Christians ask God for every day in their public and private prayers, yet they get nothing: there are still heretics and even more rather than fewer of them; there are still countless wicked sinners and infidels who are not converted and countless people who are miserably afflicted by sicknesses of the body and spirit; discord still continues to trouble and divide men; and finally, the spirit of wisdom hardly leads to their veritable good and even less does it inspire in them the fear and love of God, so that it hardly seems that the will of God is done on earth as they imagine it is done in heaven. And so, the church itself (the entire Christian, Catholic, and Roman Church that is called the “beloved spouse of God and Christ) does not get what it asks so insistently from

God, although it makes all its requests and prayers in the name of its Lord and divine Savior Jesus Christ, who promised that he would infallibly get for them everything they asked from God in his name. This clearly shows the falsity of this promise. So, it is in vain that our Christ-cultists say all their lovely "Let us pray together" and "through our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. It is in vain that they ask so much in his name and it is in vain that they finish all their prayers with this lovely refrain.

Who is there, for example, among our Christ-cultists, even the most zealous, the most religious, and most qualified, when commanding the mountains to move themselves from one place to another or a tree to uproot itself and go plant itself in the sea, who would dare to be assured of seeing the effect and accomplishment of their commandment? There is certainly no one with common sense who would want to undertake it. However, their God and their all-powerful Jesus Christ positively said that they would get everything asked in his name and also positively said that if they had only a mustard seed of faith, nothing would be impossible. If they said to a mountain, "Go and move over there," it would go where they commanded it. If they said to a tree, "Go and plant yourself in the sea," it would obey. Likewise, he said that those who believed would chase away demons in his name, speak in unknown tongues, touch snakes with no danger, drink poison with no harm, and heal the sick only by laying on hands, etc. If they had only a little faith, nothing would be impossible for them. And in doing all these wonders they would give a certain proof of the truth of their faith and the truth of their Christ's promises.

But if they cannot do these wonders, it is a decisive proof that they lack faith and do not believe or that these promises of their Christ are false and deceitful. If it is because they lack faith, why do they not have faith? Why do these blunderers not believe, seeing that it would be so glorious and advantageous for them to believe and do such great and marvelous things? But if they claim to have faith and still cannot perform these wonders, they have to acknowledge the vanity and falsity of these promises and consider themselves suckers. If Mohammed or some other impostor had made similar promises to his partisans and had been unable to show any effect, our Christ-cultists would not fail to cry out, "Ah ha! The fraud! The impostor! The fools who believe such an impostor!"

That is where they find themselves (and they have been there for a long time) and they still cannot or do not want to acknowledge or admit their error and blindness. And as they are ingenious at fooling themselves and pleased to support and confirm themselves in their errors, they say that it is because these promises had their effect and accomplishment "at the beginning of Christianity" when there was need of miracles to convince the infidels and unbelievers of the truth of the Christian religion, but since their religion has been sufficiently established, these miracles are no longer necessary and, consequently, there is no need for God to give the power to perform miracles to his faithful believers. According to what they say, this does not stop the promises from being true because they were sufficiently accomplished in the past.

But: how do they know that they ever were accomplished? They really want to believe this, but they cannot produce any decisive evidence, as I demonstrated above. Furthermore, he who made these promises did not put any restraints on them, but made them in general without any restrictions of time, place, or person in particular (Mark 16:17-18; Matt. 18:19, 21-22; Luke 11:13).

There you have some clearly expressed promises that are totally general. It is evident that they are without restrictions of time, place, or person: you only have to have faith. Therefore, to be real, they have to be real in every way, i.e., without restrictions. And since it is evident that they now have no effect and no one even dares to promise to show the effect except to his shame and confusion, it is evident that they are false, very false.

8—Jesus Christ said to his disciples that he would give them the keys to the kingdom of heaven and everything they bound on earth would be bound in heaven (Matt. 16:19). Since no one can go up to heaven to see what is done there and since these so-called keys to the kingdom and this so-called power to bind and unbind are only imaginary keys and an imaginary or spiritual power, as our Christ-cultists say, there is no impostor or fanatic who could not easily make the same promises. Since in this like in other vain promises (Luke 22:30; Matt. 19:29; John 6:54, 8:51) he postpones the accomplishment until an undetermined time in the far future, until the so-called new regeneration, which will certainly never come, there is no impostor, as I said, who could not easily make the same promises. It is also easy to see here their vanity and falsity since they are self-negating.

9—Jesus said to his disciples that he would establish his church on the rock and it would last forever and *the doors of hell will never prevail against it* (Matt. 16:18). If he means that his sect will remain forever and will never be destroyed, we will have to wait and see. For, although it has remained for a long time so far, nevertheless it is not a decisive proof that it will remain forever. Men will not always be so stupid and blind as they are about religion. Perhaps someday they will open their eyes and recognize their errors late. And if this happens, it will be when they reject with scorn and indignation everything they had so foolishly worshipped and revered and all these sects of errors and impostures will shamefully end. But if by these words Jesus Christ only meant that he would establish a sect or a society of followers who would never fall into error or vice, these words are absolutely false because there is no sect, society, or church of Christianity that is not full of errors and vice, especially the sect or society of the Roman Church, although it calls itself the purest and holiest of all.

It has been a long time since the church fell into error! It was born in it, spawned and bred in it, and it is now in errors that are clearly against the intentions and sentiments of the doctrine of its founder, seeing that it has, against his design and intention, abolished the law of the Jews that he approved and came to accomplish and not to destroy, as he himself said. It has fallen into the errors and idolatry of paganism or like paganism, as is clearly seen in the idolatrous worship that it makes to its God of dough, to its saints, and to their images and relics. (Cf. *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, 6:6.)

10—Jesus Christ said *the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will have life* (John 5:28). It has been almost two thousand years since he said this and so it has been almost two thousand since this hour should have come. Yet, we have not seen and still do not see this hour coming! So he spoke falsely since it has not yet come and it still does not seem that it is coming soon, or that it will ever come.

11—Jesus Christ said to his disciples that they did not have to worry about what they said before judges or governors or even kings because he would give them words and a wisdom that their enemies would not be able to resist or contradict (Matt. 10:19; Luke 12:11–12). If this promise had really taken effect, they would have easily convinced by their

wisdom and the force of their arguments and speech all who wanted to oppose them. Now, we do not at all see that they have ever convinced any of their enemies or any infidel by reason, as we do not see anywhere in their speech or writing any sign of this so-called divine wisdom or even any force of argument able to convince or persuade any wise or enlightened person. On the contrary, we see that they have always been confused themselves and been looked upon with indignation and scorn as miserable fanatics. That is why they were persecuted everywhere as we see in all the histories of that time.

12—This Jesus Christ said to his apostles and disciples that he was the light of the world that would shine on every man who came into the world and whoever followed him would never walk in darkness (John 8:12). Yet, we do not see any other light to shine on men except that of the sun, and even that can shine on the blind. . . . It was said in the Gospel of John that he would give to all who believed in him the power to become the children of God, not born of the will of flesh and blood or of the will of man, but born of God. Where are these divine children of God? And who is born of God in such a divine way without the cooperation of flesh and blood? Without the cooperation of the will of man? We certainly see no one who does not come through the natural way of flesh and blood, and through the cooperation of man.

13—Jesus Christ said he was the way, the truth, and the life, the resurrection itself, that whoever believed in him would live, though he died, and whoever lived and believed in him would never die (John 11:25). So also he said that if anyone kept his word, he would never die (John 8:51). If this is so, then there is no one who has kept his word or truly believed in him, not even his most faithful disciples, because there was no one then or in the following centuries who did not die; and every day we still see men who make a profession of faith and observe his word die without any of them being able to escape or avoid death. But how could he prevent anyone from dying, seeing that he could not even preserve his own life or avoid death? So where is the truth of all these lovely promises? Who would not laugh at hearing them and seeing them so ineffective? If they cannot show the truth in them, then we must conclude that they are absolutely false and totally ridiculous.

To say that these words and these kinds of promises should be understood in a spiritual sense and that they are true in the spiritual

sense but not in the natural and literal sense is a pure illusion, because this so-called spiritual sense is only a fabricated and imaginary sense that can be applied and twisted to fit all kinds of subjects, like the shoe of Theramenes that fits all feet. There are no promises or propositions, no matter how false, absurd, and ridiculous, that cannot be given some spiritual, allegorical, and figurative meaning, if you only want to find some spiritual and imaginary truths, like our Christ-cultists claim to find in the words and promises of their divine Jesus Christ. So, since the spiritual sense they give is only an imaginary sense, the truths also that they claim to find are only imaginary truths that it would be ridiculous to seriously dwell on. Moreover, as these promises and words are no more truthful in the spiritual sense than in the natural and literal sense, it follows that they are just as false in both senses.

14—Jesus Christ said that they would see him descend from the heavens, coming from the clouds with a great power and majesty, and he would send his angels who would gather all the elect from the four corners of the world with the powerful sound of a trumpet from one end of the heavens to the other, that the sun would darken, the stars would fall from the sky, and then all the nations of the earth would bewail their misfortune. And he guaranteed that all these things would happen shortly after he predicted them, i.e., during their lifetime (Matt. 24:30-31; Luke 21:27). In truth, he told his apostles that their generation would not pass, that all these things were happening. And at another time here is what he said: *In truth, I say to you that among those who are present here some of you will not die before seeing the kingdom of God come* (Mark 9:1). There is a very clearly expressed prophecy and promise of what should have been done. However, it is evident that none of this happened. Many generations have passed since this prophecy and promise and there is no longer any one of them who should have seen the accomplishment of this prophecy: it has been almost two thousand years and they are all dead. And as it is evident that this prophecy has not been accomplished, so it is evident that it is false.

15—Jesus Christ said that when he was lifted up from earth he would draw all things to him, i.e., as our Christ-cultists say, he would draw all men to him, i.e., to his knowledge and love (John 12:32). A great deal of this is not true, seeing that the number of those who know and worship him is almost nothing compared to those who do not. If

they claim that these words are true enough because he has drawn people to himself from every age, sex, and condition, it is a vain interpretation because there is no impostor who could not say and do as much.

16—It was said in these so-called Holy Scriptures that just as death came because of one man, so too would justification come because of one man; just as all men died in Adam, so too would they all live again in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17). He preached and announced as a mystery of divine faith that all the dead would be resurrected to be immortal and that the mortal body that we all have would be clothed again in immortality (1 Cor. 15:42–53). It was said that God would make new heavens and a new earth where justice would dwell (2 Pet. 3:13). All these promises and predictions are obviously false because we see no effect and no semblance of truth. It was said that God would not delay his promises, but has not it taken long enough to postpone for thousands of years the performance of things that should have been done so soon?

17—They spoke about the coming and birth of Jesus Christ like of one in whom God should have accomplished all these lovely and advantageous promises that he made to the old patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That is why when Mary, his mother, thought she was pregnant with a wholly divine son in whom God would show the extraordinary marvels of his omnipotence, she rejoiced and glorified the Lord saying that

*he had done great things in her and was going to display his omnipotent arm to dispel the evil designs of proud and haughty men, to make monarchs fall from their thrones and raise the humble in their place, that he was going to fill with good things those who were hard pressed with hunger and bring a drought upon those who lived lavishly, and, finally, that he was going to take the people of Israel, his servant, under his protection, remembering the mercy he had promised to their father Abraham and his posterity forever. (Luke 1:47–55)*

And Zachariah, the high priest, also said:

*Blessed be the Lord of Israel, that he has come to visit and redeem his people and he has raised up a powerful savior in the house of his servant David, as he promised through the mouths of the holy prophets who lived in past*

*ages, to deliver us from the power of our enemy and from the hands of all who hate us in order to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy alliance, according to the oath he made to our father Abraham that he grant us this grace to deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve him without fear, walking before him in sanctity and justice all the days of our lives.* (Luke 1:68-75; cf. Acts 13:26-39)

And Jesus Christ himself, speaking to his apostles about his coming, told them that everything that was said of him in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and Psalms had to be accomplished and that repentance and remission of sins would be preached in his name in all nations (Luke 24:44). And it was with respect to the so-called accomplishment of these promises that he announced and ordered his disciples to announce everywhere the coming of the kingdom of heaven, meaning the accomplishment of all these lovely and magnificent promises that he believed had been made by God to their ancient fathers (Matt. 10:7; Mark 16:15). So it is evident that the coming and birth of Jesus Christ was considered at that time (at least by his disciples) the coming of what should have been the accomplishment of all those lovely promises made to the old patriarchs. That is also why his disciples asked him one day *if he would soon reestablish their kingdom of Israel* (Acts 1:6).

Now, it is evident that the Christ did not at all accomplish the so-called promises and that the accomplishment was not at all fulfilled in him. This is easy to demonstrate by making a comparison of what was said in the so-called promises with what Jesus Christ was and did. And as it is evident that nothing was done and seems not to have been done since the birth and coming of Jesus Christ any more than before his birth and coming, it is also evident that the accomplishment of the said promises was not at all fulfilled in him, nor in anyone else, and, consequently, these promises and prophecies are entirely vain and false.

## 28. VANITY AND FALSITY OF THE SPIRITUAL, ALLEGORICAL, AND MYSTICAL INTERPRETATIONS THAT OUR CHRIST- CULTISTS MAKE OF THEIR SO-CALLED HOLY SCRIPTURES, AS ALSO THE SPIRITUAL AND MYSTICAL SENSE THEY GIVE TO THE PROMISES AND PROPHECIES CONTAINED THEREIN

I know very well that our Christ-cultists consider it ignorance or vulgarity to want to take literally all the promises and prophecies as they are written, and they think they do well in making subtle and ingenious interpretations of the plans and will of their God, leaving out the literal and natural meaning of the words to give them a meaning they call "mystical" and "spiritual" and "allegorical," "anagogical," and "topological," i.e., figurative, saying, for example, that by "the people of Israel and Judea," to whom these promises were made, we have to understand not the Israelites according to the flesh, but the Israelites according to the spirit, i.e., the Christians who are, according to what they say, the Israel of God, the true chosen people for whom all the promises were reserved to be accomplished, not in a carnal and crude or earthly manner, but in a wholly spiritual and divine manner. And that by the deliverance promised to this people from the captivity of all their enemies, we should not understand a bodily deliverance of a captive people, but a spiritual deliverance of all men from the servitude of the devil and sin, which was supposed to be done by Jesus Christ, their divine Savior, who gave himself up to death for the salvation of all men. That by the abundance of riches, goods, and temporal happiness promised to the people of Israel, we must understand not the goods and prosperity of the earth, but the abundance of graces and spiritual benefits that in the Christian religion God is supposed to convey to holy souls through the infinite merits of the divine Savior, Jesus Christ.

And finally, that by the city of Jerusalem, which is so favorably spoken of in these promises and prophecies, we should not understand the terrestrial Jerusalem, but the spiritual Jerusalem, which is the Christian church, or the celestial Jerusalem, which is heaven itself and, according to what our Christ-cultists say, the true dwelling of God, the place where the true throne of his glory and sovereign majesty is, the place where is eminently found all the goods that one could desire and all the happiness that one could enjoy, where nothing foul can enter and where the true elect are eternally blessed without ever fearing any evil.

And so, according to this spiritual and mystical interpretation of the promises made to the ancient patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when God promised to bless and multiply their race and their prosperity like the grains of sand in the sea or like the motes of dust on the earth, it was only a figurative expression by which he wanted to make it understood that he was blessing and multiplying the Christians who were spiritually understood by the posterity of the ancient patriarchs. When he promised to make an eternal bond with them, he meant an eternal and spiritual bond that he would make with the Christian church in giving it the evangelical law that would abide until the end of the centuries. When he promised to them and to all their prosperity to give them a powerful redeemer who would deliver them from all their servitude and all their miseries, who would gather them from all the countries of the world where they had been scattered and held captive, who would vanquish all their enemies and who would bring them back victorious and triumphant into the possession of their lands and country of Canaan and Palestine, this did not literally mean a temporal redeemer, but a spiritual redeemer who would deliver men spiritually from the servitude of the devil and sin, who would bring them all back to the knowledge of the true God, and not a redeemer who was supposed to deliver the Jewish people alone from their temporal captivity. And when he promised to make them lavishly enjoy all kinds of goods in their country after their deliverance, an abundance of wheat, wine, milk, honey, oil, and all kinds of other goods, this did not mean the temporal goods of the earth like wheat, wine, oil, milk, honey, and such, but the spiritual goods of grace, which were symbolized by these temporal goods and which the spiritual Savior of souls was supposed to bring to men after he had delivered them from their sins. And finally, when he promised to make the city of Jerusalem so beautiful,

holy, rich, abundant, flourishing, and happy, this did not mean the terrestrial Jerusalem, but the spiritual Jerusalem, which was supposed to be the Christian church, or the celestial Jerusalem, which was the true dwelling of God and the true resting place of blessed souls.

## VAIN ILLUSIONS AND RIDICULOUS INTERPRETATIONS

And just like with all the other promises or prophecies that were made on behalf of the people of Israel and their city of Jerusalem, which are all obviously false in their natural and proper sense (nevertheless our Christ-cultists do not want to openly acknowledge their falsity because it is on these so-called promises and prophecies that their entire religion is founded and they would be considered suckers if they acknowledged their vanity and falsity), so to hide from this shame they have been forced to give them a meaning they do not have in order to try to cover up their falsity and find in them, if they can, a truth that is not and never will be there.

But, since it is only an extraneous meaning, an imaginary meaning, a meaning fabricated from the fantasies of the interpreters, it is easy to see and show that this so-called spiritual and allegorical meaning cannot at all be used to see the truth or falsity of any proposition or promise or prophecy, and it is even ridiculous to fabricate in this way a spiritual meaning when the subject or speech does not require it. For, it is unquestionable that it is only with respect to the natural and true meaning of a proposition, promise, or prophecy that one can judge its truth or falsity. A proposition, for example, a promise, or a prophecy that is true in the proper and natural meaning of the terms in which it is conceived will not become false in itself on the pretext of wanting to give it a meaning that is different from what it has. Likewise, a proposition, promise, or prophecy that is obviously false in the proper and natural meaning of the terms in which it is conceived will not become true on the pretext of wanting to give it a meaning that is different from what it has. So, when in a speech, promise, or prophecy there is a clear-cut and definite meaning, a proper and natural meaning by which we can easily judge its truth or falsity, it is an abuse and madness to want to create for it a different meaning to search for truths or falsities that are not there,

and it is ridiculous, as I said, to want to abandon the truth of a definite, proper, and natural meaning to search for truths that are only imaginary in a fabricated and imaginary meaning.

This is what our Christ-cultists do when they abandon the proper, natural, and true meaning of the promises and prophecies to fabricate spiritual and mystical meanings that are certainly only imaginary meanings and ridiculously imagined at that, since in abandoning the real and true meaning they latch onto a meaning that is only imaginary and serves only to establish new errors to cover up the old. I say these spiritual and allegorical meanings are “only imaginary” because they actually depend only on the imagination of the interpreter: it depends only on their imagination to give them whatever spiritual and mystical meaning they want, so that if it was only a matter of fabricating spiritual, allegorical, and mystical meanings to make the promises or so-called prophecies true, by this means one could easily make everything true that was the most false and most absurd, which again would be very ridiculous to want to do.

Moreover, to want to give to the so-called divine promises and prophecies another meaning than what they openly contain in themselves is recklessness and presumption that is insupportable in men because it is totally changing, altering, corrupting, and even destroying in some way the said promises and prophecies. It is, I say, destroying them at least insofar as they are from God. For, although they think that they were actually from God, they do not claim that the spiritual, allegorical, and mystical meanings are really from God or even from the prophets. They do not claim that it is God himself or the prophets who said that they had to understand them and interpret them spiritually, allegorically, or mystically, as our Christ-cultists do. So, it is our Christ-cultists themselves who fabricate at will all the lovely so-called spiritual, allegorical, and mystical meanings with which they vainly maintain and feed the ignorance of the poor people.

And so, when they suggest that the so-called promises and prophecies come from God himself, and then do not explain them to us in their proper and natural meaning, but in a fabricated and hypothetical meaning that they call “allegorical, spiritual, and mystical,” or in an analogical and tropological sense, as they like to call it, it is no longer the word of God that they spout at us, but only their own thoughts, their

own fantasies and ideas dug up from their false imaginations; and so, they are not worth any consideration or attention.

What again shows us the illusion and vanity of these so-called spiritual and mystical meanings is that there is no sect or nation that could not also use the same promises and prophecies on behalf of their false religions, as our Christ-cultists do for theirs, if they wanted to fabricate spiritual and mystical meanings suitable to their beliefs, mysteries, and ceremonies. For, you can invent and fabricate as many of them as you want and apply them as you want to whatever you want; it only depends on the ingenuity and imagination of the interpreters.

It seems that it was Paul, the Grand Pooh-Bah, the vessel of election of Jesus Christ, who first invented these lovely spiritual and mystical meanings. For, this apostle, seeing on the one hand that the things that he believed should soon happen, conforming to the said promises and prophecies, were not happening as he preached, and that the time of their accomplishment was passing without any appearance that they would really be accomplished as he believed or pretended to believe, and on the other hand not wanting to acknowledge or sincerely admit his error in this, for fear, no doubt, of being shamefully taken as a sucker in what he believed and preached, to disguise the error and cover up the deception he advised people to abandon the literal meaning, the proper and natural meaning of the promises and prophecies and to give them a new meaning, unexpected and unthought-of, which was to interpret them spiritually, allegorically, and mystically, saying to this effect that everything that was said and done and passed or practiced in the law of Moses was said and done only figuratively for what would be accomplished and done in the law of Jesus Christ or in Christianity. (Cf. 1 Cor. 2:6–14, 10:1–10; Gal. 3:14–18, 4:21–31; Rom. 9:4–8.)

That is why he said that the letter kills but the spirit gives life, as if wanting to say that the literal interpretation of the law and promises is self-negating and confuses anyone who wants to stick to it, but the spiritual interpretation he gives is the true meaning that should be understood (2 Cor. 3:6). And as if those to whom he preached such a lovely doctrine owed him a great service and had to supply him lavishly with everything he needed to feed and support himself: *Do not be surprised if we reap all your temporal goods after sowing among you all the spiritual goods* (1 Cor. 9:11).

So, according to the wonderful doctrine of this scholar of the Gen-

tiles, the two wives of Abraham and his two sons spiritually represent two lovely mysteries. The one who was a slave represents the alliance of God with the Synagogue, which was only a slave and only gave birth to slaves, as this apostle says. The other who was the spouse represents the alliance of God with the Christian church, which is free and is the spouse of Jesus Christ, according to this apostle. Likewise, the son of the slave, born through the flesh, represents the Old Testament, which was only for the carnal Jews, represented by this slave's son. But the son of the free woman, born through the promise of God, represents the New Testament, which is for the Christians who are the true sons represented by Isaac (Gal. 4:22-25; Gen. 21:10).

Proof of this (note this well) is *that Sinai, or the ancient law, is a mountain in Arabia corresponding to what is now the terrestrial Jerusalem, which is a slave with all its children; but Jerusalem on high, which is called our Mother, is free and gives birth to children as promised* (Gal. 4:25-26). As a result, according to this apostle's doctrine, the terrestrial Jerusalem would not be the Holy City or a city very specially chosen or cherished by God, as the "Scriptures" say, but this would only be the "Jerusalem on high," as he says, or the "the celestial Jerusalem."

Likewise, according to this apostle's doctrine, the true Israelites were not the real Israelites in the flesh, but only those in the spirit of the faith of the ancient patriarchs. According to his doctrine, the promise to give them a powerful liberator who would deliver them from the captivity of all their enemies does not mean a redeemer who would be powerful in the world or even a bodily deliverance from visible enemies like men, but rather a liberator or redeemer who was spiritually all-powerful through God and a spiritual deliverance from invisible enemies like demons, vices, and sins.

## IT IS ALL VAIN AND LAUGHABLE CHILDISHNESS

And finally, according to this apostle's doctrine, the promise to make them gloriously and victoriously enter into possession of their lands and country where they would forever be filled with happiness and bliss and lavished with all goods does not mean a glorious and triumphant return

into Judea and Palestine or the enjoyment of temporal goods in this life, but the enjoyment of heavenly and eternal goods that the just ought to enjoy in heaven, according to this lovely doctrine, where Jesus Christ, their savior and redeemer, will lead them gloriously and triumphantly after they have generously conquered demons, vices, and passions, the greatest enemies of their salvation. All of this and much else that would be too long to report here were divinely and mysteriously symbolized for us in everything that was done and happened in the ancient law. And all this based on the lovely reason that Sinai, where the ancient law was given, was a mountain in Arabia that was joined to what is now the territory of Jerusalem, which is a slave with its children! And on the lovely pretext that Abraham had two wives, one of whom was a servant and represented the Synagogue and the other was his wife and represented the Christian church; and also on the pretext that this Abraham had two sons, the one from the servant was the Old Testament and the one from the free woman symbolized the New.

Who would not laugh at such a vain, stupid, and ridiculous doctrine as this? "Could you, my friends, contemplating this work, hold yourselves back from laughing?" (*Horace, Ars Poetica*, 5).

If, following this lovely way of allegorically, figuratively, and mysteriously interpreting everything that was said, done, and practiced in the ancient law of the Jews, we also wished to interpret all the speeches, actions, and wonderful adventures of the famous Don Quixote of La Mancha, we could certainly find as many mysteries and mysterious figures as we would like; we could fabricate as many allegories as we would like about his adventures and all his actions, and create a wholly supernatural and divine wisdom as good as any in the ancient law. But, we would have to be incredibly simple or incredibly naïve to put such pious faith in such vain interpretations and promises.

Yet, it is on such vain and ridiculous foundations that the entire Christian religion rests and it is on these vain and ridiculous spiritual and allegorical interpretations that our Christ-cultists founded their so-called Holy Scriptures and based all their mysteries, their doctrine, and all the beautiful hopes they have of an eternally blissful life in heaven. That is why there is nothing in all the ancient law that their scholars do not try to explain mystically and figuratively as something done in theirs; they find and see almost everywhere, like lunatics, the face of their Christ,

what he was, and what he did. They see his face in many people of the Old Testament like Abel, Isaac, Joseph, Joshua, David, Solomon, and many others: they claim that all of them represented Christ. They see his face in the animals and beasts: they find him in the Paschal lamb, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and even in the scapegoat in Lev. 16. Finally, they see him in inanimate things like the rock that Moses struck with his rod, the mountain where God spoke to Moses, the bronze snake that Moses raised in the desert: they claim that all these things and many others like them represented their Christ. And so, according to this lovely way of allegorizing so well everything that was done in the ancient law, they find that everything represented some of their mysteries.

We clearly see that it is ridiculous to abandon the real, natural, and literal meaning of these promises and prophecies in order to fabricate spiritual and allegorical meanings that are unsuitable for them. It is obviously an abuse of the terms of this law and these promises and prophecies; it is a perversion of the meaning and the true sense so that, although they would like to suppose that they were really from God, they are destroyed and annihilated by these sorts of allegorical and mystical interpretations that are entirely vain and frivolous, since they are basically only hollow imaginings and vain and ridiculous fictions of the human mind, which is pleased with vanity and lies. And so they do not deserve the least attention.

They are totally laughable and clearly show the vanity of these promises and prophecies that are no less vain in themselves than in the spiritual and mystical interpretations that our Christ-cultists are pleased to give them.

I would find it very astonishing that so many great and illustrious people have enjoyed telling us and spouting out so many stupidities about such vain subjects, if I did not know that they were carried away by their individual opinions and considerations.

The greatest men are sometimes capable of a thousand weaknesses, like others, and there are thousands of layers in the depths of the human heart and mind, which would be difficult to always develop well. We do not always see what motives drive them to speak or what views compel them to act. For me, I can hardly believe, as Montaigne says, that these great men spoke "in good faith," i.e., seriously when they delivered so many stupidities on the subject. Perhaps, it is that they persuaded themselves later about what they at first only wanted to make others believe,

"like children," as Montaigne says, "who scare themselves with faces that they paint for their friends" (*Essays*, 2:12), or like the stupid idolaters who religiously revere tree trunks or stones that they fashion in some way. And our Christ-cultists themselves, who still today worship feeble little images or idols of dough after they have mysteriously and secretly pronounced only four words over them—is there anything more vain, stupid, and ridiculous than this?

I would prefer to think that these great men wanted to toy with our common ignorance and stupidity, knowing full well that there is nothing that you cannot make the ignorant believe. Yet if we want to believe that these great men really said what they thought and believed, I cannot help thinking they were ignorant fools.

You will forgive me for this expression, if you wish, because I am naïvely writing what I think, though I have reflected on it a long time, always following, as far as I could, the clearest lights of reason to see if I was deceiving myself because natural reason is the only road that I have always laid out for myself to follow in my thoughts, which seemed obvious to me that everyone should always do in order not to walk blindly, as we do, on roads and in countries that are unfamiliar. And the more I thought, the more I always found where to settle my thoughts.

Therefore, seeing that these promises and prophecies have not been accomplished in their proper and natural sense, and, as our Christ-cultists admit, they could only have been so in a spiritual and allegorical sense, which is basically only an extraneous sense and a ridiculous and imaginary meaning fabricated at their pleasure by the imagination of men, it obviously follows that they are false since they could not possibly be true and veritable in a sense that they do not have in themselves and that is only imaginary.

And if they are false, it is clear and evident that they do not come from God and that they cannot serve as proofs or decisive evidence of the truth of any religion, any more than the so-called miracles. And since all these so-called motives of credibility on which our Christ-cultists claim to base the certitude of the truth of their religion have no weight or authority to prove what they claim, it obviously follows that their religion is false and that everything that they say comes from God is, as I said, only errors, illusions, lies, and impostures—and this is the fourth conclusive proof that I have to give.

## 29. FIFTH PROOF: OF THE VANITY AND FALSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION DRAWN FROM THE ERRORS OF ITS DOCTRINE AND MORALITY

**L**et us move on to the fifth proof that I will take from the falsity of their doctrine. There is no religion that does not pretend to teach the purest, holiest, and truest doctrine. However, there is not one of them that is not mixed and kneaded with errors, illusions, lies, and impostures. Consequently we can truly say this of the Christian, Apostolic, and Roman religion, as well as of all the other religions. From this I take the argument that a religion that accepts, approves, and authorizes errors in its doctrine and morality cannot be a true religion and cannot truly be a divine institution. Now, the Christian religion, especially the Roman sect, accepts, approves, and authorizes errors in its doctrine and morality. This is easy to show.

In the first place, it teaches and makes people believe not only things that are false but also things that are ridiculous and absurd and that are entirely opposed to what they should think of the bounty, wisdom, justice, and mercy of an infinitely perfect god.

In the second place, it also accepts, approves, and authorizes errors in its morality:

1—Because it approves and authorizes maxims that aim to turn justice and natural equality upside down

2—Because it accuses and condemns the most natural and lawful inclinations of Nature as wicked, and it allows, favors, and authorizes abuses that are openly shocking to good judgment and are entirely opposed to justice and to the good government of men.

It is easy to show you this merely by stating the errors and abuses because to state them plainly and simply such as they are is sufficient to refute them.

## 30. FIRST ERROR OF ITS DOCTRINE, CONCERNING THE TRINITY OF ONE GOD IN THREE PERSONS

**F**irstly, then, the Christian, Apostolic, and Roman religion teaches and makes people believe that there is only one God and at the same time that there are three persons in God, i.e., three persons who are God: "With fervor it preaches a single god in three persons" (*Hymn, De Laudis*).

This is clearly absurd: if there are three who are really God, there are really three Gods. And if there are really three Gods, it is false to say that there is only one God. Or if it is true to say that there is really only one God, it is false to say that there are really three who are God, since "one" and "three" cannot really be said to be one and the same thing.

The same Christian religion teaches and makes people believe that the first of these so-called three divine persons, whom it calls "the Father," engendered the second person whom it calls "the Son," and these two first persons together produced the third whom it calls "the Holy Spirit." And yet it teaches and makes people believe that these three so-called divine persons do not depend at all on each other and none are older than the others, since none existed before the others. This again is clearly absurd since one thing cannot receive its being from another without some dependence on it, and a thing has to exist in order for it to give being to another. If, then, the second and the third of these so-called divine persons received their being from the first, they have to depend in their being on this first person who gave them being or who engendered and produced them, and this first person also has to have existed before being able to give being, since that which does not exist cannot give being to another thing.

If, then, the first person really gave being to the two others and the two others really received their being from the first, the first must have existed when the two others had not yet existed and, consequently, it existed before the others.

Moreover, it is contradictory and absurd to say that a thing that has been engendered or produced has not had a beginning. Now, according to our Christ-cultists, the second and third divine persons were engendered or produced; so they had a beginning. And if they had a beginning and the first did not since it was not engendered or produced by another, it necessarily follows that the one existed before the other, i.e., the first existed before the second and the second before the third, since it is absurd to say that they produced each other without any dependence on each other and without any priority or posteriority. If this is absurd, it is certainly no less absurd to say that there is really only one God but there are three persons in God.

Our Christ-cultists who sense these absurdities and cannot defend against them with any good reason have no other resource but to say that we have to piously close the eyes of human reason, suppress our mind under the obedience of faith, and humbly worship such high and reverent mysteries without wanting to fathom or understand them.

But as this "faith" is really only a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures (as I proved above), when they say that we have to piously and blindly submit to everything their faith teaches and makes them believe, it is as if they were telling us to piously and blindly believe and accept all kinds of errors, illusions, and impostures by the very principle of errors, lies, and impostures. "These are truths where reason is lost" (Quesnal, *The New Testament in French with Moral Reflections on Each Verse*, cf. John 14:10).

There is good reason here to say that reason is lost because we have to actually lose or entirely renounce the lights of reason to want to maintain such absurd propositions as these. Yet that is one of the principal points of the doctrine of our Christ-cultists. They themselves see very well that reason is lost in the absurdities of these lovely so-called mysteries and yet they figure that they would rather lose their reason than go against their faith by using the lights of reason. And this, too, even more clearly proves their blindness and the falsity of their doctrine. "It is a reason for them to believe only what is unbelievable and according to them it follows human reason the more it opposes it," as Montaigne said (*Essays*, 2:12). But this proves much more clearly the blindness and falsity of their doctrine.

Our GodChrist-cultists reprimand and condemn the blindness of the

ancient pagans who recognized and worshipped many gods. They scoffed at the genealogy of their gods, the births and marriages and the generation of their children, and they themselves did not care that they were saying things much more ridiculous and absurd than anything the pagans ever said about their gods. For, although the pagans recognized and worshipped many gods, they did not say that they all had but one nature, one power, and one divinity. They ascribed to each, ingenuously and without mystery, their own nature, person, will, inclinations, and divinity. But our GodChrist-cultists, by recognizing a single god in name but actually admitting three, to whom, however, they ascribe only one nature, power, will, and divinity, are certainly much more absurd than the pagans with their plurality of gods.

If these same pagans believed that there were goddesses as well as gods who married and had children, they were thinking nothing unnatural in this since they did not imagine that these gods were without bodies and feelings. And since they thought they had bodies and feelings like men, we should not be surprised if they believed in male gods and female goddesses. For if there really were gods, why would there not be both sexes? There is no reason to deny or recognize one or the other. And supposing, like the pagans, that there were gods and goddesses, why would they not marry? Why would they not love each other? And have children of their own species, like men do? There would certainly be nothing ridiculous or absurd in this doctrine and belief of the pagans if its foundation were true, i.e., if it were true that there really were gods.

But in the doctrine and belief of our GodChrist-cultists, there is something much more ridiculous and absurd because, besides the fact that they say that one God equals three and three gods equal one, which is a very great absurdity, they say that this three-in-one God has no body, no form, no figure at all. They say that the first person of this three-in-one God, whom they call "the Father," engendered all alone by his own thought and knowledge a person whom they call "the Son," who is totally like his father, without any body, form, and figure.

But if these two so-called persons are without any body, form, and figure, how is it that the first person is called "the Father" and not "the Mother"? And how is it that the second is called "the Son" and not "the Daughter"? If the first is really father rather than mother and the second is really son rather than daughter, there must be something in these two

persons that makes the one father rather than mother and the other son rather than daughter: What could do this unless it is that they are both male and not female? But how could they be male and not female, seeing that they have no body, form, or figure at all? This is unimaginable; it cannot be; it is self-negating. But, it does not matter; they are always very pleased to say that these two persons who have no body, form, and figure and, consequently, can have no sex, i.e., they are not male or female, are, nevertheless father and son and by their mutual love they produced a third person who is called "the Holy Spirit," who like the other two has no body, form, and figure. So, according to the wonderful and holy doctrine and belief of our subtle and scholarly GodChrist-cultists, there is only one three-in-one God who is without body, form, figure, and color and in whom, however, there are three divine persons, all without body, form, figure, and color. It cannot be said that they have any sex, i.e., that they are male or female, and nevertheless that did not stop them from engendering and producing one another, which was done, say our GodChrist-cultists, not carnally but spiritually and in a totally mysterious and ineffable manner, i.e., in a manner that our Christ-cultist themselves cannot explain or understand. Judge if this doctrine and belief is not incomparably more ridiculous and absurd than the ancient pagans'? It certainly is because the ancient pagans believed, following the normal course of Nature in its operations, that the gods could give birth to many children and their children could in turn give birth to many others and thus continue for generations and generations. According to their principles, there is nothing ridiculous or absurd in their thoughts or belief.

But why do our GodChrist-cultists want to limit the generative power of their God the Father to the generation of a single son? Could he not or did he not want to engender more? Or could it be that it was not befitting to have several sons? And several daughters? It cannot be that he wanted only one son because a multitude of children, when they are all well-born, beautiful, wise, and virtuous, do honor and glory to the father who engendered them; and it cannot be doubted that a god-father would always engender only beautiful children who would all be as wise and as perfect as he wanted them and, consequently, they would all do honor and glory to him.

Moreover, this so-called divine Father had no reason, as men do, to

ever fear seeing any of his children in poverty or misery, since, being the sovereign master and lord of heaven and earth, he could have given to each and every one of them the privileges befitting their divine birth and he could even, if he had wanted to, have created and given to each of them an entire world to govern and to do with what they wanted and kept for himself this world—if he found it good. But, it seems that for some reason he did not want to do this.

To say that he could not engender others, given that his generative power had been entirely exhausted by the generation of only the first son, would be to say something ridiculous and absurd since it would be ridiculous and absurd to want to put such meager limits on a power that they say is infinite. Now, our Christ-cultists say that the generative power of this divine Father is infinite; and if it is infinite, then it cannot be exhausted by the generation of a single son, although they claim that this son is also infinite, because the infinite can never be exhausted and omnipotence that is exhausted cannot be infinite.

What? Does this power to engender become exhausted in men after the birth of a single child? Not at all. Far from it, it is not even exhausted after the birth of twelve or fifteen, seeing that there are many who have had an even greater number of children. Egyptus, for example, the first king of Egypt, had fifty sons, they say, whom he married to the fifty daughters of his brother Dardanus. They say Murad, the third king of the Turks, had two hundred children. They say Hierosme, king of the Arabs, had six hundred. Skilurus, king of the Tartars [or Scythians] left eighty sons. It seems that king Solomon had more than any of them since he had no fewer than seven hundred wives who were like queens and he had three hundred concubines; as a result, if he had had only one child per woman, he would have had at least one thousand. This power to engender is not limited in women either to have only one child: there are many who had more than a dozen. There were and still are many who have two or three at the same time. The *Historical Journal* of May 1709 reports that the wife of an artisan in London brought three boys and three girls into the world in the same delivery. They say the countess of Holland, Margaret, birthed thirty-six children in one delivery. Moreover they say another countess of Holland, also Margaret, after making fun of a woman who was overburdened with children, in one delivery had as many babies as there are

days in the year, i.e., 365, who were all married. Look at the *Annals and Histories of Holland and Poland*.

And I will not mention many species of animals that normally give birth to ten or twelve babies in a single litter. It seems by all these examples and by everyday experience that the power to engender in men and beasts is not limited to the generation of only one, but often many more. Why, then, do our Christ-cultist want to put such a meager limit on such a gentle, charming, and pleasant perfection as this in their God who is all-powerful and infinite in all other kinds of perfections? They can give no solid reason and that is what makes them ridiculous, even more ridiculous than the pagans in the belief in the generation of their gods. But why, then, do they not want the second or third person of their three-in-one divinity to have the power to engender a son like the first? If this power to engender a son is a perfection in the first person, then it is a perfection and power that is not in the second or third person; and since these two persons lack a perfection and power that is in the first, they are certainly not equal, as our Christ-cultists claim they are. If, on the contrary, this power is not a perfection, they should not have attributed it to the first person any more than to the other two because only perfections should be attributed to a being who is sovereign and infinitely perfect. But they do not dare say the power to engender a divine person is not a perfection. On the one hand if they say that this first person very well could have engendered many sons and daughters, but he only wanted to engender this single son and these two other persons also did not want to engender or produce others, we could:

1—Ask them how they know that this is so because we do not see in their so-called Holy Scriptures any of these so-called divine persons positively declare it. And if they did not declare it, how can our Christ-cultists know about it? Certainly they cannot know anything about it! And so they talk according to their own ideas and hollow imaginations. And in this again they make themselves ridiculous and reckless. For, it is ridiculous and reckless to judge and talk so positively about the intentions and will of the gods without knowing what they are.

2—Say that if these so-called divine persons really had the power to engender many sons and daughters but they did not want to, it follows that this divine power remains pretty useless and ineffective in them: it is totally useless in the third person who engendered and produced

nothing and it is quite ineffective in the other two since they were limited to such a small effect. And so, this power to engender and produce lots of sons and daughters remains useless and idle in them, which is not at all appropriate to say about these so-called divine persons.

Furthermore, we could say that this is a clear indication in the person of the father that he did not take much pleasure and contentment in the generation of his son, seeing that he did not want to engender another. And it would be a clear indication in the three persons that that they did not want to do so much good for other divine persons that they could have engendered or produced, seeing that they did not want to give them the being that they so advantageously had. It is certainly a pity that these divine persons had so little inclination to love of generation and that they loved so little the multiplication and propagation of their divine species. For, if they had only loved their multiplication as much as men do, if they had wanted to multiply their divine race only as much as Jacob multiplied in Egypt and if they had wanted to give bodies to their children or if all their divine children had wanted to incarnate in human bodies, as the so-called only Son of God the Father did, the earth and the heavens would now be full of divine children and divine people who would be a lot more worthy than this multitude of cruel and corrupt men who fill the land with crimes and viciousness. And so, on whatever stance our Christ-cultists make this first, capital point of their doctrine, it is always clearly false, ridiculous, and absurd.

## 31. SECOND ERROR, CONCERNING THE INCARNATION OF GOD BECOME MAN

Our Christ-cultists and God-cultists reprimand and condemn the pagans for ascribing divinity to mortal men, as well as for worshipping them as gods after their death. They are certainly right to reprimand and condemn them for this, but these pagans did only what our Christ-cultists themselves still do today, ascribing divinity to their Christ who was really only a man, and a mortal man like other men. They themselves admit and make a confession of faith that he was really a man and even a mortal man. As a result, if our GodChrist-cultists reprimand and condemn the pagans for worshipping weak and mortal men as gods, they should, then, condemn themselves since they do the same thing and make the same error and they themselves worship as god a man who was mortal, and even so mortal that he died shamefully on a cross between two thieves after having been condemned to death.

It is no use for our Christ-cultists to say here that there is a big difference between their Jesus Christ and the pagan gods, on the pretext that their Christ was, as they say, truly god and truly man together, given that the divinity was really incarnated in him in such a way that the divine nature was joined and united hypostatically, as they say, with the human nature, making Jesus Christ truly god and truly man, which was never done in the so-called gods of the ancient pagans so that it was obviously an error and madness to worship them as gods since they were only weak and mortal men like other men.

But it is easy to see clearly the weakness and vanity of this response and this so-called difference between the two. For, would it not have been just as easy for the pagans to say that the divinity or the divine nature was incarnated in the men and women they worshipped as gods and goddesses? Certainly it would have been just as easy for the pagans to say this of their gods and goddesses as for the Christians to say it of their Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, if the divinity had wanted to be incarnated and

united hypostatically (as our GodChrist-cultists say) to human nature in their Christ, how do they know that it had not also wanted to be incarnated and united hypostatically with the human nature in great men and admirable women who by their virtues and positive qualities or good actions excelled above the crowd of other men and came to be worshipped as gods and goddesses? Certainly, the divinity could have been incarnated in the gods and goddesses of the pagans as easily as in the Christ of the Christians.

And if our GodChrist-cultists do not want to believe that the divinity was ever incarnate in great people, why do they want to believe that it was incarnate in their Christ? What reason and what proof do they have? Nothing but their faith and their blind belief, which is, as I said, a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures, and was the same in the pagans as in them. This clearly shows us that they were both playing the same game, they were both equally in error and they have nothing to condemn each other for. But, what is more ridiculous in Christianity than in paganism with respect to the gods is that the pagans usually ascribed divinity only to great men, to great characters, or to people who excelled in virtue or in rare and beautiful perfections—those who, for example, invented the sciences and the arts, who did some special service for the public, or who performed some great and generous action, etc.

But to whom did our GodChrist-cultists ascribe divinity? To a nobody who had no talent, no mind, no learning, no skill, and who was totally despised in the world. To whom did they ascribe divinity? Dare I say it? Yes, I will say it: they ascribed divinity to a fool, a madman, a wretched fanatic, and a miserable scoundrel.

Yes, my dear friends, it is to this character that your priests, scholars, and preachers have ascribed divinity. It is this character whom they make you worship as your loving and divine Savior, who could not even save himself from the shameful punishment of the cross to which he had been condemned and on which he died miserably. For, this Jesus Christ who they make you worship as a god become man to save and redeem you was, according to the very portrait that his evangelists and disciples give, only a low-born man, a wretched fanatic, and a miserable scoundrel who was nailed and hanged on a cross and whom we could say had been cursed by God and men, according to what is written in their own holy books where it is said, *he is cursed by God who is hanged on a tree* (Deut. 21:23).

There is no need for me to prove that he was only a vile and contemptible man because outside of the fact that he himself said, *he had no place to lay his head* (Luke 9:58), you know he came into this world in a stable, he was born of poor parents, he was always poor, he was only the son of a carpenter, and from the time he wanted to appear in the world and be talked about he was considered a madman, a fool, a fiend, and seducer, who was always despised, mocked, persecuted, flogged, and who, finally, was hanged on a cross where he died miserably, *cursed by God who is hanged on a tree.*

To prove all this, it is only a matter of proving and showing that he really was a fool, a madman, and a fanatic. This is what I am going to prove clearly by these three points:

- 1—by the opinion of him in the world,
- 2—by his own thoughts and words,
- 3—by his actions and mannerisms.

## 32. WHAT WAS THE MIND AND CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST?

**F**irst, as to the opinion of him in the world we clearly see in the evangelists themselves that he was only considered a man like I just said. We see in Luke that the first time he wanted to start preaching in Nazareth, where he was born and bred, the people were so outraged by what he said (Luke 4:29) that in their anger they chased him from the city and took him to the edge of a cliff to throw him off and break his neck.

Another time when he was talking with the Jews and saying stupid and offensive things that shocked them, they said to him, *Do we not have reason to say that you are a Samaritan and possessed by a demon?* (John 8:48, 52, 57, and 6:53–60)

People, friends, and family all thought he was crazy and spoke nonsense and they ridiculed him (cf. Mark 3:21; Luke 11:45, 53, 23:9–11; John 10:20).

It was only to scorn him that the Jews mocked him and his imaginary royalty when they scornfully put a crown of thorns on his head and a reed in his hand to act as a royal scepter and knelt before him saying, *We salute you, king of the Jews* (Matt. 27:29). About this St. Paul categorically said that no prince of this world knew his so-called wisdom and if they had they would never have crucified him (1 Cor. 2:8).

All this evidence clearly shows us that he was really only considered a madman, a lunatic, and a fanatic. And we can also see this clearly in his own thoughts and words.

For, he thought and imagined not only that he was the son of God, but also that he was born the king of the Jews to rule over them eternally (John 3:16, 17). He imagined that he was going to deliver them all from the captivity or slavery of all nations and reestablish their kingdom in a more thriving state than ever before (Luke 4:18; Acts 1:6; Matt. 17:11). He imagined that they would soon see him coming down from the sky with his angels, full of glory and power, with a majesty to judge, i.e., to govern all the living and the dead, whom he thought he would resurrect (Matt. 24:30–31) and to govern the earth in justice and truth (Luke

21:27-28). He imagined that he was soon going to create a new heaven and earth where justice would reside and he would reign eternally with his elect (2 Peter 3:13). He imagined that he would make his apostles rule with him, that they would sit on a dozen thrones to judge, i.e., to govern under him the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28) and they would eat and drink at his table in his kingdom (Luke 22:30). He imagined or at least he said that everyone who for love of him left their father, mother, brothers, sisters, children, houses, lands, and inheritance would be given one hundred times as much as they had left and he would give them eternal life (Matt. 19:29). He imagined that he was soon going to make all the dead hear his voice and resurrect them and make them leave their graves by the power and force of his voice (John 5:25, 28) and he would forever preserve from death those who observe his word and believe in him, assuring them that they would never die (John 8:51). He imagined that he would be or was the great liberator (in his time there were many other impostors calling themselves the promised Messiah, like Judas the Galilean, Theudas, Barcosbas, etc., who on this vain pretext abused the people and tried to stir them up to seduce them, but who all were scattered and finally perished) who had been so often promised to the Jews and to the city of Jerusalem in the law of Moses and all the prophets (he thought he could give the Holy Spirit and power to forgive all sins only by blowing in their mouths [John 20:22]).

Finally, he imagined that it was in him that God was going to accomplish all the great and magnificent promises made to this people and that all his elect would be eternally blessed in his name since he was the eternal and all-powerful son of an eternal and all-powerful God (John 3:15-17).

In their Gospels do we not clearly see the thoughts and visions of a fanatic? Did Don Quixote, that famous fanatic and wandering knight, ever have such thoughts like these? Certainly not. His visions and his thoughts, as wild and false as they were, were never as crazy as this. One would have had to be an arch-fanatic like the Christ of the Christians to have thoughts and visions as vain, false, ridiculous, absurd, and extravagant as he had. And if he himself or somebody like him were to return now to tell us he had such thoughts and visions, we would certainly look upon him today only as a lunatic, a fool, and a fanatic—just as he was considered in his time.

### 33. WHAT WAS HIS PREACHING?

We come to his words and speech. They show us clearly enough the character of his mind, which was just as I said. We already see this in his first speech in the synagogue of Nazareth. For, although it was said in a Gospel (Luke 4:22ff) that everyone first praised and was surprised to hear the words of grace come out of his mouth, nevertheless, it did not last because their admiration soon turned into indignation and scorn so that they chased him from the synagogue and wanted to throw him off a cliff. The madness that appeared in this speech he made (without talking about other stupidities that no doubt especially outraged the Jews, for it seems that they should not have been so outraged only by what I am reporting here) consisted in him wanting to attribute the glory of seeing in him the accomplishment of all the grand and magnificent promises that had been made in the law and which the so-called prophets had spoken about so often, especially the prophet Isaiah (Luke 4:17), which evidence he found by opening the book given to him. For, taking this prophet's text as evidence (which he found, as I said, by opening the book either intentionally or not) he wanted to persuade the people that all the grand and magnificent promises that God had made to their fathers, especially to this prophet, would be fulfilled in him. That is where his mental derangement clearly appeared because he so vainly imagined he saw so many great and beautiful things happen of which he was completely incapable of showing any effect.

And at the same time this proves that he had to have said something in his speech more shocking and more harmful to the Jews, seeing that they were so upset with him. For, if he had said nothing more shocking than this, such a speech, it seems to me, should have aroused only laughter and scorn and not their anger and indignation to the point of wanting to throw him off a cliff. But our Christ-cultists do not claim to say here that their Christ had sufficiently proven the accomplishment, or sufficiently shown the effects of the word of the prophet that he read, through the surprising miracles that he performed by miraculously healing all kinds of sicknesses and disabilities. For, besides the fact that I

showed above the vanity and falsity of these so-called miracles, even if they were true they would be nothing in comparison with what he should have done to truly show the accomplishment of what this prophet said. For, where Jesus Christ read at that time this prophet predicted nothing less than the deliverance, happiness, glory, and bliss of the entire Jewish people. And not just the deliverance of a few people possessed by demons or the healing of a few sick or disabled, shady individuals. This deliverance of the entire Jewish people, according to what this prophet said, should have been made by an all-powerful prince who took the government of the empire on his shoulders and by his beautiful and wonderful qualities would be called the Admirable, the Counselor, the mighty God, the Father of the coming age, the Prince of Peace, and he would sit on the throne of David, reign forever in his kingdom, establish and strengthen it in justice and truth to last forever with no end of peace in sight (Is. 9:6–7). This was certainly and clearly far from happening in the time of Jesus Christ as in any other time.

And so, it was obviously vain and false to speak about this so-called prophet and the so-called accomplishment of his predictions.

To say that this prophecy was accomplished spiritually in Jesus Christ, as our God-cultists claim, is a pure illusion, seeing that the so-called spiritual accomplishment can only be imaginary and can as easily be attributed to someone other than Jesus Christ. And so, it is to be blind and self-imposing to claim that Jesus Christ by his so-called miracles had sufficiently shown the accomplishment of the prophecy that he read on this first occasion.

But let us go on to other speeches and preaching that are certainly more unusual and striking in their kind.

Here is how he began to preach: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near* (Matt. 3:2). *Believe the good news*, he said, and he went throughout Galilee in the cities, towns, and villages preaching this good news of the approaching kingdom of heaven (Mark 1:14–15). And as no one saw (and no one at present sees) any appearance of the coming of this so-called kingdom, it is an evident proof that it was only imaginary and you would have to have a twisted or backward mind to run around like he did preaching the approach of such a kingdom.

But let us see how he praised and described this so-called kingdom in his other preaching to make his listeners know its grandeur and excel-

lence and have a high opinion of it. Here is how he spoke to the people and his disciples: *The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men were sleeping his enemy came and sowed weeds among his good seed* (Matt. 13:24–25). *The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field that a man hides again after he has found it and is so full of joy for having found it that he sells all his goods and buys the field* (Matt. 13:44). *The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for beautiful pearls and when he finds one at a high price goes and sells everything he has to buy it* (Matt. 13:45). *The kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea and catching all kinds of fish; and when full, the fishermen take it out and put the good fish in a vessel and throw out the bad* (Matt. 13:47–48). *The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed sown in a field; there is no grain smaller than this one and yet when it grows it is bigger than all plants and becomes like a tree where birds of the sky come to rest on its branches* (Matt. 13:31–32). *The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman takes and mixes with three measures of flour until all has risen* (Matt. 13:33).

In the end, he always preached and taught the people in parables and only in parables, as is expressly indicated in the Gospels (Matt. 13:3).

Here certainly is lovely and subtle preaching for a man who was said to be the Son of God and the son of such a wise father and whom our Christ-cultists claim to have been eternal wisdom itself. Here are some lovely and ingenious parables or comparisons! And they can really give a lofty idea of the grandeur and excellence of this lovely so-called kingdom of heaven, seeing that it is similar to so many lovely things like a mustard seed sown in a field, a fishing line thrown in the sea, leaven kneaded into dough and flour! Etc. If one of our scholars or preachers today preached such things, would we not mock him? Certainly we would only scorn and laugh at him. And our Christ-cultists would like to persuade us that this is the speech of divine and eternal wisdom?

And what is remarkable in this is that this so-called wonderful and divine wisdom spoke to people, as it says, *so that seeing, they see not and hearing, they understand not* (Matt. 13:14) and that thus they will not be converted and their sins will not be forgiven (Mark 4:12). And on another occasion this same so-called divine wisdom said that it *came to blind those who saw clearly* (John 9:39).

Being so, there was not only madness, but also malice and vicious-

ness in his speeches and preaching since he spoke on purpose in ambiguous and obscure terms so that they would not understand what he said and no one would profit from it.

It is said in Ecclesiasticus (37:23) *he who speaks sophistically*, i.e., in an ambiguous and deceitful manner, *is hateful*. Much more reason should we hate him who speaks on purpose with the intention of deceiving, blinding, and confusing his listeners. So, this Christ of the Christians spoke on purpose to people, as he himself said, in parables so that though seeing they would not see and though hearing they would not understand what he was saying and so they would not be converted and their sins would not be forgiven. It obviously follows that there was not only madness but also malice and viciousness in his speech and preaching, which would make him not only contemptible but also despicable and disgraceful to the people.

On the one hand, he said that he had come to save men, to seek and save all that were lost, to call and save all sinners and *he asked for no sacrifices but he only wanted to bring mercy* (Luke 19:10; Matt. 18:11). He said he was the Light of the World, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Good Shepherd, and he would give his life for his flocks and for their safety, etc. (John 8:12, 10:14–15, 14:6).

And on the other hand, he said that he had come to blind those who saw clearly, that we should not think he came to bring peace on earth, but rather to light the fires of war (Matt. 10:34–36). Would you not have to be out of your mind to make such speeches and preaching that were contradictory and entirely self-negating? Is not this how a fool and fanatic speaks?

There is no impostor or fanatic who cannot say and promise as much. Those who have nothing better to give their disciples end up having to feed them with empty hopes (cf. Matt. 5:3–4).

And there are many examples that would be too long to record here. (Cf. Matt. 13:3–8, 23:26–27; Luke 11:23, 12:35–36, 14:26–27, 35; John 6:51–55, 7:16, 19–20, 28–29, 8:5, 12:24–27.) Really, are not these the words of a fool and fanatic? You would certainly have to have lost your mind to speak like this and if someone came today saying the same things, we would certainly consider him a fool and fanatic.

Here again is another, more particular speech this Jesus Christ made. One day a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house with some others

and after he arrived this Jesus Christ sat down at the table without washing his hands according to the custom. The Pharisee did not think this respectable but did not say what he thought. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ noticed that he did not find this good and here is how he treated this Pharisee who had invited him to his house (Luke 11:37ff):

*You others wash the exterior of the cup and plate and inside you are full of greed and injustice. You fools, did not he who made the outside make the inside as well? [But give alms of what you have and all will be pure.] Woe to you, Pharisees, who give a tenth of mint, rue, and other plants and who neglect the judgment and charity of God. You should observe the latter but not forget the former. Woe to you, Pharisees, because you are like blank graves whose outside seems beautiful to the eyes of men but the inside is full of the bones of the dead and rot. So you appear righteous on the outside but inside you are full of hypocrisy and injustice. Blind Pharisees, first clean the inside of the cup and plate so that the outside also be made clean.*

(Cf. Matt. 23:25-28)

Can you imagine that a man with common sense could ever speak like this to a person who had honestly invited to his house to eat and while he was actually at his table? It cannot be; surely only a fool, a madman, and an impudent fanatic could go so far in madness and impertinence.

Here is an argument he made that clearly shows his mental derangement. The Jews told him one day that he was being a witness for himself and because of this his testimony was unacceptable. Here is what he said to them to prove that his testimony was valid:

*Though I testify for myself, my testimony is still valid because I know where I came from and where I am going; but you others do not know where I come from or where I am going and if I judged someone, my judgment would be just because I am not alone, but my Father who sent me is with me. And it is written in your law that the testimony of two people is accepted as valid; now, I testify for myself and my Father who sent me also testifies for me, etc. (John 8:13-18)*

Therefore, following his argument, his testifying for himself should have been valid! Is not this a lovely proof? Who would not laugh at such an

argument? It is easy to see by all his speeches that Jesus Christ was really only a fool and a fanatic. And it is certain that if he came back again today among us, if it were possible, and did and said the same things as before, we would certainly consider him nothing but a fool and fanatic.

We can easily judge the same about his character if we examine closely his actions and mannerisms. For:

1—To run around and make a disturbance in all the cities, towns, and villages like he did and preach the coming of an imaginary kingdom of heaven as he did, belongs to a fanatic and we consider fanatics all men who do the same thing today.

2—To have been, as is said in the Gospels, transported by the devil onto a high mountain where he thought he could see all the kingdoms of the world (Matt. 4:8; Luke 4:5) certainly can only befit a lunatic and fanatic. For, it is certain that there is no mountain where we can even see only one entire kingdom, unless maybe it is the kingdom of Yvetot in France. So it was only in his imagination that he saw all the kingdoms of the world and it was also no doubt only in his imagination that he was transported onto a mountain as well as onto the pinnacle of a temple. Now, again it belongs only to a fool, lunatic, and fanatic to have such visions and transports of the imagination.

3—When he healed the deaf and the mute, it is said that he took the person aside, put his fingers in his ears, spit and grabbed his tongue, then casting his eyes to the sky he sighed deeply and said “Ephphata!” which means “Open up” (Mark 7:32–34). All these particularities and mannerisms certainly are fitting only to a fanatic.

When he resurrected Lazarus (or rather pretended to resurrect him), he wept, trembled, and was moved in his spirit; then he approached the tomb of the so-called dead man, trembled again, lifted his eyes to the sky, and said, *My Father, I give you thanks for hearing me; then he cried out, Lazarus, come outside!* (John 11:38–43). All these are mannerisms of a fanatic.

And many other similar examples could I report (cf. Luke 10:21–24; Matt. 21:12–13; John 13:21–31, 17:1–8, 21–25).

All this evidence, therefore, about the character of Jesus Christ, his thoughts, imaginations, words, speeches, actions, mannerisms, and judgments that he did in the world clearly show us that he was only a nobody, a vile and despicable man who had no mind, talent, or knowl-

edge; and finally, that he was a fool, a madman, a wretched fanatic, and a miserable scoundrel. Yet it is to such a character that our Christ-cultists attribute divinity. It is such a character that they worship as their loving and divine Savior and the all-powerful Son of an all-powerful God. And it is in this that they clearly make themselves more ridiculous and blame-worthy than the pagans who attributed divinity only to great men with strong characters and rare and singular virtues or who had done some outstanding service or important benefit for the public. Being so, it is evident that Christianity was only a veritable, even a vile and despicable fanaticism in the beginning, seeing that it was at first only a sect of vile and despicable people who professed to blindly follow the false thoughts, imaginations, maxims, and opinions of a vile and despicable fanatic who came from a vile and despicable nation that had already so well persuaded its disciples what he said concerning the so-called reestablishment of the kingdom of Israel and all the other lovely promises that it made and that they would ask him if they would be done soon (Acts 1:6).

And to prove that Christianity was really only a vile and despicable fanaticism, we have to see what the historians of the time said about it and how the first Christ-cultists spoke about themselves.

## 34. CHRISTIANITY WAS ONLY A VILE AND DESPICABLE FANATICISM IN THE BEGINNING

**T**he histories of the time spoke of Christianity as a pernicious, vile, and despicable sect and a detestable superstition. Just look at what Tacitus the Roman historian, said:

Nero wanted to blame the crime of burning Rome on somebody else, so he had the Christians cruelly killed as arsonists; they were hated for their infamy, these people who were called “Christians” because of Christ, their founder, who was punished with the extreme punishment in the reign of Tiberius by Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea. But this pernicious sect, after being repressed for some time, proliferated again not only in its birthplace, but in Rome itself, which is the meeting place and like the sewer of all the world’s filth. They were insulted unto death, covered with the hides of wild beasts and devoured by dogs or fastened to a cross and burned to serve as fires in the night. Even though these lowlifes were not innocent and deserved the extreme punishments, it did not stop people from taking compassion on them because the prince killed them not for the public good as much as to satisfy his cruelty. (*Annals*, 15:44)

That is how this historian speaks of the first Christians.

Lucian has nothing better to say and treats them as lowlifes:

These lowlifes scorned everything, even death itself, on the hope of immortality and they voluntarily offered themselves to punishment because their first lawmaker, who was crucified in Palestine for having started this sect, made them believe that they were all brothers since they renounced their religion and worshipped the crucified and they lived according to his laws and held everything in common, receiving his dogma with blind obedience. (*On the Death of Peregrinus*)

"The hatred against the Christians," says [Coëffeteau's] *Roman History*, "was so great in the Roman Empire that they accused them of causing all misfortunes in the empire so that if the Tiber swelled or the Nile rose too high, if the sky darkened or the earth quaked, if famine or plague came, the people were angered against them and cried out that they should be thrown to the lions and wild beasts."

We learn from them what people thought of them, their doctrine, and their way of living. The evidence they provide about themselves should not be dubious in this respect. Their Grand Pooh-Bah St. Paul said, *We preach Christ crucified, which is a scandal to the Jews and folly to Gentiles* (1 Cor. 1:23). But as he imagined that there was a great wisdom hidden in this folly, he gloried in it as if it was a real and wholly extraordinary and divine wisdom: *Please God that I never glorify in anything but the cross of Jesus Christ* (Gal. 6:14). Elsewhere he says, *I think God has exposed us like people condemned to death, making us a spectacle to the world* (1 Cor. 4:9). *We are fools for the love of Jesus Christ; we are weak and scorned. . . . Until now we have suffered hunger, thirst, nudity, mistreatment, and homelessness; we bless those who curse us, persecute us, and punish us; they slander us and we pray to forgive them; we are treated as victims that they sacrifice for public crimes and like filth that the entire world rejects* (1 Cor. 4:10–13). Etc. (Cf. 2 Cor. 4:4–10; Heb. 10:32–34, 11:36–38.)

This is all very different from what the ancient so-called prophets predicted as so glorious and so advantageous for the people when their so-called Messiah and Liberator would come to deliver them from captivity. But it also shows very clearly that Christianity in the beginning was and indeed was considered nothing but a madness and a vile and despicable fanaticism. For, why were the first Christians treated in that way, hated, scorned and persecuted everywhere? Certainly it was only because of the falsity, madness, and absurdity of their doctrine and because of their crazy and ridiculous way of life and manners full of superstitions. This is what made them so detestable and contemptible everywhere. And what is even more remarkable is that despite this they did not stop believing that they were wiser than all other men, for they imagined that their madness was a wholly supernatural and divine wisdom (1 Cor. 1:20–21, 27–28).

All this clearly shows that Christianity was only a vile and despicable

fanaticism in the beginning and, consequently, it is evident that our Christ-cultists are gravely mistaken on this subject and that they are in more ridiculous and absurd errors than even the pagans of old. For, the pagans never claimed to turn human wisdom into folly or human folly into supernatural and divine wisdom like the Christians do. And so we should not be surprised if in Italy there is a saying that "you have to be crazy to be Christian" (*Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*).

### 35. THIRD DOCTRINAL ERROR: THE IDOLATRY AND ADORATION OF GODS OF DOUGH AND FLOUR IN THEIR SO-CALLED HOLY SACRAMENT

**O**ur Roman GodChrist-cultists, as well as the others who are not Roman, reprimand and condemn the pagans for worshipping idols of wood, stone, copper, bronze, plaster, gold, or silver, and they think it was and still is today a great madness and blindness in men to worship unmoving statues and idols that have no life or feeling and are not at all capable of doing any good or evil to anyone. Our Roman Christ-cultists mock them for these idols and so-called divinities of wood and stone or gold and silver, that have, as they say, eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear, mouths but do not speak, feet but do not walk, hands but cannot do anything, etc.

Indeed, they are right to mock such divinities and those who worship them. But why, then, are they themselves so stupid and foolish as to do the same thing and worship, as they do, feeble little idols or images of dough that are, in a sense, worse than idols of gold or silver? That is why we could very well say about our Roman Christ-cultists that it is the pot calling the kettle black or the kettle calling the pot black. They see, as their Christ said, a speck in the eye of their pagan brothers and friends, and they do not see the log in their own, i.e., they see in their pagan brothers the madness of their idolatries and they do not see in themselves the even greater madness, idolatries, and superstitions. I am not talking about the idols of wood and stone or bronze, plaster, gold, or silver to which our Roman Christ-cultists physically give the same honors as the pagans gave to their false divinities, because I know that it is not their intention to look upon or worship them as divinities. I am mainly talking about their little idols of dough and flour that they cook and then consecrate and eat every day, even though they truly worship them as their God.

If the divinity, as our Roman Christ-cultists claim, really wanted to

be worshipped in bread and wine or, as they say, under the visible species and appearances of bread and wine, why would it not and did it not also want to be worshipped in wood and stone, in plaster, bronze, gold, and silver? Or, if you want, under the visible appearances of these or similar things? They are certainly no more impossible, indecent, or unsuitable than the other. Our Christ-cultists do not dare deny that their Christ could as easily have changed wood, stone, gold, or silver into his body and blood as they claim he did to bread and wine, because if they denied it, there would be as much reason to deny the other; and so, according to their principle, there was an equal possibility and power to do both, and, consequently, the divinity, if it wanted, could as easily and as truly have been in idols of wood, stone, gold, silver, or plaster as in little idols or images of dough, such as our Roman Christ-cultists worship. So, they could both play at that game and they would both be as well founded in their vain opinions.

Moreover, if we thought about what would seem to be more appropriate for the sovereign majesty of a God, it certainly seems that it would be more appropriate to be worshipped in some strong and solid matter like wood or stone, or in some rich and precious material like gold or silver, rather than to want to be worshipped in vile and feeble little images of dough and flour that have in themselves no solidity, that melt in the rain, fly away in the wind, and are eaten by rats and mice. Certainly, if it is blindness and madness for pagans to believe that the divinity truly dwells in their idols, it is an even greater blindness and madness for our Roman Christ-cultists to believe that their God-man truly dwells, body and soul, flesh and bone and blood, in feeble little images of dough and flour that the slightest breeze can carry away and the tiniest mouse can eat.

If I told you, my dear friends, that in a certain foreign country there was a nation and a religion where the people and priests made it a duty of piety to make and eat the gods they worshipped and where the gods were only feeble little images of dough that they cooked and that the priests consecrated and turned them into gods by saying only four words over them and then carefully enclosed and preserved these gods in boxes lest the rats and mice eat them first or the wind blow them away, would you not laugh at the simplicity or rather the stupidity and foolishness of these poor ignorant people? Certainly, you would laugh if you did not

feel the laughter rebound onto you since you yourselves are these people who believe so stupidly in worshipping and eating your God when you make and worship and eat so piously and devotedly the little images of dough that your priests make you believe are the body and blood, the soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, your God and divine Savior.

### 36. COMPARISON OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE GODS OF DOUGH AND FLOUR WITH THE CONSECRATION OF THE GODS OF WOOD AND STONE OR GOLD AND SILVER THAT THE PAGANS WORSHIPPED

**T**here is something strange in Christianity because the people make a profession of faith to devotedly eat their gods; and they eat and tear them apart inhumanely. It is very barbarous. How could they have persuaded men of such strange and absurd things? How could they have convinced them that the whole body and blood, soul, and divinity of a man-god were really and truly in the form and figure of a feeble little image of dough and a single little drop of wine? How could they have convinced them that the entire substance of this image of dough and wine was entirely changed into the body and blood of this so-called man-god, and that this change happened in an instant through the power and virtue of only four words that a priest secretly pronounced over them? And as often as these priests wanted to pronounce these four words over different little images of dough or different amounts of wine, so often would they miraculously change their substance into the body and blood of this man-god who would be found there at the same time in thousands and thousands, millions and millions of different places; and all this without any multiplication or division of his being! There is certainly nothing so vain, ridiculous, and absurd as this in all the pagan religions.

How, then, could they have persuaded reasonable and sensible men of such strange and absurd things? I am not too surprised that ignorant and vulgar people let themselves be persuaded of such things because it is easy enough to delude ignorant and simple-minded people into believing whatever you want. But, that wise and educated people, learned and scholarly and even intelligent men with lively and penetrating minds let themselves be led, just as the ignorant, into such crude and absurd errors, and that they themselves became and still become

every day the protectors and defenders to support and maintain them through the base and cowardly motives of self-interest and public opinion or through the ridiculous stubbornness of wanting to support the wrong side rather than being guilty of retracting what they said and recognizing that they were deceived and rather than being happy to open the eyes of the people in good faith by making them clearly see the truth and falsity of everything they made them believe so vainly and stupidly!—this is what always seems so strange to me.

What? Scholars? Famous scholars who know so well how to reproach and condemn the errors of idolatry in the pagans are not ashamed to bow down before mute idols? And before feeble little images of dough like the simple and ignorant people do? Do not they blush when they publicly and heartily preach what they so openly condemn in the pagans? Is it not an abuse and a manifest corruption of their ministry? Do they think that the vain and ridiculous consecration of their feeble little idols of dough has more force and effect than the vain consecration that the pagans performed of their idols of wood, stone, or silver? Do they think that the four words of their so-called consecration have more force and power than that famous pompous and magnificent so-called consecration that was made, for example, in Babylon of that famous, colossal golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar erected on the plain of Dura during his reign? This golden statue was sixty cubits high and six cubits wide. The king erected it on the field or plain I mentioned and wanted to dedicate or consecrate it in the most solemn manner possible. So, he ordered all the princes, lords, governors, magistrates, judges, and other officers of his kingdom to come on the appointed day before this statue to solemnly dedicate and consecrate it and at the same time he ordered all the people to bow down before it and worship it as a god at the moment they heard the sound of trumpets, flutes, and other musical instruments that began to play right after the consecration; and he threatened to severely punish anyone who did not worship it (Dan. 3:1ff). What the king commanded was punctually carried out. After the consecration everyone bowed down to worship this statue of a newly made god.

There, then, is perhaps the most solemn and magnificent consecration ever made. Do our Christ-cultists think that such a consecration could have had the force and power to make this golden statue a

real god, either in changing the entire substance of gold into god or in attracting and arresting the divinity itself in the statue? Of course not. No, they do not want to think this; they would even be ashamed to say it.

Why, then, do they think that their vain and ridiculous consecration of only four words that they say over feeble little images of dough and over a few drops of wine would have the force and power to change bread and wine into the body and blood of their God Christ? From where do they get this so-called force and power to turn a little image of dough or a few drops of wine into an all-powerful God? And to change, as they say, in an instant the entire substance of bread and wine into the body and blood of a God man?

O, the foolish scholars! How did they dare support or only publicly suggest such ridiculous and absurd things? It must be that the dispositions, habits, birth, and education of men have strange effects on their minds since they blind them to such an extent. For, it is certainly only the dispositions, habits, birth, and education of men that can today make them blindly accept such ridiculous and absurd things.

There is certainly nothing equal in all of paganism and it seems that the Christian religion was invented only to see how far the madness of men could go in the matter of religion. For, there is nothing so ridiculous and absurd as what our Roman God-cultists think it their duty to blindly believe on the pretext of their divine faith. Montaigne says, "It is a reason for them to believe only what is unbelievable and according to them it follows human reason the more it opposes it" (*Essays* 2:12).

*All will be done that I said could not be,  
And there will be nothing you cannot believe.*

—Ovid, *Tristia*, 1:8

Indeed, we can imagine nothing more ridiculous and absurd than what the Christian and Roman religion teaches and makes people believe.

For proof of this we only have to point out again on what foundation our GodChrist-cultist scholars base such lovely and wonderful mysteries. You would be surprised to learn it, if I had not already made you halfway understand, but I have to tell you very distinctly and openly.

They are based precisely on nothing but some vain and ambiguous words of their fanatic GodChrist. This fanatic said to his apostles and disciples that his father and he were one (John 10:30).

He told them that he would send them a spirit of truth coming from his father and him and from this they infer their so-called highest and loveliest mystery of the Trinity that they say is one God in three persons who are called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As if these ambiguous words could have only one meaning. The same so-called GodChrist, taking the bread that he was giving his apostles to eat, said, *Take this and eat it, for this is my body* (Matt. 26:26).

Likewise, offering them wine to drink in a chalice, he told them, *All of you drink, for this is my blood, the blood of the new covenant that will be poured out for the salvation of many* (Matt. 26:28). And with these words they absolutely maintain that at that moment their Christ changed the bread and wine he was holding into his body and blood, his soul and divinity for his apostles, under the species and appearance of the bread and wine that he gave them. As if again these words of their Jesus Christ could have only one meaning. And as far as he told his apostles at the same time to do the same thing in memory of him, they again infer that he gave his apostles (and from them to their successors who are the priests today) the power to change bread and wine into his body and blood and hence his soul and divinity also, as far as a living body, as he was and they claim he still is, does not exist without a soul nor a god without divinity. And there on some ambiguous words of a fanatic our Roman Christ-cultists established the imaginary mysteries they call "supernatural and divine."

Now, our Christ-cultists themselves show us that these words of Jesus Christ were really ambiguous because they have not been able up to now to agree among themselves on the meaning of these words. Some give an opposite meaning to what others give and Jesus Christ himself told his disciples that he understood them in a different sense than they did when he called them spirit and life (John 6:63), i.e., they should have understood them in a spiritual, figurative, or metaphorical sense and not in the proper and natural sense of words as they did.

Moreover, we know that the custom of Christ was to speak almost always in parables, which is obscure and figurative speech and, consequently, also ambiguous speech that can be taken in different ways. And

it is with such ambiguous words that our Christ-cultists fabricate their greatest, holiest, and most formidable mysteries. It is with such ambiguous words that they worship the gods of dough and flour and that they claim to have the power to make as many as they want. For, according to their principle, they only have to say four words over as many of these little images of dough as they want or over as much wine as they want, and they will make as many gods as they have in front of them, even if there are thousands of millions. For, they claim that with their four words, "This is my body" or "This is my blood," which they say are effective in themselves (*ex opere operato*), it is as easy for them to consecrate hundreds, thousands, millions and millions of these images of dough as to consecrate only one and, consequently, that it is as easy for them to make hundreds, thousands, millions and millions of gods in this way as to make only one! What madness only to have such a thought! These vain men, these priests, these abusers of the people cannot with all the so-called power of their GodChrist make the tiniest fly or earth-worm, and yet they believe they can make gods by the thousands! Fools, all of them, as many as they are!

Their so-called Christ could not give them the power to make a single grain of wheat, barley, or oat; he could not give them the power to change the smallest stone into bread or the smallest drop of water into wine, but he gave them the power to make gods whenever they want and as many as they want? By changing with four words the bread and wine into his body and blood?

They must be struck with a strange blindness and predisposition of the mind to believe and want to support such ridiculous and absurd things; and all this based on a few ambiguous words of a fanatic. He likewise told his disciples that he would give them full power and authority over impure spirits, to chase them all away and heal all kinds of sicknesses and disabilities. Do our priests credit themselves with this power to heal? They would certainly become laughingstocks if they claimed to have such a power.

## 37. THE CHRISTIANS' ADORATION OF GODS OF DOUGH OPENS THE DOOR WIDE FOR ALL KINDS OF IDOLATRY

**D**o not these blind scholars see that it opens the door wide for all kinds of idolatry to worship in this way images and idols on the pretext that priests have the power to consecrate them and change them into gods just by pronouncing a few vain and frivolous words over them? Could not all the priests of pagan idols have boasted of having a similar power? And still do so today? If it is only a matter of alleging and finding such vain and frivolous pretexts as our Roman GodChrist-cultists lay claim to, it would be easy for all the idolatries to find them, and even more attractive and convincing. It is said in the so-called holy books of our god-cultists that God would confound the wisdom of sages and would change the wisdom of the world into folly (Is. 29:14; 1 Cor. 1:19). No matter who said this, we can say it has truly been accomplished in our Roman GodChrist-cultist scholars, seeing that they have the weakness and baseness to worship feeble little images of dough and they are crazy enough to believe that they received the power to make gods from a miserable fanatic. *He makes them fall who counsel others in extravagant thoughts with unfortunate results and he confounds judges* (Job 12:17).

When I see or imagine our scholars, even with an angelical doctor at their head, humbly bow down before their little images and idols of dough and say with a devout heart, or at least in a devout way, these lovely words, "I worship you devotedly, supreme Deity, you who are truly hidden in his shape," or "In prostration we venerate such a great sacrament," I find it totally laughable and offensive at the same time.

I say "laughable" because all these lovely scholars really deserve to be laughed at and made fun of for doing such a thing. But at the same time it is offensive to see that those who should be teaching others about the error and opening their eyes to such a vain and crazy superstition are themselves buried in it more and more every day. And this mainly to get

as much profit as possible for themselves, because it is sure that if they did not get some personal profit and advantage from it, they would not even start to support or assert such a vain and ridiculous superstition. And if some of them were ignorant or stupid enough to simply believe what they tell others, they would certainly deserve to be yoked to the hay cart with asses and eat thistle with them rather than to be seated in the ranks of the learned. But we do not even see asses and oxen stupid enough to bow down before idols. And so, I dare say that all who worship them are lower than asses and oxen. *O madmen, who could have blinded you so much?* (Gal. 3:1).

It is on a firm and solid foundation of truth that all the wise and enlightened men, all the so-called holy prophets and the apostles of Jesus Christ, as fanatical as they were, condemned idolatry and scornfully rejected the superstitious worship of idols of gold and silver or any other material (cf. Ps. 115:4–8; Wis. 13–15; Baruch 6).

And we see that it was expressly forbidden in the law of the Jews, on which our Christ-cultists base their religion and all their principal mysteries, not only to worship gods of gold, silver, wood, and stone, but it was also very expressly forbidden to make any image, carven or cast, of things in the sky, on the earth, or in the sea lest, says the law, men come to be seduced by its likeness to something and worship it as a divinity (cf. Ex. 20:4; Deut. 4:15–16).

And does not the grand St. Paul, talking about those insane idolatrous scholars, say that they will be lost in the vanity of their arguments and their insane minds will be filled with darkness and calling themselves wise they became fools because they transferred the glory of the incorruptible God to the shape of corruptible men, birds, four-legged beasts, and snakes (Rom. 1:21–23)? And elsewhere he exhorted his brothers to *flee from idolatry* (1 Cor. 10:14).

All the apostles of Jesus Christ unanimously forbade idolatry and the worship of idols. It is what they prohibited the pagans who embraced their faith from doing: *For those among the Gentiles who have received the faith, we have told them to abstain from the worship of idols and even from the meat that was sacrificed to idols* (Acts 15:29, 21:25).

So, if they forbid the cult of idols of wood and stone, gold and silver, or any other material, it certainly was not so that they could offer idols or images of dough to worship. In fact, we do not see that they did wor-

ship them or that they ever wanted them to be worshipped. When they did want them worshipped, it was only an excess of folly and extravagance; for, it is clear that it would be folly and extravagance to absolutely forbid the cult of idols and at the same time want to worship feeble little images of dough and pieces of bread. But as I said, we see here how far their madness has gone.

And it is astonishing that today, although the world seems to be so well-informed and to have gotten over so many other gross mistakes, nevertheless there are still men crazy enough to want to take the trouble to cross the seas and risk their lives in foreign countries on the pretext of converting, or it is better to say "perverting," people to their false religion. It is astonishing that our missionaries dare to try to make these foreigners recognize the vanity of idols and gods of wood, stone, gold, and silver that they worship and at the same time they dare to offer them idols or gods of dough and flour to worship. It is astonishing that these zealous missionaries and ministers of error could have and still can persuade reasonable people of such things and they could make them turn away from the cult of idols of gold and silver in order to worship feeble little images of dough. I say this only in passing.

Likewise, we see that Jesus Christ himself never claimed to want to be worshipped in bread or in images of dough or even that he ever wanted to be worshipped in his own person because, although he said he was the Son of God, that God was his Father, that it was the bread of life, the living bread, descended from heaven, that whoever ate it would never die but would have eternal life, nevertheless it seems that he never said that he was God himself, nor that he should be worshipped as God.

Far from it, he often called himself "the Son of Man"; and when someone said to him one day, *Good Teacher, what do I have to do to have eternal life*, he responded, *Why do you call me "good," seeing that only God is good?* (Luke 18:19). So, he did not believe that he was God and he did not claim that we should believe him to be God or call him God, since he did not even approve of simply being called "good." And after his so-called resurrection, when he wanted to disappear entirely with his apostles, he said to a woman he met, *Go tell my brothers that I am going to go up to my father and yours, to my God and yours* (John 20:17). It seems clear enough by this that he did not think he was God since he

recognized having the same God and God the father as his apostles. He also said that he came down from heaven not to do his own will, but to do the will of God his father who sent him and who was, he said, greater than he (John 6:38). Being so, therefore, he did not believe he was God since he said God was greater than himself and he said he was not doing his own will but that of God his father (John 14:28). And if he did not believe he was God, it certainly does not seem that he wanted to be worshipped as one in his person against the will of God himself and, consequently, even less in bread and in feeble little images of dough.

And he expressly said that he came not to destroy or break the law but to accomplish it (Matt. 5:17). So, he did not want to introduce idols or images of dough to be worshipped, seeing that the law so strictly and expressly forbade it that those who worshipped or wanted to worship idols deserved to die (Deut. 13:5). Moreover, Jesus Christ himself advised his people to do and carefully follow what the scholars, scribes, and Pharisees told them and taught them to do, in accordance with this law. He even told them that he had to accomplish this law in the smallest points: *Everything in the law will be accomplished to the smallest iota and the single period* (Matt. 5:18), and he said that whoever broke the slightest precept would be least in the kingdom of heaven (5:19). Now, this law, as I said, expressly forbade idolatry of any kind.

Likewise, the scribes and Pharisees taught, in accordance with this law, that they could not worship idols or make any image to worship. Being so, it does not seem, then, that Jesus Christ wanted to make his people do what their law and their scholars had so expressly forbidden them to do and, consequently, it does not seem that he ever thought about wanting to be worshipped in idols or images of dough because this would have been like wanting to make them do what he had expressly advised them not to do before. It seems to me that our idolatrous Roman Christ-cultists ought to pay a little more attention (which they do not) to this.

If we add to this that it was said in the Prophets that the idols would one day be completely destroyed and this so-called prophecy would be accomplished particularly at the coming of the Messiah, then there is certainly no place here to think that the Messiah would have wanted to multiply the idols instead of destroying them. And according to the doctrine of our Roman Christ-cultists, he would have multiplied them by

adding new idols of dough and flour to the idols of wood, stone, gold, and silver that men already worshipped, instead of completely destroying them all.

Our Christ-cultists know all this very well. They see the evidence, the strength of all these arguments because if they did not see it, they would only be ignorant; and if they do see it, they are clearly corruptors of the law *who unjustly hold the truth captive and change the truth into lies*, as their Grand Pooh-Bah St. Paul said (Rom. 1:18, 25), because against such strong, clear, and convincing evidence of truth they want to maintain and support error and idolatries that are opposed to the law they approve and recognize as having been truly given by God and opposed to common sense and good judgment.

For in the end, our scholars have to acknowledge the strength or weakness, the certainty or uncertainty of this argument of all the prophets and wise men against the idolatry of the pagans. Here is the argument.

All the images and idols of the pagans are only wood, stone, gold, or silver, etc., and are only man-made works. Therefore, they conclude, they are not gods. This argument or reasoning is either strong or weak, it is either certainly conclusive of the truth or not.

Likewise, this: the images and idols of the pagans have no life, sentiment, or movement and cannot do good or evil to anyone. Therefore, they are not gods.

And this: the images and idols of the pagans have eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear, mouths and cannot talk, hands and cannot do anything, feet and cannot walk, so they are not gods, etc. . . .

These arguments and all other possible arguments like them are strong or weak, conclusive of the truth or not. Our Roman GodChrist-cultists have to acknowledge one or the other. If they dare to accuse their prophets' arguments of weakness and uncertainty, then they must:

First, at the same time accuse all the strongest and most convincing arguments of men of weakness and uncertainty because it is unquestionable that natural and human reason provides the strongest and most convincing arguments about this. Now, to do this is in a way to destroy reason itself or at least to destroy all certainty and assurance of truth and, consequently, also to destroy all certainty and assurance of truth in the matter of faith and religion as well as in every science. Our Christ-cultists

do not want to do this since they claim that the truth of their religion is more certain than any other truth—and they could not claim such a thing if they supposed that there was no certainty in human reasoning.

In the second place, if they accuse these arguments of weakness and uncertainty, they also have to accuse all the prophets and the most sensible people of ignorance and lack of judgment. For it is ignorance and lack of judgment to believe you are well founded in reason when you are not; and it is ignorance and lack of judgment to consider weak and uncertain arguments and reasoning as the strongest and most sure and convincing that could be. Now, the prophets and all the most sensible people, in reasoning like they do against the idolatry of the pagans, believed that they were very well founded in reason, that they clearly proved the vanity of idols and the falsity of pagan gods by the strongest, most decisive, and most convincing evidence of truth that could be given. As a result, if their arguments and reasoning about this were weak and uncertain, it would be ignorance and lack of judgment in them to offer and give them to us, as they have, as such sure and convincing arguments and reasoning. And as our Christ-cultists claim that the prophets spoke at the time through the inspiration of God himself, it follows from this that God himself inspired in them only weak and uncertain arguments and, perhaps, could not inspire in them stronger or more certain ones. For, if he had been able to, he no doubt would have done so. And since God did not inspire them, we could say and think that he really could only inspire weak and uncertain arguments. And yet, our Christ-cultists dare not say this.

Therefore, despite themselves they have to acknowledge the force and certainty of their prophets' arguments and reasoning against the idolatry of the pagans and against the falsity of their gods. And if they acknowledge the force and certainty of them, they have to also acknowledge that these same arguments and this same reasoning is equally conclusive against them and their idolatries with as much force and certainty of proof. And they have to acknowledge that they equally prove the vanity of their idols and the falsity of their gods of dough and flour as they do the pagan idols and their gods of wood, stone, gold, and silver, etc.

And the evident reason of this is that the idols and gods of dough and flour are also man-made works just like the gods of wood, stone, gold, and silver. And if our idolatrous GodChrist-cultists made or

formed their gods of flour and dough with eyes, ears, noses, mouths, hands, and feet, they would be just as useless as the others because they would not see with their eyes or hear with their ears, they would not breathe with their noses or speak with their mouths, they would not do anything with their hands or walk with their feet any more than the gods of wood, stone, gold, and silver that the prophets talked about.

And so, it is evident that the gods of dough and flour that our Roman Christ-cultists worship are not any better in this respect than the pagan gods. And there would be no idolater bowing down before their idols of wood, stone, gold, and silver who could not say with the Angelical Doctor, "I worship you devotedly, supreme deity who is truly hidden in these shapes," which obviously tends to justify all kinds of idolatry.

But we could say that in some ways the pagan idols would be preferable to the Christians', not only because they are more solid and stronger in themselves and made of more precious material, but also because their form, size, and shape are nobler and more attractive than the Christians'. For, the pagan idols were majestic. The great golden statues or the monstrous and hideous ones that they used to (and still do) worship inspire fear and respect, at least in the hearts and minds of ignorant and simple people.

But the idols of the Roman Christians, being only feeble and vile little images of dough, can inspire in their worshippers no sentiment of fear and veneration; they cannot resist two seconds of rain or wind and the smallest beasts of the earth are capable of eating them. That is why it is necessary for the priests to always keep them closed up tightly in boxes, lest the wind carry them away or the rats and mice eat them.

So, it is clear that our Roman Christ-cultist idolaters are a lot crazier, more ridiculous, and more foolish than the pagans who worshipped their statues or idols. As a result, if the reasons and arguments of the prophets should make it easy for the pagans to see the vanity and falsity of their gods of wood, stone, gold, and silver, it is all the more reason for our Roman Christ-cultist idolaters to clearly see the vanity and falsity of their gods of dough and flour. And they should be ashamed to worship, as they do, gods who melt helplessly in the rain and are blown helplessly away in the wind and are eaten by rats and mice and even by slugs.

But our idolatrous GodChrist-cultists claim here to escape the

strength of this argument by distinguishing and separating, as they would like to do, substance from accidents and accidents from substance! To cover up their error and their shame, they claim that it is not the bread or dough that they worship in their so-called holy and divine sacrament—there is no more bread and dough, there remains only accidents, i.e., the species or visible appearance; the whole substance has changed into the body and blood of their Lord Jesus Christ, real God and real man, and, consequently, they are not idolaters like the pagans who worship only images or statues and not the real God. They allege such vain arguments to try to cover up the shame of their idolatries. For, it is evident that if it is only a matter of saying, as they do, that the substance of the bread and wine was changed into the body and blood of their sovereign GodChrist and his soul and divinity were simultaneously in this so-called divine sacrament, it would be just as easy for all the idolatrous pagans to say that the substance of the wood, stone, gold, or silver of their images and statues were really changed into the body and blood and even the soul and divinity of their gods—Jupiter, for example, or Mars, Mercury, Apollo, Asclepius, etc., or even their goddesses Cybele, Juno, Ceres, Minerva, Diana, Venus, etc.—or to say, if they wanted, that their divinities were really in their images and statues conjoined with the substance of wood, stone, gold, and silver of which they were composed and, consequently, that they were no more idolatrous than our Roman Christ-cultists.

If the pagans claimed to justify their worship and their idols like this (and, indeed, they would have to give this reason or something like it because it is not believable that their intention was only to worship the wood, stone, gold, or silver in their idols, but no doubt they claim to worship some divinity that in some way specially resides in the material of which they are composed), if, then, these pagans claimed this, our Roman GodChrist-cultists would not stop reproaching and condemning and even mocking them and their vain belief. But they do not see that they themselves are worthy of reproach, condemnation, shame, and confusion, seeing that they say and do what they judge to be worthy of reproach, condemnation, and confusion in others.

If, for example, the priests of the idol of Bel whom Daniel (14) talks about, had had the skill, industry, or shrewdness to know how to distinguish, as our Roman GodChrist-cultists do now, the substance from the

accidents and to say that their god Bel ate only the substance of all that bread, wine, and meat they gave him every day and left them, their women, and children only the accidents to eat and that they believed them on their word in such a lovely and subtle doctrine, they would not have had to eat in secret what they offered this idol; they and their women and children would have been able to revel in the leftovers of their god in sight of the whole world without taking any risks. They certainly would have played their game much better, disguised their deceit much better, and not have been caught in their fraud, as they were, and had the displeasure of so tragically bearing the penalty. It seems that they had not yet realized such a lovely secret to deceive men with impunity.

But seeing that this lovely secret is only an invention and fiction of the human mind, that this fiction clearly tends only to justify all kinds of idolatry and give rise to all other similar impostures, that there is no imposture that could not boast about a similar fiction as advantageously and with as much assurance of truth, that this chimerical fiction entirely destroys the whole force of the proof of the argument and reasoning that the prophets made to prove the vanity and falsity of the pagan gods and the worship of their idols (which is nonetheless the strongest, most convincing, and most conclusive that can be made on the subject)—so it is not at all believable that an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise god would want to be worshipped by men in such a way, since it would obviously be wanting to mislead them and give rise to the worship of him in wood, stone, gold, and silver, or, if you want, under the accidents and visible appearances of these kinds of things, just like they worship him in bread and wine or, if you want, under the accidents and visible appearances of bread and wine, seeing that they cannot deny, in the opinion of our Roman GodChrist-cultists, that God or their god Christ could equally put or hide himself in wood, stone, gold, or silver or anything else, as he puts or hides himself in the bread and wine or under their accidents or visible appearances. Now, according to the evidence of these prophets (whom our Christ-cultists cannot reject), God clearly and obviously testified that he did not want to be worshipped in wood, stone, gold, or silver or anything like them or even under any form, shape, or image of anything under heaven or on earth and in the waters (Ex. 20:4; Deut. 4:15–16; chapter 36 above).

All this is evident by witnesses that our Christ-cultists cannot reject.

Therefore, it is not believable and we should not believe that God ever wanted to be worshipped in bread or under any image of dough, seeing that he so expressly forbade his worship under any form or figure. And it is for the same reason that we should not believe either that God or any divine person ever wanted to incarnate and become man or in any way take the form or shape of man, seeing that he so expressly and severely forbade his worship under any form or shape whatsoever.

That is also why the apostle St. Paul considered anyone foolish and insane who changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the shape of corruptible man or of birds and four-legged beasts and said they *were changing the truth of God into lies* (Rom. 1:25).

And since according to this same so-called divine law God prohibited, even under pain of death, the eating of human flesh or blood, it is not believable that this same God in the Christ would have really wanted to give men his flesh to eat and his blood to drink since he so expressly and so severely forbade it and absolutely commanded this law to be observed forever (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 7:27, 17:14; Deut. 12:23; Ps. 111:9; Lev. 3:17).

How, then, would this God in Christ want to give his flesh to eat and his blood to drink after having forbidden it? All this evidence and all these arguments are clear and evident and obviously show the Christian religion is false and teaches errors, even more ridiculous and absurd than ever were in paganism.

Let me add that all these idolatries of gods of dough and flour are, as I said, only based on a few vain and ambiguous words of a wretched fanatic. We have to be even more amazed that such idolatry can be established and maintained among peoples who have so many smart and educated men in all kinds of arts and sciences.

## 38. FOURTH ERROR, CONCERNING THE CREATION AND THE SIN OF THE FIRST MAN

**S**ince this belief contains many ridiculous and absurd things, we have to try to show the ridiculousness and absurdity clearly. However, I will not try here to refute in particular the fable of the so-called creation of the first man and woman or the fable of an earthly paradise where God put them or that of the so-called fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that they were forbidden to eat or of the so-called seduction made or caused by the deceitful speech of a serpent that was craftier and shrewder than man, even with all the so-called wisdom and perfection in which he had been created, or of the punishment of these two so-called chiefs of the human race or even of the so-called punishment of the serpent or finally of the so-called virgin who divinely mothered a son: "The untouched Virgin, not knowing man, conceived a son by the Word (Hymn of Christmas). How many cuckoldries are there in history," Montaigne says, "by gods against poor humans? In Mohammed's religion there are, in people's belief, many Merlins, i.e., fatherless children divinely born out of the bellies of virgins" (*Essays*, 2:12). I will not focus on individually refuting all these fables or many others like them: there would be too many things to say and it would take too long. Suffice it to make three main points here about this doctrine to show its falsity, ridiculousness, and absurdity clearly.

First, it is false, ridiculous, and absurd in that it teaches that the vices and sins of men grievously offend God and arouse his anger and indignation.

Second, it is false, ridiculous, and absurd in that it teaches and ensures that God will punish the sins of men not only with temporal punishments in this life, but also with eternal punishments in another life and even with the most horrible and severe punishments imaginable.

Third, it is false, ridiculous, and absurd in that it teaches and forces people to believe that God himself was made man and delivered to death and to the shameful punishment of the cross to redeem men who grievously offended him and earned an eternal damnation and curse by their sins.

All this, I say, is false, ridiculous, and absurd. And this is what is necessary to show you a little more fully.

## 39. FIFTH ERROR, CONCERNING THE SO-CALLED INJURY AND OFFENSE THAT THE SINS OF MEN GIVE TO GOD, HIS SO-CALLED ANGER AND INDIGNATION THAT IS AROUSED, AND THE TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL PUNISHMENT THAT HE EXACTS

**F**irst, it is sure, evident, and unquestionable that the Christian religion teaches that the vices, sins, viciousness, and evil actions of men, and even many that seem should be only minor faults (like the one Adam and Eve, the first of the human race, committed in the earthly paradise by eating the fruit in the garden that God had forbidden them to eat), nevertheless offend God very grievously and arouse his anger and indignation.

This is what all the so-called Holy Scriptures of the Christ-cultists openly testify, this is what our Christ-cultists themselves say in their books of piety, this is what they publicly preach in their churches and, finally, this is what they teach in their schools and in all the private and public education they give people.

Their St. Chrysostom guarantees that sin was the most displeasing thing in the world to God (Homily 41, Sermon 41 on St. Matthew). Their great St. Augustine says that sinners offend Jesus Christ reigning in heaven. Their great St. Paul says that sinners crucify Jesus Christ all over again in their souls (Heb. 6:6). And St. Augustine says that sinners offend him worse than the Jews did when they crucified him on the cross (*Explanation of Psalm 47*). The Council of Trent calls sin an offense against God and even “a very serious offense” (Session 14).

And in their so-called holy book Genesis, it is mentioned that at the time of Noah, God was so grievously offended by the sins of men *that he was stricken with sorrow in the depths of his heart* and regretted ever having made man (Gen. 6:6). Accordingly, all the Christ-cultist theologians agree that the grievousness of sin is so great that, even if all the

men in the world and all the angels in heaven gathered together to bemoan the injury to God and repent as much as they could with all their tears and all their penance and all their best actions, never would they be able to worthily satisfy the justice of God when he has been offended by a single, mortal sin so that all the blood of their martyrs, all the purity of their virgins, and all the worthiness of angels and saints would not be enough to worthily satisfy the justice of God offended by sin (Christian Morality).

It would need infinite merits, say our Christ-cultists, to worthily satisfy God because the injury of sin was in a way infinite, so it would need no less infinite merits to satisfy it. And since all the merits of creatures joined together do not have an infinite value, it follows, they say, that all the merits of all the creatures are insufficient to worthily satisfy the justice of God offended by mortal sin.

For this reason they say the divine Son of God himself wanted to redeem men and incarnate and become a man like us in order to worthily satisfy the justice of God, his eternal father, for all the sins of men through the infinite worthiness of his passion and death (Christian Morality). The offense and injury that sin gives to God, our Christ-cultists say, is so great that it is impossible to imagine it. It is, in a sense, incomprehensible. Here is the reason they allege: To understand or know the greatness of an offense, it is necessary to know the quality of who is offended and the quality of who offends, inasmuch as the greatness of an offense is taken not only from the quality and nature of the offense itself, but also from the greatness, excellence, and dignity of the person offended, as well as the indignity and baseness of the offender. That is why, according to their reasoning, in order to understand the excess of the injury or offense to God, it is necessary to be able to know and measure, so to speak, the greatness and sanctity of God himself because the sin draws its grievousness from the opposition it has to his greatness and sanctity. And since no one can understand the greatness and excellence of God, being infinite in every kind of perfection, it is impossible for men to be able to know the grievousness of the offense and injury that mortal sin gives to God.

## VAIN REASONING

This grievousness or enormity of mortal sin is so great, according to what they say, that all the flames of hell cannot eradicate it. That is why their great St. Augustine and all the Christ-cultist theologians after him say that it would be better to let the whole world perish, i.e., the heaven and earth and all it contains, than to willingly commit a single mortal sin. To sin, the Grand Pooh-Bah scholar says, is to dishonor God, which no one should ever do since all creatures should perish by this. This injury that is given to God by sin is so great and terrible that it makes St. Anselm say that if on one side he saw hell open with all its flames and on the other side a single mortal sin to commit and it was necessary to choose one or the other, he would throw himself into hell rather than willingly commit a single mortal sin.

Here is what they say about the lesser sins, which they call “venial sins”:

Since venial sin is an offense and injury to God, it follows that it is a greater injury than all the injuries of creatures joined together and that the saints would prefer to lose a thousand lives than to deliberately commit one venial sin so that they could not in good conscience say a little white lie to render the greatest glory to God and all creatures should feel happy to sacrifice their being to avoid the least venial sin, seeing that it is an incomparably greater injury than all the evils of the world and would be the desolation of all peoples, the ruin of all creatures and the destruction of the entire universe. (*Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*)

So that is how our pious and superstitious Roman GodChrist-cultists talk about the so-called offense and injury that sin commits against God. I could say a lot of things about such a lovely doctrine, if I wanted to show distinctly how ridiculous it is . . . but let us move on.

Look at how they talk of God in his anger and indignation (cf. Deut. 32:21–22, 42; Is. 63:3; Jer. 32:30, 37; Ezek. 5:11, 25:17; and Num. 11, Is. 5:24–25, 9:19; Ps. 6:1, 102:9–10; and Eph. 2:3, 5:6).

Now, it is an error to believe and think that an all-powerful and infinitely perfect being such as God could really be offended by any vice or viciousness of men and likewise it is an error to believe and think that an infinitely perfect and wise, immutable being such as God could truly be

moved to anger, fury, and indignation, or even to any other passion. I will prove this clearly by the following argument.

A being who is infinitely above all offense and injury cannot really be offended by anything or really receive any injury from anyone or anything. Now, a being that is all-powerful and infinitely perfect is by nature infinitely above all offense and injury not only because by its omnipotence it would banish and prevent everything capable of hurting it, displeasing it, or giving any injury or displeasure, but also because by its very nature it would be invulnerable, inalterable, and unshakeable. It clearly follows that it would be entirely above all offense and injury and, consequently, it would not be able to be at all offended by the vices and viciousness of men.

So, far from this so-called infinite grandeur and majesty of God being a reason to say that the vices and sins of men offend him, being so much more grievous because he is more exalted than men in grandeur and in all perfections, on the contrary, it is a reason to say that they do not offend him at all and that they would not even be capable of offending him in any way, since he is infinitely above everything that men can do to offend him.

If all men, for example, were to shoot all their arrows and all their guns and all their big cannons against the sun or moon, could they make a hole? Not at all! Why? Because it is too far beyond the range of arrows that men could shoot against it, and it is entirely beyond the range of all their guns and artillery. Likewise, if these same men wanted to throw mud at the sun or moon, could they stain it or dirty it? Not at all! Why? Because it is too far beyond anything that men could do against it. So much the more reason why men, with all the good and evil that they could do, cannot do any good or evil to God, who is infinitely above anything that men can do, and, consequently, all the vices, sins, and viciousness of men are incapable of offending him in any way (cf. Job 22:2-3, 35:5-8).

We could use the example of an injury or offense that a person of low standing commits against a king or a person of high standing. That this injury is more serious and more criminal than the same offense committed against a peer, we agree, but this example proves nothing with respect to a god because a king or any other person of any standing whatsoever is not completely above the harsh attacks that even the lowest people can make against him. Far from it, people of higher

standing are more delicate than others because they are not used to being attacked, so they feel the harshness more deeply in themselves. That is also why they are considered more offended than people of lower standing would be. But it is not the same with an infinitely perfect god because he is by nature invulnerable, inalterable, and unshakeable, as I said, so he would be infinitely above all attacks, nothing at all that men could do would be able to offend him.

Indeed, if the vices and viciousness of men were capable of offending (I mean a real and true offense) the divine nature even slightly, you could say that God is the most offended, mistreated, dishonored, and tormented and, consequently, also the most unfortunate and miserable of all. For, to be all the time the object of the injuries and offenses that countless men can give every day and every moment, if every vice and sin committed gave only as much pain as a fly or a flea could give to a man, this would be enough to make him the unhappiest and most tormented being in the world. Imagine what pain and torment it would be for a man if he were continually stung or bitten by a million flies or fleas that were constantly surrounding him. This would certainly be a more annoying and unbearable torment than the most painful sickness. Death itself would be more welcome than such a torture.

That, according to our Christ-cultists, would be how far the image of the state of their God is reduced if the vices and sins of men were capable of offending him even slightly. For, although every vice and sin does not offend him a great deal, nevertheless the great number, the almost infinite multitude of vices, crimes, and sins that are committed every day in the world would make him the unhappiest and most miserable of all beings. Now, would it not be absurd and ridiculous to say that a god who is an all-powerful and infinitely perfect being and who, consequently, should also be the happiest, calmest, and most content, is, nevertheless, because of the vices and sins of men, the unhappiest and most miserable of all? This would be totally ridiculous and absurd. So, it is ridiculous and absurd to say that God is really offended by the vices and sins of men and it is ridiculous and absurd to exaggerate, as our Christ-cultists do, the grievousness and enormity of the vices and sins of men with respect to the so-called offense that it gives to God, seeing that this offense does not exist, that it is not real or true and that it is only imaginary and wholly metaphoric.

And so, it is ridiculous to say, as they do, that a single venial sin is a greater evil than all the evils of all creatures put together. It is ridiculous to say that it would be better to lose a thousand lives and let all creatures perish than to willingly commit one single venial sin and, for example, to say a little white lie. Finally, it is ridiculous to say, as some of them do, that they would prefer to enter hell while still alive than to willingly commit a single venial sin because it is as if they were saying that they would prefer to suffer all the most dreadful punishments of hell than to say a little white lie or a single vain and frivolous word. It is as if they were saying that a little white lie or frivolous word would do greater harm than all the evils in the world put together and they would rather let the whole world perish than to say a little white lie. What madness to say such things!

And if it were so, they should also have said that God would have done better to not ever have made any creature than to have allowed, as he did, any venial sin to have been committed or any meddlesome lie or vain and frivolous word to have been uttered. So, it is totally ridiculous to say that the vices and sins of men offend God grievously and mortally. Let me add that to be offended or to be able to be offended is decisive proof of weakness and stupidity, which cannot at all exist in an all-powerful, infinitely perfect being and, consequently cannot be in God.

So, too, it is an error to believe that he could be upset, angered, or infuriated against men because of their vices and sins. It is an error, I say, to say and think this not only because this is unworthy of the wisdom of an infinitely perfect being, such as they consider God, but also because being immutable and unchangeable in his nature, as they suppose, he cannot be subject to any of these passions. And the reason is that these passions are extraordinary emotions of the soul that change and alter the natural and ordinary disposition of the soul.

And so, since God is immutable and inalterable in his nature, it is evident that he cannot be moved by any of these passions.

This is what our Christ-cultists themselves are forced to acknowledge; just look at what their leaders say:

God does not think the same as men, as if thoughts and will come to him one after another. He is not angered the same as men, as if subject to some change. Nevertheless we say that he is angered and irate, but

it is only to indicate the grievousness, enormity, and malice of our sins, which are such that they seem to provoke his anger, although he cannot naturally be moved to anger or hate or any passion. (St. Ambrose, *On Noah and the Ark*, 1:4)

And St. Augustine said about God, “You are jealous of your glory, but you fear nothing; you repent, but without sorrow, grief, or regret, you are angry, but always calm” (*Confessions*, 1:4). And elsewhere:

My Lord, you have already said with a loud voice in the inner ear of my heart that you are eternal because you never change, not by the impression of a new form nor by the vicissitude of any movement; your will is also not subject to the inconstancy of time like a will that wavers in its resolutions in a way that it cannot be immortal in duration. I see this truth clearly in your presence, etc. These same lights that you have communicated to me show me that the disobedience of any of your creatures does not harm your person or disturb the order of your empire, either in heaven or on earth. (12:11.11)

And elsewhere he says that God and his angels “are not angered and have mercy without compassion” (*The City of God*, 9:5) and in another place that “God does not vary in his thoughts or will over time like men,” and he says that “God did not think differently before he created the world than he does now after creating it and he will not think differently after the world has ended because the will of God lasts eternally.” Fulgentius says the same thing.

And the apostle St. James categorically said that every kindness and perfect gift comes from on high and descends from the father of lights, i.e., from God himself who is, he says, *not subject to any change or any shifting shadow* (James 1:17).

Thus it is clear and evident that our Christ-cultists are forced to acknowledge that an infinitely perfect being such as their God cannot be subject to any passion and, consequently, it is an error to say or think and even more so to teach every day as they do that the vices and sins of men arouse the anger, fury, and indignation of God. And it is ridiculous and absurd to say that a being that is by nature unmoving and unchanging can be in any way subject to the movements of these kinds of passions. “The offender and the being offended are equal evidence of

imbecility" (*Montaigne, Essays*, 2:12), which cannot at all be suitable to an infinitely perfect being.

The philosophers, particularly the Stoics, figure it is disgraceful for any wise person to be carried away by the motions of any passion. All the more reason would they judge it disgraceful for an infinitely perfect being to be carried away. And what shows that the vices and sins of men do not at all offend God and that they do no wrong, harm, injury, or displeasure to him and that they arouse no anger or indignation in him, is that he does not prevent them in any way. For, if they really offended him and really aroused his anger and indignation, as our Christ-cultists say, he would not fail to prevent them; or at least if he did not prevent them, it would not be for lack of power, seeing that he is all-powerful and can easily do everything. So, maybe it is because he did not want to prevent them; and in this case not only would he go against the nature of kindness and wisdom, which always tends, as far as it can, to obtain good and prevent evil, but he would also make himself the object of laughter and mockery since it would be madness for him to want to be constantly offended and outraged by all kinds of vices and sins and to want to be annoyed and angered for evils he could have prevented but did not want to.

But, say our Christ-cultists, God does not want to take away from men the freedom to do what they want; and they willingly abuse the power he gives them when they do evil, whereby they grievously offend him. But, you can also say that God, being all-powerful and infinitely wise, as they suppose, could, without taking away freedom from men, always guide and direct their hearts and minds, their thoughts and desires, their inclinations and wills so well that they would never want to commit any evil or sin and in this way he could easily prevent all kinds of sins without taking away or injuring the freedom or free will of men. Consequently, it is a vain reason to say that he wants to prevent the vices and viciousness of men on the pretext that he wants to leave them the freedom to do what pleases them.

In addition, since our Christ-cultists uphold and teach that God himself is the first principle and the first mover of all that is moved and all that is done in the world, and that nothing is done without him and his pre-motion and cooperation, it follows that he would be the first principle, the first mover, and the first author of all that is done of good or

evil in men and in all creatures. Consequently, if he were angered and grieved against the vices and dissoluteness of men, it would be against what he himself were doing in them and it would be himself who was offending himself by the vices and sins of men, just like a man who wanted to stab himself by the hand of someone else. This would be ridiculous to say and think about a God, i.e., an infinitely good, wise, and perfect being. For, certainly only madmen willingly offend themselves and are angered and grieved against good. So we can clearly see that our Christ-cultists are in error when they say that the vices and sins of men grievously and mortally offend their God and arouse his anger, fury, and indignation.

Our Christ-cultists see very clearly that their way of speaking about the so-called offense and anger and indignation of their God cannot abide in the true sense of the words in which they express their thoughts, and so they have been constrained to give them a metaphorical and figurative meaning. That is why they also say that these terms "offense," "injury," "ire," and "anger," "fury," and "indignation" and others like them should not be understood literally, but only metaphorically from the external effects that these passions usually produce in men who really are offended and moved to anger and indignation. Moreover, it is common for men who feel offended and angered and infuriated to use vengeance and severity by violently and harshly punishing and mistreating the offenders.

In the same way, say our Christ-cultists, God often severely punishes the men who abandon themselves to vice and sin and violate and scorn his law and commandments. And he punishes them with as much strictness and severity as if they had grievously offended him and really angered him, and in a manner of speaking this is why they say that the vices and sins of men offend God and arouse his anger and indignation. So, according to their true sentiment, when they say this, all these expressions mean nothing but that God chastises and harshly punishes the vices and sins of men; and they use these kinds of expressions in order to adapt to the common way of speaking and to instill fear and terror in sinners, as well as to humiliate the haughty, arouse the careless to virtue, excite curious minds, and support the spirit of piety in the just.

But, if it is only this that our Christ-cultists mean and intend, then it is true, as I said, that the vices and sins of men do not offend God in

any way or arouse his anger and indignation and, consequently, our Christ-cultists are in error and are wrong to exaggerate vainly the grievousness and enormity of sins with respect to the so-called offense to God, seeing that it is, according to them, only a metaphorical and imaginary offense.

Moreover, it is abusing the terms to call an "injury" and "offense to God" what is not an injury or offense to God and to call "ire" and "anger," "fury" and "indignation" what is not ire, anger, fury, or indignation in God. For example, we do not call it "anger" and "fury" when a judge pronounces or carries out a sentence to severely punish criminals! So why call it "ire," "anger," "fury," and "indignation" when an infinitely wise God justly punishes the viciousness of men, since he punishes them without anger and indignation? But if following this explanation in the way our Christ-cultists talk, the vices and sins of men are only metaphorically called "injuries" and "offenses to God" in that he punishes them, it follows that if he did not punish them they would not even be metaphorically called injuries and offenses and they would only be called thus if he punished them. As a result, if he did not punish them and had never punished them, they would never have been and would never be, even metaphorically speaking, offenses to God. And so, for example, if he never punished the sin and so-called disobedience of Adam, which our Christ-cultists say was the sole cause of the unhappiness and fall of man, would it ever have been (or even been called) an "offense to God"? I do not know if our Christ-cultists could reconcile this with what they say about the grievousness and enormity of sin with respect to this so-called offense to God.

They are likewise in error with respect to the temporal and eternal punishment they say God gives for the crimes and sins of men. They are wrong with respect to the temporal pains that men suffer in this life because you cannot say with certainty or with any semblance of truth that the pains and evils of this life are the punishments that God sends them in retribution for their sins. And clear and convincing evidence of this is that if these pains and evils were really the punishments of God, they would always be proportional to the seriousness and to the number of their crimes and sins and never would the innocent or just bear the same punishment as the guilty, because it is not believable that an infinitely good and just God would ever want to punish the innocent equally

with the guilty. It is not believable that he would want to punish harshly the minor faults in the former and to punish only lightly the abominable crimes in the latter. It is not believable that he would want to let abominable crimes go unpunished and would want to make the innocent and just suffer the pain that the wicked and guilty deserve. Now, we clearly see every day thousands and thousands of crimes and abominable viciousness go unpunished in the world. We clearly see the just and innocent bear the same pain as the guilty and groan in their sufferings and afflictions and often die miserably while the impious, vicious, and detestable men live in joy and prosperity and triumph in their iniquities. And according to what our Christ-cultists themselves say, using the example of the punishment of the first sin of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:17), of the punishments of the Bethsamites who looked upon the ark (1 Sam. 6:19), and of the punishment of the census David took of his people (2 Sam. 24:15) and many other similar examples, following what our Christ-cultists say, God very severely punished the lesser faults in some while not punishing at all or punishing very lightly the very great crimes in others. For, regarding the so-called sin that Adam committed in the so-called earthly paradise when he ate a kind of forbidden fruit, this can only be a very minor fault compared, for example, with the sin that Cain afterward committed when he viciously killed his brother Abel. However, following our Christ-cultists, God very severely punished the sin of Adam, which was a very minor fault, and he did not at all, or at least only very lightly, punish the sin of Cain, which was a detestable crime.

Many examples can be quoted along with everything we see every day in the world, the unhappiness and unfortunate accidents that happen to good people and not to the infinite number of bad people who deserve to be severely punished and who are not, clearly show us that God often very severely punishes minor faults in some and not the great crimes in others, and he often equally punishes the good and the bad, the innocent and the guilty, the just and the unjust. Since this is obviously contrary to the sovereign bounty, wisdom, and justice of an infinitely perfect God, it seems that the temporal pains and evils of this life are not really punishments from God. They are certainly only the natural results and effects of the natural constitution of things that are corruptible and mortal.

Moreover, is it believable that a God who is infinitely good and wise

and who had created men to fill them with goods and favors and to make them perpetually happy and content in an earthly paradise would have wanted, right after having created them for such a good purpose, to exclude them entirely from his grace and friendship and reduce them all to the unhappy necessity of suffering all the pains and miseries of this life; and all this because of the single fault of one man, even a very minor fault, which was to have indiscreetly eaten a forbidden fruit in the garden?

I say that this is not believable!

What? An infinitely good and wise God would have wanted to make all men's temporal and eternal happiness and unhappiness depend on the vain and slight obedience or disobedience of a single weak and fragile man? And whose weakness and fragility he knew? And whose fall into disobedience he had foreseen? It is not believable!

What? For such a fault and disobedience, which was only trivial, inconsequential in itself, which did no wrong or harm or displeasure to God or anyone, which was not even committed with any bad intention? And which today would not even deserve a lash of the belt? An infinitely good and wise God would have wanted to lose all mankind? Deprive all men of his grace? Condemn them all to death? Make them suffer all the pains and miseries of this life as punishment for such a fault? And as if this was not enough, condemn them all to an eternal curse and reprobation? This is not at all believable. And to even have such a thought does injury to the sovereign bounty and wisdom of a God.

If a prince, for example, had it in mind to lose all the people of a province or even of his kingdom for the minor disobedience of one of his subjects or one of his favorites, or if a rich and powerful father of a family with many children had it in mind to chase them all from his house and deprive them all of their inheritance and even make them all miserable and unhappy for the rest of their lives because of the minor disobedience of only one of his children, would you not say that this prince or this father was foolish and insane? You would, and you would be right to say this because they would have to have totally lost their minds and fallen deep into brutality and fury to go so far!

How is it, then, that an infinitely good and wise God could have fallen into such a cruel and furious insanity so as to want to lose all men, who were his children and his people, and make them forever unhappy?

And for the fault of a single man who had only indiscreetly eaten an apple or plum that he was forbidden to eat? This is not at all believable and is ridiculous to even think. Therefore, it is obviously an error in our Christ-cultists to say that God punishes the crimes and sins of men with temporal punishments in this life, which are certainly, as I said, only the natural results and effects of the natural constitution of human things that are changing, corruptible, and mortal.

But this error seems even more obvious when they say that God does not only punish men with temporal punishments in this life, but that he punishes them even more severely in another life with eternal tortures, the cruelest and most dreadful tortures imaginable of a hell that is (always according to what they say) full of fire and flames and all kinds of horrors and curses. For, this is pushing the vengeance of God to such an excess of cruelty, barbarism, and inhumanity that there is no one even among the cruelest tyrants who ever wanted or had the courage to push so far. This is pushing it as far as it could possibly go.

What? All the evils, miseries, and afflictions in this life are not enough for an infinitely good and merciful God to take vengeance on men for the so-called crime of a minor disobedience? They are not enough to revenge the so-called crime of having indiscreetly eaten some fruit? Some apples, plums, or cherries in a garden? They are also not enough to revenge the crime of only having transgressed some law of fasting and abstinence commanded by the church? Of having had a little too much to drink or eat when enjoying a friend's party? They are not enough to take vengeance on the young men and women for the so-called crime of a gentle kiss or hug? Or the so-called crime of having only thought about or looked at each other with a little indulgence? But he still needs eternal punishments for them forever? And he needs the cruelest, most terrible and dreadful punishments of eternal fire and flame, all the most terrifying punishments you can imagine? He needs these kinds of punishments to satisfy his vengeance? And to have the pleasure of tormenting men forever? This would exceed all cruelty and inhumanity. And to want to support this is to want to push it to the utmost limit.

Do you not say, gentlemen Christ-cultists, that God is full of kindness and mercy (2 Cor. 1:3)? Do you not say that he loves to forgive? And his gentleness and mercy is greater than the malice of our sins (Joel

2:13)? You do say all this! How, then, can you say that he would so severely, cruelly, and pitilessly punish such minor and vain faults? This is self-contradictory and self-negating. *When a scourge kills suddenly, he laughs at the pains of the guilty and innocent* (Job 9:23).

Imagine for a moment the dreadful unhappiness where many of these unfortunate reprobates are whose only crime, perhaps, was to die without baptism; others whose only crime, perhaps, was to have been weak enough to enjoy just a few natural pleasures; others to have a little too much indulgence for some friends; others to have had the will and desire to take vengeance on some wicked enemy; others still whose only crime was to miss a few masses, to have neglected some fasts, or not to have firmly believed everything stupid men and liars told them about a paradise and a hell of which they never saw or knew anything, etc.

So, there are these poor unfortunates, unpardonably condemned to suffer forever the cruel and horrible torments of hell and to burn in flames eternally without ever any hope of pardon, without ever any deliverance or relief from their torment? What pains! What cries! What groans! What horrible screams will these poor unfortunates not let loose for eternity? And would an infinitely gentle and kind, infinitely good and merciful God, as they call him, never relent? Would he never look upon such horrible torments or hear the wails, the cries, and the pitiful groans of these poor unfortunates? Would he never be touched by compassion for the least guilty any more than for the most wicked?

If a God were capable of this and actually did such a thing (which is, nevertheless completely impossible), I would dare say that such a God deserves to be hated, detested, and cursed forever, seeing that he is crueler than all the cruelest tyrants who ever lived or ever could live. Do you think this can be said about a God? Certainly not. It is just as morally ridiculous and absurd to say that an infinitely perfect, good, and wise being deserves to be hated, detested, and cursed forever as it is to say that a God wants to punish for eternity and without pity not only the sins of the malicious and vicious, but also the sins of the weak and ill. This is opposed to what is expressly said in one of the so-called holy prophets (Is. 40:1-2).

The so-called holy and divine books testify that God repented having so severely punished men for their wickedness when he made them all perish in the waters of the deluge that had flooded the entire earth in the

time of Noah. They say that God promised then that he would no longer curse the land because of the sins of men and no longer flood them because they were naturally inclined to evil. He even tells them that he would put his rainbow in the clouds as a sure sign of his covenant with men and with all living creatures. And did he create or form a dreadful hell to torment them and cruelly burn them eternally? What does this mean? Can it even be imagined of an infinitely good and wise being? Certainly not and it should not be said or thought.

Our so-called Christ said of one of his disciples who was bound to betray him that it would have been better for him if he had never been born. But if what I just explained about the doctrine of our Christ-cultists were true, we could certainly say that it would have been better if God had never created man than to have created him and left him, as he did, in such a weak and fragile condition. Our Christ-cultists cannot deny this. For, since they themselves say and it is a maxim of their morality that it would be better to let all creatures die than to commit a single venial sin—i.e., for example, a single little white lie or a single casual, frivolous word, which are only venial sins according to their doctrine—it is clear that it would have been much better if there had never been men or a world than to have one so full of wicked vices and detestable crimes. It would have been much better if there had never been men than to have so many wretched and unhappy reprobates for all eternity. In a word, it would have been better if God had stayed at rest and had never created anything than to have allowed the slightest evil, i.e., the slightest sin or disobedience to his commands. Consider whether an infinitely perfect, good, and wise being would ever have wanted to make or allow to be made what would have been better never to have made. It is ridiculous and absurd to say that he would ever have wanted to do what would have been better not to do, seeing that it would be acting against the nature of his infinite bounty and wisdom. All these reasons show us clearly that our Christ-cultists are again in error when they say that God punishes the crimes and sins of men with eternal punishments.

But we see another error of their doctrine, completely contrary and opposed to what I just refuted; for, after having portrayed their God to us as a horrible monster of anger, fury, and indignation against human sinners, pitilessly punishing them for their vices and sins with the

dreadful punishments of hell and severely punishing them for the slightest venial sins with the burning flames of purgatory for many years, they then portray him to us as a wonderful prodigy of kindness, gentleness, clemency, and mercy, easily forgiving the greatest and most detestable crimes. Look at what is written in almost all the so-called holy and sacred books where the mercy of God is exalted over all his works, particularly in the prophets' books where it is said that God is gentle, kind, merciful, patient, and that his mercy is great and his kindness surpasses the malice of sinners (Joel 2:13); and elsewhere it is said that although the crimes of sinners be red as scarlet, they will be white as snow and though they be red as crimson, they will be white as wool, wanting to say in this way of speaking that although their sins be very grievous and great, it will not keep him from bestowing grace and mercy on them and cleansing them and purifying them of all the stains of their vices and sins (Is. 1:18).

That is also why the Christian religion teaches and forces people to believe under pain of damnation and eternal curse that God, through an excess of his kindness and mercy, wanted to have pity and compassion for the fall of all men caused by the sin of Adam and wanted to redeem them from all their sins and he had so much kindness for them that he wanted to become a man himself and die shamefully on a cross to satisfy, by his death, his divine justice that had been offended by the sins of men; and by this to redeem them from eternal damnation and at the same time to get for them an eternally blessed life in heaven. If what the Christian religion says is true, then here is decisive evidence of the greatest kindness and mercy that God could have done for sinners who had so grievously offended him. But, it is easy to see the falsity and absurdity of this doctrine. For:

1—How in the same God do you make such a great excess of kindness and love for men compatible with such little care that he took to keep and maintain them in their innocence, and with such a great weakness and fragility as that in which he willingly left them to fall so easily and quickly after they had sinned? For, it was certainly up to him alone, i.e., to God, to give men at first enough strength, courage, reason, wisdom, and virtue to resist the temptations of sin and remain forever steadfast in their innocence without ever falling into sin. And this was entirely up to God to do. In this case, men would never have fallen into

sin and as a result, according to the Christ-cultist doctrine, there never would have been any evil or, consequently, any unhappy creature, which would have been the greatest happiness in the world. But God, according to the doctrine of our Christ-cultists, did not want it this way. How can they make this agree with such a great kindness and love that they say he has for men? It is not at all compatible.

How again in the same God do you make such a great kindness and love for men compatible with such a great strictness and severity with which he punishes the slightest faults? How in the same God do you make such a great kindness and mercy toward sinners compatible with such a great anger, fury, and indignation that he has against sinners? And even with such a cruel vengeance as he exerts against them? Such contrary and opposite extremes cannot exist together in the same subject since they would necessarily be self-negating. So, it is ridiculous and absurd to want to attribute them to the same God.

2—Is it believable that an infinitely good God who has so much clemency and kindness for men wanted to reprove, lose, and condemn the entire human race not only to all the pains and miseries of this life, but also to burn eternally in the dreadful flames of hell for such a minor fault as Adam committed when he ate some forbidden fruit in the garden? And for a fault that did not deserve a single lash of the belt! It is disgraceful only to have such a thought about a God who is sovereign, good, and wise.

3—If such a fault should irritate and offend the divine majesty so much that it would want to condemn, lose, and make all men unhappy for such a little thing, is it not believable that an infinitely good, wise, and all-powerful God would have wanted to prevent this fault rather than to let it be committed with such detrimental and fatal results and consequences for the entire world? He could easily have prevented it, if he had wanted, through his wisdom, providence, and omnipotence and even without costing him any trouble or work. Since he did not prevent it, it is obvious that he did not want to prevent it or he did not think of it: neither of these could be said of an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God because it would be entirely against the nature of a sovereign bounty and wisdom to not want to prevent the source and cause of such great and detestable evils.

4—Is it believable that an infinitely good and wise God would have

wanted to be offended so grievously for such a minor fault? And for a fault that he allowed and did not prevent? Is it believable that after having allowed and not wanting to prevent it, he wanted to atone for it and punish it in himself, in his own person of his so-called divine Son, eternal and consubstantial with him, as our Christ-cultists say? Is it believable that this so-called divine Son, eternal and consubstantial with God his father, wanted to be made man and suffer such a cruel and shameful death as he did on the cross to make amends for an injury or offense that was only imaginary and metaphorical?

I say "imaginary and metaphorical" because all the crimes and sins of men are, with respect to God, only imaginary and metaphorical injuries and offenses. Is it believable that a God the eternal father would have wanted to deliver his own son into the hands of men who had so grievously offended him in order to die shamefully and cruelly with thieves like a criminal? Through his death to make amends and remove the injury and offense that had been done by a man who had only eaten an apple or plum against his commandment? Is it believable that a God looked upon this cruel and shameful death of his dear and divine son as a worthy satisfaction and compensation for the injury that had been done by such a so-called sin? And this after having said himself or making it said in his law that *he who hangs on a cross is cursed by God* (Deut. 21:23)? Nothing is more vain, more idiotic, more extravagant, and more ridiculous than all this.

Was it necessary that an all-powerful God get taken and whipped to have mercy and compassion on sinners? And did it need to cost him his life to take men away from an imaginary enemy? What madness to think this! Nevertheless, on this so-called beautiful and lovely mystery of a God become man, a God whipped, hanged, and died ignominiously on a cross, is what the entire Christian religion is based. It is as if they said that an infinitely wise and good God were offended and very angry with men for nothing, for a trifle, and that he was mercifully appeased and reconciled with them through the greatest of all crimes, a horrible deicide, the murder of a god, which they committed in crucifying and making his dear and divine son cruelly and shamefully die. *Be astonished, O heaven and earth*, at such a strange doctrine (Jer. 2:12).

What? This single offense that men had committed in doing this, i.e., in crucifying a God, should have made them unpardonably lost for-

ever; instead it happily saved and redeemed everyone! What madness! What madness, once more, to say or even think such a thing! You have to be stupendously stricken with blindness and stubbornness to not want to recognize and condemn such gross, visible, ridiculous, and absurd errors as these. We can certainly say that there never was the like in all of paganism; and nevertheless this is what the Christian religion teaches and makes people believe absolutely. And so, it clearly contains errors in its doctrine.

I will not go on here to refute in particular the errors that it teaches concerning its so-called holy sacraments or its indulgences or its relics of saints and its pilgrimages or even concerning its vain benedictions and its vain, superstitious, and ridiculous celebrations of masses and other things like this. For, all this will be sufficiently refuted by everything I just said and everything I am going to say. So, I will pass on to the errors of morality that it contains.

## 40. THREE PRINCIPAL ERRORS OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY

I have noticed three particular errors. The first is that it makes the perfection of virtue and the greatest good or advantage of man consist in the love and pursuit of pain and suffering according to the maxims of Christ, its chief, who said to his disciples that happy are the poor, happy are those who cry, who are hungry and thirsty, who suffer persecution for justice (Matt. 5:3–10). And according to other maxims of this Christ we have to carry our cross, renounce ourselves and all we possess, and if anyone wants to be perfect he has to sell everything he has and give it to the poor (Matt. 19:21; Luke 18:22); and, on the other hand, this Christ cursed the rich and those who enjoyed themselves and were happy in this world (Luke 6:24).

The second error of its morality consists in condemning as vices and crimes worthy of eternal punishment not only the deeds, but also the thoughts, desires, and affections of the flesh, which are the most natural, proper, and necessary for the preservation and multiplication of the human race. It condemns them absolutely in all men and women who are not legally joined together by the bonds of marriage according to its laws and orders. Not only the real, physical union of male and female, but also all lascivious actions, fondling, and even all desires, affections, thoughts, and looks that purposefully tend to this end—it considers them all crimes worthy of eternal punishment, according to the maxim of its GodChrist that said that anyone looking at a woman with the design or desire to enjoy her has *already committed adultery in his heart* and is already guilty of a crime (Matt. 5:28). As a result, according to this maxim the Christian religion, which believes itself to be the purest and holiest, considers as mortal sins worthy of eternal punishment in hell not only all lascivious actions and fondling, but also all desires, thoughts, looks, and talk that willingly tend to this end in men and women who are not legally joined together according to their laws and orders.

The third error of its morality consists in approving and recommending the practice and observance of certain maxims and, as it were,

precepts that clearly tend to the reversal of justice and natural equality, and also tend to favor the wicked and oppress the good and the weak. For, it approves and recommends the practice and observance of the precepts and maxims of the Christ, who ordered his disciples to love their enemies and do good to those who did them harm; he commanded them to not resist vicious men but to quietly suffer their injuries and mistreatments, not only without vengeance, but also without anger, without a murmur, and without complaining (Matt. 5:39). That is why he said that if someone took their coat, they should let them have their tunic as well, etc. (Luke 6:29). And so, in accordance with these lovely maxims, one of the famous GodChrist-cultists was right to say that "the motto of carnal man was to conquer so as not to suffer, but the motto of the Christian man was to suffer so as not to conquer, to be trampled under foot so as not to fall and to die in order to live" (*Pasquier Quesnel, On St. John*, 2:20, 16), although we hardly see any of them following these lovely maxims, apparently because they hardly put any faith in them and they know very well that they are not good, as is indeed the case.

It is an error to say that the perfection of virtue consists in the love and pursuit of pain and suffering because it is as if they were saying that the greatest virtue consisted in loving to be miserable and unhappy, in loving and pursuing that which is most contrary to Nature and even tends to destroy it. We cannot deny that pain and suffering, hunger and thirst, harm and persecution are contrary to Nature and that all these things tend to destroy it. Now, it is clearly an error and even madness to say that the perfection of virtue consists in loving and pursuing what is contrary to Nature and tends to destroy it. And it is also clearly an error and madness to say that the greatest good and happiness of man consists in weeping and groaning, in being poor and unhappy, hungry and thirsty, etc. Consequently, it is an error to say that the perfection of virtue and the greatest good of man consist in the love and pursuit of suffering.

It is true that it is not specifically and categorically in the pain and suffering that our Christ-cultists claim that the perfection of virtue and the greatest good of man consist, since it is always bad to suffer and those who suffer the most are not always the wisest and most virtuous for it. They only claim that the perfection of virtue consists in constantly suffering for a good end and the greatest good of man consists in the pos-

session and enjoyment of the greatest goods and rewards, which they claim everyone who suffered patiently and virtuously will enjoy in heaven all together. That is why Jesus Christ said that those who weep will be happy because they will be consoled and those who suffered persecution for justice will be happy because the kingdom of heaven is for them, etc. But this does not stop this moral maxim of our Christ-cultists from being absolutely false, since it is always an error and even madness to love and pursue pain and suffering on the pretext of acquiring goods and rewards that are only imaginary. For, this so-called kingdom of heaven, which our superstitious god-cultists seem to make such a big deal about, is only an imaginary kingdom. It is abusing the simplicity, ignorance, and credulity of people to want to make them love and pursue real pain and suffering on the pretext of acquiring lovely rewards that are only imaginary. Moreover, this maxim to love and pursue the cross, i.e., pain and suffering, to renounce yourself and everything you possess, is based only on the word of a miserable fanatic, as I demonstrated above. And so, it is an error and madness in men to want to follow or put any faith in such a maxim that is so contrary to the good of Nature and good judgment.

Likewise it is an error of Christian morality to condemn as it does all the natural pleasures of the body; and not only the natural actions and deeds of the flesh, but also all the voluntary desires and thoughts to enjoy them, if it is not, as they say, done in a legal marriage according to their laws and orders. It is an error, I say, in this morality to look upon everything as criminal actions and thoughts worthy of eternal punishment. For, since there is nothing more natural and legitimate than this inclination to which all men naturally tend, it is in a way condemning Nature itself and its author (if it has one other than itself) to condemn as lecherous and criminal an inclination that is so natural in men and women and comes to them from the most intimate depths of their nature. What, God? An infinitely good God would want, for example, to make young people burn eternally in the dreadful flames of hell only for having had a few moments of pleasure together? For having followed and surrendered to this sweet inclination of Nature, which God had so strongly imprinted in their nature? Or even only for having consented and indulged in thoughts, desires, or carnal motions that God himself had formed and aroused in them? This is entirely ridiculous and absurd and it is disgraceful only to have such a thought about an infinitely good

and perfect God and being. The thought alone of such cruelty is monstrous, "my soul shudders with horror at this memory" (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.12).

And so, it is clearly an error in Christian morality to condemn as it does in men and women thoughts, desires, and inclinations that are so natural to them and so legitimate and necessary to the preservation and multiplication of the human race. And it is an error to look upon them as lecherous inclinations and vices worthy of eternal punishment and reprobation. I am not, however, saying this to approve of or favor in any way the debauchery of men or women who would indiscreetly or excessively abandon themselves to this animal inclination, and I condemn this excess and disorder as well as all other kinds of excess and disorder. And I do not pretend to excuse men and women who indiscreetly lay themselves open to losing their honor or to incurring some other untoward disgrace for having such a pleasure, nor do I excuse those who would give opportunity to speak or think badly about them by their suspicious behavior. As much in this respect as in many other things, you must conform to the laws, customs, and practices of the country where you are. Among us marriage between close relatives is absolutely forbidden; it would be a double crime to be carnally united with a close relative, at least if you do it without permission and legal dispensation. Elsewhere it is commonly permitted and it would even be a duty of piety and justice to accomplish this marriage by the double bond of love that comes from kinship and marriage, according to what a poet said of some nations where this was commonly done: "There are peoples among whom the mother is united with the son, the daughter with the father, and the familial tenderness increases the love with a double bond" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X.331–33).

The best thing, then, is for each individual to wisely follow the laws and customs of his country without being badly spoken or thought of, following that other maxim of our Christ-cultists who say that "if you are in Rome, do as the Romans, and if you are elsewhere, do as elsewhere" [St. Ambrose]. But, to say that these kinds of actions, desires, or thoughts and indulgences are crimes worthy of eternal punishments and torments is an error that is not at all believable, and it is disgraceful to think that a sovereign kindness would want to punish men so severely for such a slight and vain matter. Still, they are wise who can control

themselves and who do not blindly or indiscreetly follow this gentle and violent inclination of Nature. And he was wise who said with respect to this that "he did not purchase regret at such a high cost" [Demos-thenes]. But it is dumb also, in my opinion, to not dare, at least sometimes, because of bigotry or superstition, to taste what it is. There could be many other things to say on this subject, but what I have just said should be enough to show you clearly the error of Christian morality in this respect.

Here again is another error of this Christian morality: it teaches that we must love our enemies, not take revenge for injuries and not even resist vicious men, but, on the contrary, that we must bless those who curse us, do good to those who do us harm, let them rob us when they want to take what we have, and always quietly suffer the injuries and mistreatments that they do, etc. This is an error, I say, or rather these are errors to teach such things and to want to make people follow and practice such maxims of morality that are so contrary to natural right and reason and so contrary to the good and legitimate government of men. Now, these maxims are entirely contrary to everything I just said because it is obviously a natural right, natural reason, natural equality and justice to preserve our life and goods against those who want to take them from us unjustly. And as it is natural to hate evil, it is also natural to hate those who unjustly do evil. Now, the aforementioned maxims of Christian morality go directly against all these natural rights and, consequently, are false. And it is an error to want to teach them and make people practice them, seeing that they are contrary to all natural rights and that they clearly tend to the reversal of justice, to the oppression of the poor and weak, and they are contrary to the good government of men. I remember reading somewhere that this was why the emperor Julian, called the Apostate, left the Christian religion, unable to convince himself that a religion that tended to the reversal of justice and natural equality in its precepts and maxims of morality could truly be a divine institution. Now, these maxims of the Christian religion not only tend to the reversal of justice but also clearly tend to favor the vicious and their oppression of the good and the weak.

For, is it not clearly favoring the vicious to say that we must not revenge injuries or mistreatments that are done to us unjustly? Is it not favoring them to say we must not resist them and that we should let

them do what they want, even rob us when they want to steal what we have? Is it not favoring them to say that we must love them and do good to them for every evil that they do to us? Certainly, this favors them and authorizes them in their malice and viciousness and leads them to boldly attack the good and the weak and do whatever they want without punishment and without fear.

On the other hand, is it not clearly exposing the good and the weak to the injuries, insults, and mistreatments by the vicious who ask nothing better than to brag about these lovely maxims so as to offend and attack the just, good, and weak more freely and boldly on the pretext that they would not dare or want to take revenge or even defend themselves as they should? Certainly, it is exposing them to this and in a way it is wanting the good to abandon themselves to the clutches of the vicious, their enemies. For, since the good people cannot follow or practice these maxims without the vicious freely doing what they want, to tell good people they have to follow these maxims is like telling them they have to surrender themselves and their goods to the clutches of the vicious, which clearly tends to the reversal of order and justice, as I said, and, consequently, these maxims are clearly false and detrimental to the real public good.

It is very true that there are sometimes certain cases or situations in which it would be better to suffer quietly some wrongs, damages, injuries, or injustices than to want to take revenge and better to give something away to the vicious than never to want to give anything away. You know that it is prudent on these kinds of occasions to choose the lesser evil to avoid the greater: you have to buy peace when you cannot have it otherwise. But to say in general, according to the maxims of Christian morality, that you have to suffer everything from the vicious, let yourself be robbed, trampled underfoot, torn apart, and, if the opportunity arises, burned alive, and that even with this you have to love the vicious and do good to them, and all this on the pretext of a greater perfection of virtue and in the vain and deceptive hope of a greater eternal recompense that will never come! These are ridiculous and absurd errors that are contrary to common sense, to Nature, to good judgment, detrimental to good men and detrimental to the state and to the good government of men who ask that good men be maintained in peace and that the vicious be severely reprimanded and punished for

their viciousness. That is also why it was given in the ancient law of Moses, which our Christ-cultists recognize as divine law, to the closest relative of someone who had been viciously killed by some vicious enemy to severely revenge the death of his relative. Here is what the law states: If someone was struck dead by a blow, his death will be revenged by the death of the murderer; the closest relative of the victim will kill the murderer the first time he meets him and if it is by hatred and ambush that he killed him, the closest relative will revenge the death on the murderer and *he will cut his throat the first time he meets him* (Num. 35:19–21). And these other words of the same law: *the closest relative of the dead will revenge the death on the murderer*. Since this law is clearly contrary to the abovementioned maxims of Christian morality, it shows clearly enough that they are false. And so, the Christian religion clearly contains errors in its doctrine and morality, as I just showed through all these arguments and reasons. It clearly follows that it is false and, as such, it is not a divine institution, as our Christ-cultists would like to persuade us. And this is the fifth proof that I have to give.

# 41. SIXTH PROOF: OF THE VANITY AND FALSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, TAKEN FROM THE ABUSE, THE UNJUST PERSECUTIONS, AND THE TYRANNY OF RULERS, WHICH IT TOLERATES OR AUTHORIZES

**H**ere again is another proof, the sixth. I have taken it from the abuses, unjust persecutions, and even the tyranny that it tolerates, approves, and authorizes in the rulers of the earth to the great prejudice of the public good and the common good of people and individuals. I have formed this argument from the fact that a religion that tolerates, approves, and authorizes abuses opposed to justice and the good government of men, and that authorizes the tyranny of the rulers of the earth to the prejudice of the peoples, cannot be true nor can it be a truly divine institution, inasmuch as all divine laws and orders would be just and equitable, and every divine religion would reproach and condemn everything that is contrary to justice and the good government of men.

Now, the Christian religion tolerates, approves, and authorizes many abuses that are opposed to justice, good judgment, and the good government of men. And what is more, it tolerates and authorizes many unjust persecutions and even the tyranny of the kings and rulers of the earth to the great scandal and prejudice of the people who groan and are unhappy and miserable under the yoke of their hard and tyrannical domination. It is easy to show you this clearly enough. I will begin by the abuses and point out five or six in particular.

## 42. THE FIRST ABUSE. DEALING WITH THE IMPORTANT AND ENORMOUS DISPROPORTION OF THE STATE AND CONDITIONS OF MEN WHO BY NATURE ARE EQUAL

**T**he first is this huge disproportion that we see in the different states and conditions of men everywhere. Some men seem to be born only to dominate others tyrannically and to always enjoy and satisfy themselves in life; the others, on the contrary, seem to be born only to be vile, miserable, unhappy slaves and to groan all their lives in pain and misery.

This disproportion is totally unjust and detestable. It is unjust because it is not at all based on the merits of the one or on the demerits of the other; and it is detestable because it is used, on the one side, only to inspire and support pride, haughtiness, ambition, vanity, arrogance, and vainglory; and on the other side it breeds only hatred, envy, anger, desire for vengeance, complaints, and grumblings—all these passions, then, are the source and cause of countless evils and viciousness and would certainly not exist if men established a just proportion of states and conditions among themselves. It is only necessary to establish and preserve among them a just subordination and not to have some people rule tyrannically over the others.

All men are equal by nature; they all hold equally the right to live and to walk upon the earth, the right to enjoy their natural liberty and to share in the goods of the land, with everyone working usefully to have the things that are necessary and useful in life. But, since they live in society and since a society or community of men cannot be ruled well or maintained in good order without some kind of dependence and subordination between them, it is absolutely necessary for the good of human society that there be some kind of dependence and subordination among them.

But, it is also necessary that this dependence and subordination be just and well proportioned, i.e., that it should not exalt some and debase others, flatter some and trample others, give to some and leave nothing to others, and, finally, put all the goods and pleasures on one side and all the pains, cares, worries, grief, and displeasures on the other, insofar as such a dependence and subordination would obviously be unjust and abominable and against the law of nature itself.

There is a sensible writer of the last century who expressed this very well in his *Characters*: "Put authority, pleasures, and idleness on one side and dependence, worries, and misery on the other; either these things are out of place because of the malice of men or God is not God. . . . A very great disproportion that is noticed among men is their work and the law of the strongest" (Jean de la Bruyère, "On Great Minds").

Seneca [the Younger] says, "We all have the same birth, the same origin; there is no one who is nobler than another if it is not he who has a better mind and is more capable of virtue and the liberal sciences. Nature bore us all parents and allies when it generated us from the same nature and to the same end"; that is why he adds, "All these names and all these qualities of king, prince, monarch, potentate, noble, subject, vassal, servant, freedman, and slave are only names that ambition breeds and that insult and tyranny have given birth to" (*On Benefits*, 3.28).

Our God-cultists do not know how to oppose the sentiments of this pagan philosopher, seeing that their religion itself forces them to be concerned with and to love one another like brothers and it expressly forbids them to want to rule imperiously over others. This is patently expressed in the words of their divine Jesus Christ, who said to his disciples: *You know that the princes of nations rule over them and rulers exercise authority, but for you, you will not use it thus, but for you, whoever wants to be the greatest, let him be the least of you and your servant; and whoever wants to be first among you, let him be last* (Matt. 20:25). *Take not*, he tells them again, *take not the vain names of master or lord because you all have only one master and you are all brothers* (Matt. 23:8).

And conforming to the precepts of Christ, in this case based on justice and natural equality, St. James rightly said to his brothers that it was necessary to have no great respect but to treat and consider one another as equals:

*My brothers, the faith that you have in Jesus Christ does not allow you to have great respect for a person because if there comes among you a man wearing a gold ring and magnificent clothes, then there will come also a poor man in rags; looking at the well-dressed man you will say: Sit down here in this place of honor, and you will say to the poor man: Stand over there or sit here at my feet. Do you not judge between the two? And do you not make partial judgments? Hear me, my brothers, if you fulfill the precept of love that says you should love your neighbor as yourself, you do well, but if you show great respect to another you sin and transgress the law.*  
(James 2:1ff)

So, it is obviously an abuse—and a very great abuse in the Christian religion—to see, as we do, not only the unjust and detestable esteem of people, but also so huge, unjust, and detestable the disproportion between the states and conditions of men. But we also see where this abuse first came from, and what its origin and cause may be. Here is another sensible writer who spoke of it.

## 43. ORIGIN OF THE NOBILITY

If we consider the origin of the nobility and royal grandeur, and if we follow the genealogy of princes and potentates all the way to the source, we will find that the first parents of those who make so much fuss and such a big deal about their nobility were bloody and cruel people, thieves and patricides; in a word, the most ancient nobility was only viciousness sustained by power and impiety accompanied by dignity.

All we have done up to now by giving nobility by succession, heredity, election, or otherwise is to perpetuate an excessive power and honor acquired and increased by the most enormous vices and the most unworthy practices and of which even the perpetrators themselves are ashamed. Whence it is that they covered and still cover today the most unjust attacks and the most violent usurpations with the specious pretext of justice and virtue and they call “conquests” what is literally just really brigandage. These unjust and cruel usurpers pretend to maintain the rights and liberties of the people, their religions, and their laws while they are at heart the greatest tyrants of the world, swindlers, hypocrites, atheists, and outlaws. This is not true of just a few, but of all the houses that have made some significant impression or noise in the world.

In both powerful empires as well as in less-considerable kingdoms, we find the same vices. Ancient and modern histories are full of tragedies. The first kingdom of the Greeks owes its birth only to the parricide of Dardanos and the empire of the Amazons began only by the barbarous massacre of the men by their wives. All times and all nations furnish examples of this nature and the greatest dignities have always been acquired by the greatest injustices. (*Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, 5:22)

**T**his is certainly the true and real origin of all that proud and haughty nobility and grandeur that is found among the rulers and nobles of the earth. Being so, far from glorifying them as we do in the world, if we judge things rightly, we should rather be ashamed of such a criminal and hateful birth and source, and the people should only

have hatred and aversion for them. So it is obviously an abuse and clearly an injustice to want to establish and maintain, on such a vain and hateful foundation, such a strange and hateful disproportion between the different states and conditions of men, which, as we see, clearly puts all the authority, all the goods, pleasures, satisfactions, wealth, and even the idleness on the side of the rulers, the rich, and the nobles, and puts on the side of the poor everything that is painful and distressing, to know dependence, worries, misery, anxieties, and all the pain and fatigue of work. This disproportion is all the more unjust and detestable for the people since it makes them entirely dependent on the nobles and the rich, and it makes them, so to speak, their slaves, to the point of making them suffer not only their put-downs, scorn, and abuse, but also their persecution, injustice, and mistreatment.

This has led an author to say:

There is nothing so vile and so abject, nothing so poor and despicable as the peasantry of France. Moreover, they work only for the rulers and the nobles, and with all their work they still have great trouble to earn enough bread for themselves. In a word, the peasants are absolutely the slaves of the rulers and nobles, whose lands they give value to and from whom they rent their farms. They are no less oppressed by the public taxes and the salt taxes than by the individual burdens that their masters impose on them, without even considering what the clergy unjustly demand of these poor unfortunates. (*Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*)

Indeed, every day we see the persecutions, violence, injustices, and mistreatments that they do to the poor. They are not satisfied to have the first honors everywhere or even to have the most beautiful houses, the most beautiful land, and the best inheritance everywhere: they still must try by finesse, subtlety, or violence to have what others have, and they must force others into labor and force them to pay dues and render services that are not owed. They are not satisfied unless you surrender to them everything they demand until they see everyone crawling beneath them. It is even the very minor gentry and country squires who want to be feared and obeyed by the people, who demand unjust things from them and are a burden on the public, who are always trying to

usurp something from someone and who try to take whatever they can from wherever they can.

We are right to compare them to vermin.

For, just as vermin are a pack of riffraff who make nothing but trouble, do nothing but continually eat and gnaw at the body of those who are infected, so these people do nothing but harass, torment, eat, and gnaw at the poor. The poor would be happy if they were not troubled by these vicious vermin. But it is sure that they will always be unhappy if they do not get rid of them.

They speak to you, my dear friends, of devils, they even frighten you with the very name "devil" because they want to make you believe that these devils are the most unpleasant and frightening things to see, that they are the greatest enemies of man and they latch onto lost souls and make them eternally unhappy with them in hell.

But know, my dear friends, that there are not more vicious or truer devils for you to fear than these people whom I just spoke of, because you really do not have greater or more spiteful adversaries and enemies to fear than the rulers, nobles, and rich people of the earth, seeing that they are actually the ones who trample, pillage, oppress, torment, and make you as unhappy as you are. And thus, our painters deceive and defraud you when they show you the devils in their pictures as terrifying monsters; they deceive, I say, and they abuse you just as your preachers do when in their sermons they show you them so ugly, hideous, deformed, and terrifying to see. Both of them should rather depict them as all the lovely gentlemen rulers and nobles and all the beautiful ladies and girls who you see so well-dressed, decked out, curled, powdered, perfumed, and glittering in gold, silver, and precious stones. For, these men and women are, as I said, the true devils since they are the very ones who are your greatest enemies, your greatest adversaries, and who do you the greatest harm.

The devils that your preachers and painters depict and represent, the ones in their speeches and the others in their pictures, in such ugly and frightful forms and figures, are certainly only imaginary devils who only know how to scare children and the ignorant, and only know how to do imaginary harm to those who fear them. But the other devil men and women, the rulers and nobles, whom I am talking about, are certainly not imaginary devils and adversaries: they are the devils and adversaries

who are really visible, they really know how to be feared, and the harm they do to people is truly real and painful.

This again, then, is an abuse and even a very great abuse to see, as we do, such a strange and enormous disproportion between the different states and conditions of men. And as the Christian religion allows and approves and even authorizes such an extraneous and enormous and even unjust and detestable disproportion of states and conditions among men, it is clear enough proof that it does not come from God and that it is not a divine institution, seeing that good judgment clearly shows us that an infinitely good, wise, and just God would not want to establish, authorize, or maintain such a huge and flagrant injustice.

#### 44. SECOND ABUSE. TO TOLERATE AND AUTHORIZE SO MANY KINDS OF STATES AND CONDITIONS OF LAZY MEN OR MEN WHOSE WORK AND OCCUPATIONS ARE COMPLETELY USELESS IN THE WORLD, SEVERAL OF WHICH SERVE ONLY TO TRAMPLE, PILLAGE, RUIN, AND OPPRESS THE PEOPLE

**A** second abuse that prevails among men, and particularly in France, is that they tolerate and support and even authorize several other kinds of conditions of men that are of no necessity or usefulness in the world. And not only do they tolerate and authorize useless men, but what is worse is that they tolerate and authorize several kinds of men whose jobs do nothing but trample, pillage, and oppress the people, which is obviously an abuse since all these men are unjustly and uselessly a public burden, and it is contrary to reason and justice to want to load the people with hard and heavy burdens, and moreover to want to expose them to the unjust persecutions of those who want to hurt them.

Now, there are, as I said, among men several kinds of conditions that are unnecessary and have no real use in the world, and also several whose jobs are only burdens on the people. This can be clearly seen not only in the infinite number of scoundrels of both sexes (whose only occupation is to beg for their bread like cowards, instead of profitably spending their time, as they could, at some honest and useful work), but also in the number of rich sluggards who, on the pretext of having more than enough to live on from what they call “their rents” or “annual incomes,” do no work at all, no trade or useful function, but live as if in continual idleness having no other cares or worries than to play, stroll, have fun, drink, eat, and sleep, and enjoy and satisfy themselves in life. It is clear that all these people, beggars or sluggards, are of no use in the

world; and being of no real use in the world, they must necessarily be a public burden since they only live off the work of others. So, it is clearly an abuse to tolerate and authorize such idleness and laziness in men. And it is an abuse to allow men who do nothing and want to do nothing to be a useless burden on the public. Much more wisely was it once ordained among the Egyptians that every man had to declare before the magistrate what art or profession he lived by or pretended to live by, and if anyone was found lying or living otherwise than by just and honest work, he was severely punished.

## 45. ANOTHER ABUSE. TO TOLERATE AND AUTHORIZE SO MANY CLERGY AND ESPECIALLY SO MANY USELESS MONKS

This abuse appears clearly enough in the large number of clergymen and useless priests, both secular and religious, like the abbots, priors, and canons, and particularly in the large number of monks and nuns whom we see everywhere in the Roman Church because all these people are certainly unnecessary and have no real use in the world, except for the bishops and the priests and vicars of parishes. This is because, even though the functions of bishops and parish priests are entirely vain and useless, nevertheless, since they are set up and appointed to teach good manners and all the moral virtues along with teaching and maintaining the errors and superstitions of a false religion, we should not look upon them as completely useless, seeing that all well-ruled republics need experts to teach virtue and to instruct men in good manners as well as the arts and sciences. So, since the bishops and parish priests have the responsibility, as they say, of the spiritual government of souls and the care of instructing people in good manners as well as in the vain superstitions of their religion, we can say that they work in some way for the public good. Considering this, they have some right to live and be supported by public goods.

## 46. ABUSE, TO ALLOW THEM TO POSSESS SUCH GREAT WEALTH ALTHOUGH THEY MAKE A VOW OF POVERTY

**B**ut all the other priests, beneficiaries, all the abbots and priors, all the canons and chaplains, and particularly all the pious and ridiculous masquerades of monks and nuns, the huge number of different kinds that there are in the Roman and Gallic church, of what necessity and of what usefulness are they in the world? None! What service do they render to the public? None! What duties do they fulfill in the parishes? None! Yet, all these people are still better paid and better furnished with all the goods and commodities of life: they have the best houses, furniture, clothes; they are the best heated and best fed, and the least exposed to the injuries and discomforts of the weather and seasons. They are not, as others, fatigued by the pains of work; they are not stricken by the afflictions and miseries of life. *They take no part in the work of men and they suffer not the plagues to which others are exposed* (Ps. 72:5). If they sometimes fall ill, they are so promptly and so carefully looked after in their needs that the illness itself has almost no time to affect them; and what is more particular with respect to monks is that, although they make vows of poverty and renounce the world and its pomp and vanities, and make a profession to live in the mortification of the body and spirit and the continual exercise of penitence, nevertheless they do not fail to live pleasantly enough in the world, to possess riches and goods and to have all the commodities of life. That is why their monasteries are like lordly manors and princely palaces, their gardens are like earthly paradises where there are all kinds of flowers and fruits pleasing to the sight and taste, their kitchens are always abundantly supplied with everything that can please their taste and appetite, as much meat as fish, according to the weather and season and the institution of their orders. They have extensive farms everywhere that supply them with fat incomes, without which they would not bother in the least to work them with their own hands. In most parishes they collect a lot of

tithes and they often pretend to be lords. As a result they are lucky enough, without pain and effort, to harvest abundantly where they have sown no seed and to gather lavishly where they have scattered nothing. This makes them rich without doing anything, so that they are all able to live well at ease and become soft and fat in a sweet and pious idleness. What an abuse to see and suffer such useless people in the world.

All the monasteries and different orders with incomes have so many goods and huge revenues that we can say of them all that they are the reservoirs of all goods, abundance, and riches. How can they reconcile their so-called vows of poverty and mortification with the possession and enjoyment of so many goods and riches?

Is this what it means to be afflicted? Do they observe the vow of poverty when they possess and enjoy so many goods and live in the midst of such abundance of wealth? Truly the good poor people have something to complain about here! What an abuse and insincerity to pretend to make vows like this in order to observe them so badly! What an abuse and folly to give so many goods and riches to people who profess to renounce the world and who should always live in poverty and in the rigorous practice of penitence! What an abuse and folly to give so many goods and riches to people who do nothing worthwhile and who are entirely useless in the world!

But what folly and injustice is it at the same time to want so many sluggards, who are so useless a burden on the public, to live so fatly and softly off the work of others? I say "a burden on the public" because, although they possess a lot of goods and riches, nevertheless we can only say that they live off the work of others and are a burden on the public, since they themselves do nothing worthwhile and it is really only from the public and from the work of others that they get all their riches and all their livelihood.

It is a flagrant injustice to snatch things from the hands of good laborers who work for what they earn and what they produce by the sweat of their brows in order to give them to so many lazy monks who are entirely useless in the world. It is a flagrant injustice to feed the lazy, idle, and useless people with food that only the good workers should have.

## 47. ALSO AN ABUSE TO ALLOW SO MANY MENDICANT MONKS WHO ARE ABLE TO WORK AND EARN THEIR LIVING

If it is an abuse to allow so many monks to make vows of poverty and perpetual mortification and nevertheless to possess and enjoy so many great goods and riches, and even with this to be so useless a burden on the public, it is no less an abuse to allow there to be so many others without any use whom we call “mendicants” and are certainly even more of a burden on the public since they live only off collections and alms that they ask for and are given.

Here is what the Bishop of Belley [Jean-Pierre Camus, *Book for Hermodorus*] said about this abuse:

The monks or mendicant cenobites are obliged to earn their living from the work of their hands, as is indicated in the fifth chapter of the rule of St. Francis and in his Testament that orders his brothers to work in order to live off the income of their work; and if there is no income, they are allowed to have recourse to the lord’s table by asking alms door-to-door. Then, Pope Nicolas II in his declaration exempted from manual labor those who were too busy in their clerical duties administering sacraments or preaching the Gospels. So, according to their first institution begging is only allowed when they receive no pay for their manual or spiritual work and the collection is only for services rendered to the public. Thus before taking a collection, they should have rendered a service to those whom they ask; for, it is completely reprehensible that there are so many idle, mendicant monks fed at the public expense and so few who are capable of doing any good for the public, which is very costly for the people. . . .

Those who aspire to perfection should work more than others because sweat is on the brow of virtue and the temple of labor comes before the temple of honor; and not to stay in the laziness of begging. It is more suitable, more glorious and “more praiseworthy to give than to receive,” as Jesus Christ said in the account of St. Paul (Acts 20:35).

*It would be better to die than to be always in need* (Ecclesiasticus 40:29). An awful life, it says again, to go from house to house because where you are a stranger you dare not open your mouth. My child, it says, lead not the life of a beggar because it is better to die than to beg. The life of a man who waits at the table of another does not deserve to be considered a life because it is tormented by the meat of another (40:25), but a wise and prudent man will look after himself well because begging is sweet and pleasant only to those who have no shame or honor.

Solomon, who was the wisest of men, in his prayers asked God only for the necessities of life and prayed that he not give him excessive riches and not let him sink to begging, for fear, he said, lest the abundance of riches make him proud and haughty and begging induce or constrain him to do something bad. These maxims are quite different from those of our monks or mendicant cenobites, and it is clear enough to see that it is an error and abuse to want, as they claim, to make the perfection of virtue consist in cowardly and shameful begging.

Cornelius Agrippa in his book *On the Vanity of the Sciences* calls the monks "a bunch of monkeys and buffoons. A multitude of hooded blowhards, bearded or beardless, with halters or sacks, leather shoes, clogs or barefooted, clothed in black, grey or white, etc." And as deformed and ridiculous as the different forms and shapes of their clothing are, they still want to believe they come from a divine institution and they want us to look upon them as something holy. That is why we see that in all the pictures of their holy brotherhoods they represent their founders as receiving from heaven some particular mark of approval for their rules.

We see St. Dominic, for example, immediately receive rosaries from the hands of the Virgin Mary, queen of heaven; St. Francis received cords from heaven, St. Simon Stock received scapulars from the Virgin Mary, St. Augustine received leather belts with horn buckles from the very hands of this queen of heaven, etc. After this, who will not laugh at these mysterious visions and miraculous revelations that are found only in the chronicles of monks? It is not an article of faith that this must be so and we are not obliged to take the visions or illusions of blessed brother monks as divine revelations. (Bishop of Belley, *Book for Hermodorus*)

Here is the thought of a Turk about this great quantity and diversity of monks that he saw among the Christians: "I cannot imagine," he says, "by what policy people thus cultivate so many breeding grounds for spiritual leeches who serve only to suck the blood of the nation to the last drop" (*Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*).

He is very right to call them "leeches," because all these people are really only leeches who, on the pretext of attending more religiously than others to the cult of an imaginary divinity and going religiously every day at certain hours of the day and night to devotedly worship a god of flour and dough, to offer incense to him, to genuflect often and bow low, to mumble and sing before him psalms and canticles that this God does not hear and cannot hear, nor does he see the reverence that they do for him since he has no eyes to see the honors they render him or ears to hear the praises they give him or nostrils to smell the odor of their incense and perfumes—they imagine they do enough to deserve, on the one hand, all the great goods they possess and, on the other hand, to collect everywhere the fat and plentiful alms that people give them without having to do any work at all. That is why we see that after they have worked only a few hours of the day and night in the cult of their divinity and their god of dough, they have nothing to do but rest, entertain themselves pleasantly, walk around, play, eat well, and get fat in sweet and pious idleness. For, we cannot deny that this is the normal life of all those lazy monks, abbots, canons, and other beneficiaries like them who possess everywhere so many great goods and who have everywhere so much good income.

Enough with all these people in the world, with all these reciters of masses and breviaries, all these singers of matins and vespers, all these speakers of sermon and rosaries!

Enough with their dressing up in so many different ridiculous clothes!

Enough with them being shut up in their cloisters, walking barefoot in the snow and mud and disciplining themselves every day if they wish!

Enough with their going every day at certain hours of the day and night to sing songs or canticles in their churches or oratories! The birds sing and twitter enough in the fields and woods! Just let the people feed them so fatly to make them sing and chant in the temples!

Enough with their going every day to worship and prepare the

images and idols of dough and going every day to genuflect and bow low!

Enough with all this in the world, I say! All of it is useless, a waste, and is only madness and vanity.

And as far as they are busy day and night mumbling and singing and each day bowing devotedly thousands and thousands of times before their idols of dough, all this is a waste.

So, it is obviously an abuse and a very great abuse to give them so many great goods and such fat incomes. It is an abuse and a very great abuse to feed them so fatly at the public's expense and to the great prejudice of good and better workers who work all day long at honest and useful jobs and who, nevertheless, very often lack the very necessities of life. "Nature alone," says wise Mentor to Telemachus, "from its fertile breast provides everything necessary for an infinite number of moderate and hardworking men, but it is the pride, flabbiness, and idleness of certain men that put so many others in frightful misery and poverty."

Yes, there are certainly a large number of useless and lazy people who reduce the hardworking people to such frightful misery and poverty.

But, you will say, all these clergymen, abbots, monks, and canons pray for people every day, they celebrate the holy mysteries every day, they offer the holy sacrifice of the mass every day, which is infinitely valuable and worthy. With their prayers they turn aside the calamities of God and draw the graces and blessings of heaven down upon the people, which is, you will say, the greatest good that we can desire and, consequently, it is only right to supply them lavishly with their subsistence and to maintain them properly since they obtain so many benefits for the world with their prayers.

Vanity, vanity, stupid vanity! Only one hour of good work is worth more than everything they do.

When every one of the monks and priests every day celebrate twenty, thirty, fifty, or sixty masses, all together they are not worth a straw, as we say. Straw is useful and necessary, indispensable for many things. But all the prayers, homilies, and masses that the monks and other priests know how to say do nothing and are only useful to get money from their audience. A single stroke of the hoe, for example, that a poor worker gives to cultivate the land is useful and serves to bring forth grain to feed men;

by strokes of the hoe, good workers produce grain and wheat for their livelihood. A good laborer with his hoe produces more than enough to live. But all the priests together with all their prayers, benedictions, and so-called holy sacrifices of mass cannot contribute to the production of a single seed or do anything that would be the least useful in the world.

The profession of artisan monks is useful and necessary in all republics; even actors and flute and violin players have their value and usefulness because people of this profession serve at least to amuse and pleasantly entertain people, and it is only fair that those who work hard all day at useful and even at painful and laborious work have at least some hours of entertainment, and, consequently, it is good that there are flute and violin players to sometimes entertain and refresh those who are tired from work. But the profession of priests, and particularly of monks, is nothing but a profession of errors, superstitions, and impostures and, consequently, far from being a profession considered useful and necessary in a good and wise republic, it should, on the contrary, be regarded as harmful and pernicious. And so, instead of rewarding the people of such a profession, we should rather absolutely forbid all the superstitious and abusive functions of their ministry and absolutely force them to do some honest and useful work like others.

The lowest of the worst jobs in a good republic are useful and necessary. Somebody has to do them; we cannot do without them. Do not all parishes, for example, need shepherds and swineherds to guard the flocks? Do they not need wool-spinners and laundry women? We certainly need them everywhere; we cannot do without them. But what need is there in a republic of so many priests and monks and nuns who live in idleness and laziness? What need is there of all the pious sluggards whose occupations do nothing useful? Certainly there is no need and they are of no real use in the world.

It is, then, an abuse, and a very great abuse to allow so many monks and nuns and priests and clerics to be a public burden without any use. This is obviously against good judgment and contrary to justice.

And this is so true that the Roman Church itself cannot help recognizing the abuse, at least with respect to monks. That is why to prevent the continual progress of this abuse it expressly forbade the future invention of new forms of monastic orders, rightly foreseeing that their great multitude and variety could cause disorder and confusion in the church.

The first prohibition was in the [Fourth] Lateran Council (1215) under Pope Innocent III. Here is how the fathers of the council spoke: "And in order that this great multitude and variety of monastic orders not produce more confusion in the church, we expressly and firmly prohibit anyone from inventing or introducing any new religious order in the future; but if someone wants to enter into orders he will take one of those that are approved." The same decree was renewed and confirmed in the [Second] Council of Lyon [1274] as is seen in the chapter "Relig. Cod. Tit. in 6th," where we read this: "The Council General has wisely forbidden the too great diversity of religious orders lest it cause confusion of the church." And after the decree of this council, here is what follows: "We strictly forbid anyone in the future from inventing any new religious order." Thus we clearly see that the church itself recognized the abuse in the institution and tolerance of so great a multitude and diversity of monks and nuns who are so useless a burden on the public.

The emperor Antoninus hated idle minds so much that he took away the wages of those he found useless to the public, saying that it was shameful and cruel to let those who did not work for the republic feed on it. The emperor Alexander Severus banished from his court not only all despicable people, but also all those he judged to be useless in the service of the empire, saying that the emperors who fed on the bowels and blood of its inhabitants and the people who were useless to the republic, whom it could do without, were bad expenses for the state. We need some Antoninus or Alexander Severus today to reform all these monks and nuns and all the other clergy who are so useless and such a burden on the people; this would be good for the public good.

And not only do they allow and authorize, as I said, several kinds of people who are of no use in the world, but what is worse, they allow and authorize several other kinds of people who serve, so to speak, only to trample, pillage, and torment others and extort from them everything they have.

In the ranks of these people, it is necessary:

First, to put in their ranks the bunch of people whom we normally call "men of justice," but who are rather men of injustice, such as the officers and clerks of the court, prosecutors, lawyers, notaries, comptrollers, and often even the judges themselves and the chiefs of police who are in cahoots with the thieves and who are, so to speak, their partners,

*partners of thieves* (Is. 1:23). For, most of these people actually only tend to pillage and gnaw at the people, on the pretext of dealing out justice for them or wanting to. It is noted that Peter the Just, king of Portugal, banished and chased out of his kingdom all the prosecutors and attorneys because they squabbled and extended trials to cause the ruin of clients. Likewise, it is noted that Pope Nicolas III, a very admirable person, intelligent and an amateur scholar, chased the notaries and squabblers from Rome as leeches of the poor and a public plague. If only these two great men had had the power to banish and chase them not only from their own country, but also from the entire world!

Second, to put in their ranks the bunch of tax-collector cellar rats; the clerks; collectors of duties, excises, and other taxes; and finally the countless rogues, rascals, and rapscallions, the police of salt and tobacco who only gnaw at the country and continually go around in search of prey to catch someone in their traps and devour them.

In a realm like France there are perhaps no fewer than forty thousand or fifty thousand men employed like this to trample and pillage the poor, on the pretext of serving the king to amass his money and maintain his so-called rights; and this is without counting the numberless other insolent soldiers who only love to pillage and ravage everything they find.

King and princes who cared about the good and happiness of their subjects and who cared about governing and maintaining them in justice and peace would not keep wanting to support such evil for so many rogues at the expense of their good subjects and would not keep wanting to expose them all the time, as they do, to the hard and unjust persecutions and misappropriations that all these people do. Good princes never treated people like this.

It is, then, obviously an abuse and even a flagrant injustice in the state to allow and even to authorize so many kinds of people who serve only to trample, pillage, ruin, and oppress the poor.

## 48. THE THIRD ABUSE IS THAT EVERYONE TAKES FOR HIMSELF THE GOODS OF THE EARTH INSTEAD OF POSSESSING AND ENJOYING THEM IN COMMON, WHEREFROM IS BORN COUNTLESS EVILS AND MISERIES IN THE WORLD

**A**gain another abuse, and one that is almost universally accepted and authorized in the world, is the individual appropriation that men make of the goods and riches of the land, instead of, as they should, possessing them in common and enjoying them equally in common.

I mean all the people in the same place and in the same territory, so that all men and women who are, for example, of the same city, town, village, or parish and community, all together composing the same family, may be regarded and considered as brothers and sisters and, consequently, they should live peacefully and in common together, having the same or similar food and being all equally well clothed, well housed, well bedded, and well heated, and applying themselves also equally to the labor, i.e., to the work or to some honest and useful job, everyone pursuing his profession or what would be most necessary or most appropriate according to the time and season and the possible need for certain things. And all this not under the leadership of those who may want to dominate haughtily and tyrannically over the others, but under the leadership and direction of those who are the wisest and have the best intentions for the advancement and maintenance of the public good. All the cities and other neighboring communities will also, for their part, take great care to make alliances with one another and keep the peace inviolable and a good union among themselves in order to help and aid one another mutually in times of need. Without this the public good cannot be sustained at all and most men will necessarily be miserable and unhappy.

For, in the first place: what happens in this particular division of

goods and riches to be enjoyed only by individuals as seems best to them separately? What happens is that everyone hurries to have the most that he can have in all kinds of ways, good or bad, because greed, which is insatiable and is, as they say, the root of all vices and evils, sees a kind of open door there for the fulfillment of its desires and does not miss the opportunity to take advantage of the situation and do to men everything they can to get lots of goods and riches in order to be protected from poverty and have the pleasure and contentment of enjoying everything they desire. From this it happens that those who are the strongest, the slyest, the subtlest, and often even the most vicious and disgraceful, have the largest share of the goods and the land and are the best provided for with all the commodities of life.

What happens is that some have more and others less, and often some take all and leave nothing or almost nothing to the others, and consequently, some are rich and others poor, some well fed, well clothed, well housed, well furnished, well bedded, and well heated, while others are ill fed, ill clothed, ill housed, ill furnished, ill bedded, and ill heated, and some even have no place at all to lay their heads so that they waste away from hunger and are all stiff and chilled to the bone with cold.

What happens is that some are always stuffed and bursting with food and drink and have a good time, while others die of hunger.

What happens is that some are almost always in high spirits and rejoicing while others are continually in sorrow and sadness.

What happens is that some receive honors and glory while others receive scorn and squalor, because the rich are always highly honored and considered in the world but ordinarily only contempt is given to the poor.

What happens is that some have nothing else to do in the world but relax and drink and eat to their hearts' content and get fat in sweet and soft idleness, while others wear themselves away at work, have no rest night or day and sweat blood and tears just to get the necessities of life.

What happens is that in sickness and other needs the rich find all the help, assistance, comforts, consolations, and cures that can humanly be found, while the poor remain abandoned in their sickness and misery and die of lack of help and cures, without comfort and consolation in their afflictions and injuries.

And finally what happens is that some always have prosperity, wealth, and all the goods, pleasures, and joys like in a kind of paradise, while others, on the contrary, always have pain, suffering, affliction, and all the misery of poverty like in some kind of hell.

And what is even more particular with respect to this is that there is often only a very small distance between paradise and hell because there is often only one street or the thickness of a wall between the two, since very often the houses or residences of the rich where the wealth of all goods and the joys and delights of a paradise are to be found are very close to the houses and residences of the poor where the lack of all goods is found and all the pain and misery of a real hell.

And what is still more dishonorable and more hateful in this is that very often those who most deserve to enjoy the comforts and pleasures of this paradise are those who suffer the pains and punishments of hell and those who, on the contrary, most deserve to suffer the pain and misery of this hell are those who most calmly enjoy the comforts and pleasures of paradise.

In a word, very often in this world the good people suffer the pains that the wicked should suffer and the wicked normally enjoy the goods, honors, and contentment that should be for the good. For, honor and glory should belong only to the good, just as shame, confusion, and contempt should belong to the mean and vicious (Rom. 2:7, 10). However, the opposite usually occurs in the world, which is obviously a very great abuse and an utterly flagrant injustice; and this is without a doubt what made an author [de la Bruyère, *Characters*] say that "either these things are out of place because of the malice of men or God is not God." For it is not believable that an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God would allow such an inversion of justice.

That is not all.

What happens even more from this abuse is that the goods are so badly shared between men, some having almost all or having a lot more than they should for their just portion and others, on the contrary, having nothing or almost nothing and lacking most things that are necessary or useful—what happens from this, I say, is that hatred and envy between men arise at first.

From this, then, are born grumblings, complaints, troubles, seditions, revolts, and wars, which cause an infinite number of evils among men.

From this also arise thousands upon thousands of mean and vicious lawsuits that individuals are forced to bring against each other to defend their goods or to uphold their rights as they claim. These lawsuits again give them thousands upon thousands of bodily pains and thousands upon thousands of mental anxieties and very often cause the complete ruin of both parties.

What happens from this also is that those who have nothing or who do not have the things they need are kind of forced and bound to use many wicked ways to have enough to live on and support themselves; from this come frauds, deceits, swindles, injustices, persecutions, rape, theft, larceny, robbery, murderers, and assassins, which again cause an infinite number of evils among men.

## 49. ANOTHER ABUSE, CONCERNING THE VAIN AND INSULTING DISCRIMINATION OF FAMILIES AND THE EVILS THAT ARISE FROM IT

Likewise, what happens from these vain, insulting, and detestable discriminations of families that men make for no good reason as if they were of different species or different natures or they had a better or purer origin than each other? What happens from this?

What happens is that those who are from different families scorn and despise each other for no reason at all, on the pretext of believing that they are better or more honorable than each other.

What happens is that they scorn, dishonor, and defame each other and do not want to marry each other on the pretext that there would be something to be said against this or that family; and this “something” is normally only based on vain, deaf, and confused noises and on the false imaginations and opinions that men foolishly put in their heads that there are races of witches and warlocks. This is what they imagine based on little things, trifles, gossip, and hearsay that ignorant, impassioned, or ill-willed men say against each other. If you really wanted to focus on this, you would, perhaps, find no family who could be exempt from these so-called stains because we see every day that those who think they are the cleanest and find the most to say against others are the very ones whom others speak against in their turn.

Moreover, although there are individuals in some families who misbehave and act badly (as happens often enough that there is hardly any family who does not have its black sheep), is it right that all the other family members, who are, perhaps, honest people, be scorned and disdained? Do the innocent and honest have to suffer for the guilty? And must they bear as well the shame and confusion of their vices and faults? This certainly is not right. We must judge each on his merit and not on the demerit of another. What happens from all these vain and detestable discriminations of families?

What happens is that those who have a greater fortune than others

want to brag about it and they imagine that they are much better than others. That is why they always want to rule imperiously and tyrannically over others and subject them to their laws, as if they were born to rule and command and others were born to serve and be slaves.

In *Telemachus*, [Fenelon] says

Rulers are born and bred in a haughtiness and pride that tarnishes everything good in them; they consider themselves of a different nature from other men; others seem to have been put on the earth by the gods only to serve them, to please them, to anticipate their desires and report everything to them like to gods. According to them, the pleasure to serve them is reward enough for serving; nothing should ever be impossible when it comes to pleasing them; the slightest delays irritate their fervent and violent natures; they are incapable of loving anything but themselves; they appreciate only their own glory and pleasure. Only the misfortunes in life can normally make the princes and rulers more moderate and sensitive to the misery of others. When they have only ever tasted the sweet poison of prosperity, they consider themselves almost gods on earth; they only want the mountains to flatten themselves to be satisfied; men count for nothing, they want to toy with all of Nature. When they hear about suffering, they do not know what it is—it is a dream to them. Misfortune alone can give them humanity and change their hearts of stone into human hearts. Then they will feel they are men and have to deal with the others who are like them.

These disadvantages show clearly enough the abuse that there is in this vain and detestable discrimination of families that men make for no good reason.

## 50. ABUSE CONCERNING THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGES AND THE EVILS THAT RESULT

**A**nd again what happens from that other abuse that makes marriages indissoluble until the death of one or the other? What happens is that there are countless bad and unhappy marriages among them, countless bad and unhappy households in which the men are miserable and unhappy with bad wives or the women are miserable and unhappy with bad husbands, which often causes the ruin and dissipation of households. For, as many bad marriages as there are and bad households in which the men and women do not love each other and cannot put up with each other in peace but, on the contrary, are always in constant animosity and disagreement with each other, so many unhappy men and women are there who hate and curse their marriage every day. And what increases their grief and unhappiness even more is to see that they cannot back out of such a bad deal and legally break the bond and commitment that is so unpleasant and detrimental to them, and even sometimes deadly. This is what often enough brings them to make a scandalous division of their property and even sometimes to try to kill each other in order to be entirely free of a bond and yoke that is so detestable and insupportable.

What else happens from these bad marriages? What often happens is that the children who are born are miserable and unhappy because of the bad behavior of their fathers and mothers who give them bad examples every day and neglect to educate them or have them educated as they should in the arts and sciences as well as in good manners. And furthermore, since most of those who are involved in bad marriages are poor people who were themselves badly raised, ill nourished, not looked after, and poorly educated and who do not have the ways or means to better raise, nourish, look after, or educate their own children, it happens that they remain always in ignorance, inferiority, filth and grime, poverty, and misery; so much so that we often see them die of dearth and suffering

or unable to grow up or solve the problem of having enough to live on. And since most of these people are born and bred in ignorance and inferiority, poverty and misery, and from their youth are used to rough and painful work, always dependent on and dominated by the rich and the rulers of the earth, this is what makes them almost not know the natural rights of their human condition or the wrongs and injustice that are done to make them the miserable and unhappy slaves they are. That is why they hardly think of escaping from such dire misery by shaking off the yoke that makes them so unhappy, but think only of living meagerly in their pain and misery as they are used to and as if they were indeed born only to serve others and live and die in poverty and misery, the sad state of the condition of the poor. And what else happens from these kinds of particular, indissoluble marriages?

What happens is that when fathers and mothers happen to die and leave young children, if they are poor, they are children who are twice-cursed in remaining orphans because they remain without support and without protection and they often enough do not know where they will end up and from the moment they can walk are forced to beg miserably from door to door for their bread. And with this they are often mistreated by their stepfathers or stepmothers who treat them harshly and leave them in filth and grime and leave them almost dying of cold and hunger. And if they have something to spend, their accounts are often so badly handled and mismanaged that there remains almost nothing for them when they come of age to enjoy it, which causes them very great harm.

All these disadvantages and evils normally and almost necessarily spring from these kinds of abuse.

## 51. GREAT BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES WOULD COME TO MEN IF THEY ALL LIVED PEACEFULLY, ENJOYING IN COMMON THE GOODS AND COMMODITIES OF LIFE

If men possessed equally and enjoyed in common, as I said, the goods, riches, and commodities of life, if they were all universally occupied in some honest and useful exercise and work of the body or mind and if they wisely handled the goods of the earth and the fruits of their labor, they would all have enough to live happily and contentedly because the land almost always produces sufficiently enough and even plentifully enough to feed and support them, if they put their goods to good use. It is very rare that the land fails to produce the necessities of life.

And so everyone would have enough to live peaceably, no one would lack the necessities, no one would be tormented for himself or his children to know how to earn a living or be clothed or where to live or sleep, because everyone would surely find all of these things abundantly, easily, and comfortably in a well-ruled community. And so, no one would have to use fraud, shrewdness, or deceit to impose upon his neighbor.

No one would have to go to court to defend his possessions.

No one would have to envy his neighbor since everyone would be almost equal.

No one would have to think about stealing what others have or killing or murdering someone for his wallet and money or possessions because this would do him no personal good.

No one would have to kill himself, so to speak, with work and fatigue as happens today to countless people who are forced to kill themselves with work, pains, and fatigue to earn a meager living and pay the expenses and taxes that are rigorously demanded of them.

No one, I say, would have to kill himself with pains and fatigue since everyone would help bear the pains of labor and no one would remain uselessly idle while others were usefully busy at work.

Are you astonished, my dear friends? Are you astonished, poor people, that you have so many evils and pains in life?

It is because you bear alone all the burden and the heat of the day like those workers whom a parable in your Gospels talks about.

It is because you and all your fellow men are loaded with all the burdens of the state. You are loaded not only with the burdens of your kings and princes who are your tyrants, but also with the burdens of the nobility and clergy, all the monasticism and the courts, all the lackeys and grooms of the rulers and all the servants of others, all the soldiers, the cellar-rat tax collectors, police of salt and tobacco, and, finally, all the lazy and useless people in the world.

For, it is only from the fruit of your hard work that all these people live. By your work you supply everything necessary for their subsistence and not only what is necessary, but also what they can use for their entertainment and pleasures. What would happen, for example, to the greatest princes and potentates of the earth if the people did not support them? It is only from the people (whom they care so little about) that they get all their grandeur, riches, and power. In a word, they would be nothing but weak, little men like you if you did not support their grandeur. They would not have more riches than you if you did not give them yours. And they would not have more power or authority than you if you did not want to submit to their laws and will.

If all these people shared with you the pain of work and if they left you an equal and appropriate portion of the goods that you earn and produce so abundantly by the sweat of your brow, you would be much less overburdened and tired. And you would also have much more rest and relaxation in life.

But no, all the pain is for you and your fellow men, and all the goods are for the others, although they deserve it less. And that is why the poor have so much evil and pain in life.

De la Bruyère says in his *Characters* ("On Mankind"):

We see certain wild animals, male and female, spread throughout the countryside, black, pallid, and totally burned by the sun, stuck to the ground that they rummage through and poke at with an invincible stubbornness. Their voice is almost articulate and when they rise up on their feet, they have a human face; and in fact they are men. At night

they retire to their lairs where they live on black bread, water, and roots; they leave to other men the trouble of sowing, tilling, and harvesting and thus deserving not to lack the bread they planted and produced with so much labor.

Yes, they certainly deserve not to be lacking and they well deserve to eat the first fruits and to have the best share, like of the wine that they produce with so much pain and fatigue.

O inhuman and abhorrent cruelty, the rich and the rulers of the earth steal the best part of the fruits of their painful labor and leave them nothing, so to speak, but the chaff of the good seed and the dregs of the good wine that they produce with so much pain and labor. The author I just cited did not say this but he made it clear enough understood. In brief, if all the goods, as I said, were wisely governed and dispensed, no one would have to fear drought or poverty for themselves or their families, since all the goods and riches would exist equally for everyone, which would certainly be the greatest good and happiness that could happen to men.

Likewise, if all men stopped making, as they do, the vain and harmful discrimination of families and if they really looked upon one another all as brothers and sisters as they should according to the principles of their religion, no one of them would be able to lord it over the others or boast of being of a better or nobler birth than others or reproach each other abusively about their birth or their family. Instead everyone would be valued according to their own personal merits and not according to the imaginary merit of a so-called better or nobler birth, which again would be a very great benefit for men.

Likewise, if men, and particularly our Christ-cultists, did not make marriages indissoluble as they do, and if, on the contrary, they always left their unions and conjugal relationships free among themselves, without forcing each other, i.e., either the men or women, to remain inseparably together all their lives against their inclinations, we would certainly not see as many bad marriages and households as there are, and there would not be as much discord and dissension as there is between husbands and wives.

They would not have to reproach each other every day, injure and mistreat each other as they do so often; they would not have to get angry with each other so often; they would not have to curse each other;

they would not have to beat each other or tear each other apart in fury as they often do because they would freely be able to split up in peace whenever they stopped loving or pleasing each other and then search freely for their happiness elsewhere.

In a word, there would not be so many unhappy husbands and wives who are miserable all their lives under the fatal yoke of an indissoluble marriage. On the contrary, they would always find their pleasure and contentment agreeably and peaceably with whomever suited them because it would always be a good friendship that would be the principle and principal motive of their conjugal union, which would be a very great benefit for both; as well as for the children they produce because there would not be so many poor children who remain orphaned of mother or father or often both, whom we often see as if abandoned and miserable under the laws of some brutal stepfather or some wretched stepmother who starves and beats them or under some guardian or caretaker who neglects them and even consumes and dissipates their goods unjustly. They would no longer be like so many other poor children whom we see so miserable in the care of their fathers and mothers and who from their most tender youth suffer all the miseries of poverty, cold of winter, heat of summer, hunger, thirst, nakedness, who live constantly in filth and grime, unmannered, uneducated, and who almost cannot even solve the problem of having enough to live on.

But, they would all be equally well raised, nourished, and supported with what they needed because they would all be raised, nourished, and supported in common with public and common goods. Likewise, they would be equally well educated in good manners and honesty, as well as in the arts and sciences, as much as necessary and suitable for each with respect to usefulness for the public and the need that it could have of their service. As a result, since everyone would be educated in the same principles of morality and rules of propriety and honesty, it would be easy to make them all wise and honest, to make them all work together and tend to the same good and make them all capable of usefully serving their country. This would certainly be very advantageous for the public good and human society.

It is not the same when men are raised and educated in different principles of morality and have different rules and manners of living, because then this diversity of upbringing, education, and manner of living inspires

in men only opposition and different temperaments, opinions, and sentiments, which makes them unable to tolerate one another peaceably and, consequently, to agree with others unanimously about the same good, which is a cause of continual troubles and divisions among them. But, when they have all been raised and educated from youth in the same principles of morality and have taken to follow the same rules of living, then, all will be of the same sentiments and have the same views and will then easily be carried to the same good, which is the common good of all.

So, it would be much better for men to always have freedom of marriage and conjugal union.

It would be much better to raise, nourish, support, and educate all their children equally in good manners, as well as in the arts and sciences.

It would be better to look upon each other and love each other as brothers and sisters.

It would be better not to make discrimination of families and not to believe that they were of better families and births than others. It would be better for everyone to be busy in some useful work or some honest and useful exercise and for each to bear his part of the pain of labor and the incommodities of life without unjustly wanting to leave to others all the pain and all the burdens while he took his pleasure and contentment.

Finally, it would be better to possess everything in common and to enjoy peaceably in common all the goods and commodities of life, all under the conduct and direction of the wisest men. All would certainly be incomparably happier and more content than they are because we would not see so many miserable, wretched, or even poor people upon the earth as we see every day now. (Cf. Seneca, *Letters*, 90).

The author of the *Historical Journal* (January 1706) [Claude Jordan] said nearly the same thing about men in the earliest times:

Happy were the people who lived during the Age of Gold and in that innocence of which the poet spoke:

*The Age of Gold commenced  
Preserving mankind's innocence  
And ruling his works with equity  
Uniting accuracy with fidelity.  
The punishing laws that have since been found  
Were not yet fast engraved in bronze.*

*All lived selflessly in peace,  
Unaware of judges or police.*

Pascal in his *Pensées* (book 5) clearly enough feels the same way when he remarks that the usurpation of all lands and all the evils that ensued came only from the fact that each individual wanted to appropriate for himself the things that should have been left in common: "This dog is mine, say the poor children, this place here in the sun is mine. That is how it began, a picture of the usurpation of all lands."

Plato, the divine Plato, when he wanted to set up a republic where the citizens could live in harmony, banished from it with good reason the words "mine" and "yours," judging rightly that as long as there was something to divvy up, there would always be dissatisfaction, which breeds troubles, divisions, wars, and lawsuits.

## 52. THE COMMUNION OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS IS NOW DESTROYED AMONG THEM

In all appearances the Christian religion in the beginning wanted its followers to restore this way of living in common, as if it were the best and most suitable for men. This is what appears not only in that it obliged them to look upon all men as brothers and as equals, but also in what was done among them in the beginning. For, it is shown in their books that at that time they held everything in common and nobody was poor among them: *The whole multitude of believers had but one heart and one mind, no one of them considered any of his possessions as belonging to him in particular, but they held everything in common and there were no poor among them because everyone who had lands, inheritance, or houses sold them and brought the money to the apostles who distributed it to each according to their need* (Acts 2:44–45). From this they set down or established for one of the principal points of their faith and religion the “communion of saints,” i.e., the community of goods that was among the saints, wanting to say and make understood by this article of their faith that they were all saints and all the goods were common among them.

But this so-called holy communion or common union of all goods did not last so long among them because greed slipped into their hearts and soon broke up this common union of goods and set division among them as it was before. Nevertheless, not to seem to have totally destroyed and annihilated this article of the symbol of their faith and religion, which was the main one and the only one that they should have kept most sacrosanct, what did they do? They decided to keep this same article of their faith and to attach the word “communion” (or rather the belief of the communion of saints and the communion of goods) to an imaginary communion of spiritual goods (which are really only imaginary goods) and particularly to the receiving and devoted eating of some little images of baked dough that their priests pretend to consecrate in their masses and say they really are the body and the blood of their God

Christ, which they first eat and then give to whomever else has the devotion to present himself or herself to have their share.

That is how they have abusively and ridiculously degraded this article of their faith concerning the communion of goods and the common participation of goods that they should have always kept sacrosanct among them as in the beginning. As a result, there are almost no more goods possessed in common among them, except among those they call "monks"; for, as to the parishes or secular communities, if they still have some goods in common, it is such a small thing that it is not worth talking about because it does almost nothing for each individual.

But the monks, wiser and more prudent than others in this, have always taken care to keep all their goods in common and enjoy them all in common. That is why we see that they are always kept in such a thriving condition that they lack nothing and never feel the miseries or discomforts of poverty, which makes most men so unhappy in life. Their monasteries are as magnificently built and decorated and furnished as the houses of lords and palaces of kings; their gardens and grounds are like earthly paradises and gardens of delight; their cellars and granaries as well as their barnyards are always abundantly supplied with the best of everything, i.e., the best wines, grains, and poultry. In a word, their houses are like reservoirs of all goods and all commodities that all the individuals have the pleasure of enjoying in common. And one could say that they would be the happiest of mortals if with all their goods and riches they still had the freedom to enjoy the sweet pleasures of marriage following their inclinations and desires and if they were not, as they are, slaves of the stupidest and most ridiculous superstitions of their religion.

Once some of their good monks saw and watched some pretty young girls who were having a good time together and said with a sigh, *Happy is the man who can fulfill his desire with such lovely ones* (Ps. 127:5). They only lack this to reach the heights of their desires.

And it is sure that if they stopped possessing their goods in common and began sharing them so that each one of them enjoyed their share separately as seemed good to them, they would soon be like the others exposed and reduced to all the miseries and discomforts of life. What shows this clearly is that it is by their good rule and good way of living and enjoying their goods in common that they possess them and are kept so well in such a thriving condition. It is by this way of living that

they obtain the commodities of life so pleasantly and advantageously and protect themselves from all the pains and miseries of poverty.

It would certainly be the same with all the parishes if the people there wanted to agree to live peaceably together in common, to all work usefully in common and to enjoy equally in common, each in their district, the goods of the land and the fruits of their labor.

They could, in this case, if they wanted, and even much more easily than the monks, build palaces everywhere and pleasant, solid houses to live in comfortably with their flocks.

They could, if they wanted, construct pleasant, useful gardens and orchards everywhere and have all kinds of beautiful and good fruits in abundance.

They could carefully cultivate the land everywhere to produce abundant crops of all kinds of grains and good vegetables.

Finally, they could, if they wanted, in this way of living in common, obtain everywhere an abundance of all goods and thus protect themselves from all the miseries and discomforts of poverty, which would empower them all to live happily and contently instead of enjoying separately, as they do, all the goods of the land and commodities of life and being exposed to and dragged into all kinds of evils and miseries, seeing that it is impossible for there not to be countless unhappy people with the goods of the land so poorly shared and mismanaged as they are among men.

So, it is clearly an abuse, and a very great abuse in them to possess separately, as they each do, the goods and commodities of life and to enjoy them separately, as they each do, since they are deprived of so many great benefits and are exposed to and dragged into so many great evils and miseries.

### 53. ABUSE OF THE TYRANNICAL GOVERNMENT OF THE RULERS AND PRINCES OF THE EARTH

**F**inally, another abuse that ends up making men miserable and unhappy in life is the almost universal tyranny of the rulers of the world and the tyranny of kings and princes who rule almost everywhere on earth with absolute power over all the rest of men. For, all these kings and princes today are nothing but real tyrants since they tyrannize and do not stop cruelly tyrannizing the poor people who are subject to countless laws and onerous burdens that they impose on them and oppress them with every day.

“Plato in his *Gorgias*,” says Montaigne, “defined a tyrant as being one who has license to do whatever he wants in the city” (*Essays*, 1:42). According to this definition we can certainly say that all the sovereigns are now tyrants since they are given free license to do whatever they want not only in the cities and towns, as Plato says, but also in the provinces and throughout the realm; and they even dare to push this license to such an excess of pride and insolence that for a reason for their conduct, laws, wills, and orders they allege nothing other than their will and pleasure because, they say, such is our pleasure, like he who once said, “I want it, I order it, for a reason let my will suffice” (*Juvenal, Satires*, 6:223).

The prophet Samuel had good reason to condemn the blindness and folly in the people of Israel when they asked him to give them a king to govern them in the same way the other nations were governed (1 Sam. 8:5). This prophet protested right away against this crazy demand that they made of him and to turn them away from such a crazy thought, he solemnly warned them of the insupportable hardness of the yoke that this king would impose on them:

*Know that your king will take your sons and daughters to use them in all kinds of works and practices, some to drive chariots, others in war to be exposed to death all the time, others to become their constant servants of*

*all kinds of things, others to practice different arts and crafts and others to work their lands like slaves bought for money. They will also take your daughters to use them in different ways just like servants whom the fear of punishment forces to work. They will take your inheritance and your flocks to give them to their friends, eunuchs, and attendants. And finally, you and your children will all be subject not only to a king, but also to his servants. Then you will remember the prophecy I make to you today and, stricken with regret for this mistake, you will groan and implore the help of God in the bitterness of your heart to deliver you from such a hard dependency; but he will not listen to you and he will let you suffer the pain that your imprudence and ingratitude deserves.* (1 Sam. 8:11-18)

The people had no ears to listen to the beneficial warnings of this prophet. On the contrary, they insisted more than ever in their demand, which forced Samuel, in fact, to give them a king, but it was entirely against his inclination and sentiment because this prophet, who apparently loved justice, did not love royalty since "he was not convinced that aristocracy was the best of all governments," as [Flavius] Josephus the famous Jewish historian said (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 6:4).

Never was a prophet, if ever a prophet was, more truly accomplished than he who once made this prophecy. For, he unfortunately saw its fulfillment for the people in every kingdom and in every century that has passed since then. And still today the people are only too unhappy to see its fulfillment, particularly in France in our century where the kings and regents are made absolute masters of all things like little gods. Their flatterers persuade them that they are indeed masters of the bodies and goods of their subjects, which is why we also see that they do not spare their lives or goods at all but sacrifice everything for their glory, their ambition, their greed, or their vengeance, depending on what passion enflames them and carries them away.

What do they not do to have all the gold and silver of their subjects! On the one hand, on the vain and false pretexts of necessity, they impose huge duties and excises, levies and tariffs, and other similar taxes on all their dependent parishes; they double them and triple them at will on other, different, vain, and false pretexts of necessity. Almost every day we see new taxes and assessments, new edicts and orders, or new mandates from the kings or their prime ministers to supply them with everything they ask for and satisfy all their demands. And if the people do not obey

right away because they cannot satisfy well enough everything asked of them and cannot supply quickly enough the exorbitant sums taxed on them, they quickly send archers into the country to brutally force them to pay or do what is ordered. They send garrisons of soldiers or other scoundrels like them whom they have to feed or whose expenses they have to pay every day until they are entirely satisfied. They often even do this before the taxes are due for fear of losing them so that there are always constraints upon constraints and expenses upon expenses for the poor: they pursue them, harass them, trample and pillage them in every way. It is no good complaining and making a show of their poverty and misery—they do not care; they do not even listen to them. Or if they listen, it would be more like King Rehoboam: to burden them more rather than relieve them.

This king, as you know, seeing that his people were complaining about the taxes and assessments with which his father, King Solomon, had burdened them and that they were asking for a reduction, made this proud and insolent response: *My little finger is fatter than my father's back. If my father burdened you with taxes, I will burden you even more; my father thrashed you with whips and I will thrash you with scorpions* (1 Kings 12:10). That is the pleasant answer he gave them.

The complaints of the poor today would hardly be more favorably received than in those times because the maxim of sovereign princes and their prime ministers is to exhaust the people and make them miserable beggars in order to make them submissive and unable to undertake anything against their authority (Cardinal de Richelieu). It is a maxim of theirs to allow the financiers and tax collectors to get rich at the expense of the people in order to rob them after using them like sponges that you squeeze when they have become full. It is a maxim of theirs to take down the rulers of their kingdom and put them in such a state that they cannot do any harm; and it is a maxim of theirs to spread quarrels and divisions among their principal officers and even among their people in order that they not think about conspiring against them and that they not be able to agree to unite together to revolt against them.

That is how they succeed in burdening the people as they do with huge taxes and assessments. For, by these means they become as rich as they want while exhausting their subjects; by these means they make trouble and division among them because while the individuals of each

parish are at odds with each other and fighting and hating one another for the particular distribution that they have to make of the taxes that each of them complain about having too much and more than he ought to compared with his neighbor who is richer and will have, perhaps, fewer taxes than he—while they are at odds and fighting about this and quarreling and hurting and cursing each other, they do not have a single thought about attacking their king or his ministers, who are, nevertheless, the only true cause of their ruin, their troubles, and their anger. They do not dare to say a word openly against their kings or their ministers, they do not dare to attack them, they do not even have the spirit or courage to unite together to shake off in common accord the tyrannical yoke of one man who commands them with so much severity and makes them suffer so much harm. And they willingly cut each other's throats to satisfy their individual hatred and animosity.

Therefore, since the kings want to be absolutely rich and to be made absolute masters of everything, the poor people have to do everything they demand and give them everything they ask for. And they have to do this under penalty of being constrained in all kinds of harsh ways: by seizure of their goods, by imprisonment of their persons, and by all kinds of other violence, which makes the people groan under such hard slavery. And what further increases the harshness of such a hateful and detestable yoke and government is the rigor with which they are seen to be mistreated every day by a thousand hard and severe money collectors, who are normally proud and arrogant men and from whom all people have to suffer all the put-downs, thefts, fraud, misappropriations, and all kinds of other injustices and mistreatments. For, there is no officer, tax collector, or clerk so petty, no archer or officer of salt and tobacco so vile who, on the pretext of being hired by the king and on the pretext of collecting and hoarding money, does not believe that he has to make them proud and that he has the right to scoff at, mistreat, trample, and tyran-nize the poor.

On the one hand these kings levy huge taxes on all kinds of merchandise in order to profit from everything that is bought and sold; they put them on wine and meat; on eau de vie, alcohol, and beer; on wool, linen, and lace; on salt and pepper; on paper, tobacco, and all kinds of commodities. They make them pay for rights of entry and exit; for rights of registration; for marriages, baptisms, and burials, whenever it seems

good to them; they make them pay for liquidations, for relief of communities, for the woods and forests and for the rivers. They almost make them pay for the winds and clouds. "Let Ergastus do what he wants," Jean de la Bruyère said amusingly enough in his *Characters* ("On the Gifts of Fortune"), "he will demand a duty from all who drink water from the river or who walk on terra firma; he knows how to convert reeds, rushes, and nettles into gold." If they see someone doing business on the lands of their dominion and freely coming and going to buy and sell or only to transport merchandise from one place to another, he must have, as is said in the *Apocalypse*, the mark of the beast, i.e., the mark of the tax-collector rats and the permission of the king. He must have credentials, clearance, passes, passports, receipts, and guarantees and other similar letters of permission that are truly what we can call the mark of the beast, i.e., the mark of the permission of the tyrant. Without this if you are unlucky enough to run into and be seized by the guards or officers of the said royal beast, you run the risk of being ruined and lost because you will be immediately arrested: they will seize, they will confiscate the merchandise, the horses and wagons. In addition to this the merchants or drivers are sentenced to large fines, prison, the galleys, and sometimes even to shameful death, so severely is it forbidden to do business or to come and go with merchandise without having, as I said, the mark of the beast. *And power was given to him . . . that no one could buy or sell except for him who had the mark or name of the beast, or the number of his name* (Rev. 13:17).

## 54. TYRANNY OF THE KINGS OF FRANCE WHOSE PEOPLE ARE MISERABLE AND UNHAPPY

**A**nd if these kings on a whim start wanting to extend the boundaries of their kingdoms or empires and to wage war on their neighbors to invade their states or their provinces on whatever vain pretexts they can find, it is always at the expense of the lives and goods of the poor. For, they have to give as many men as the kings want to compose the armies. They also take them by will or by force wherever their officers can get them; they have to give money and provisions to feed and maintain their troops, which still does not prevent the poor people of the country from being exposed every day to the insults, outrage, and violence of the insolent soldiers who love nothing but ravaging and pillaging everything they can find. And when their armies can penetrate into the enemy territory, they do nothing less than make them ravage and completely desolate the provinces, burning and bleeding everything.

These are the normal effects of the cruelty and tyranny of the princes and kings of the earth and particularly of our last kings of France. For, no one has pushed absolute authority so far or made their people so poor, so enslaved, so miserable as these last kings.

No one has spilled so much blood, killed so many men, caused so many tears of widows and orphans, ravaged and desolated so many cities and provinces as this last, late king Louis XIV, called “the Great” truly not for the great and commendable actions he did, seeing that he did nothing really worthy of this name, but really for the great injustices, the great thefts, the great usurpations, the great desolations, the great rape and carnage of men that he has caused everywhere on land and sea alike.

Here is how a writer spoke about it:

France today is overwhelmed with a huge number of tax-collector cellar rats and enforcers who gnaw the poor to their bones to such an extent that I fear the king will lose his rights. They should advise him in the future to no longer declare war on his neighbors so unjustly, to

never again break the peace without just cause or break the truce before the terms have expired; in this way he will avoid the trouble he finds himself now in looking for peace. Let him no longer tyrannize the poor as he does, let him no longer assault his subjects to force them to give what they do not have, but, on the contrary, let him be like a father; instead of heaping new taxes and duties on them, let him grant an honest freedom to everyone, or else expect great revolutions in his kingdom.

Kings, like the people, are subject to the laws and it is wrong for the kings of France to believe they are above divine and human laws. King Louis XIV saw that fortune favored him and was pleasantly convinced that he was sent from heaven to rule the universe alone and command the entire earth and just as there was only one sun in the firmament, so there should have been only one monarch in the world. In this hope, the king took this star as his emblem. If I dared to speak to the king, I would willingly tell him what the pirate told Alexander the Great when this monarch was reproaching him for his thefts: I am a petty thief, said the corsair, but you are a felon; for, it is not enough that God has given you this kingdom, you want to invade the entire world. (*L'Esprit de Cardinal Mazarin*, 1695)

## 55. ORIGIN OF THE DUTIES AND TAXES IN FRANCE

**A**ccording to the author of the *Historical Journal*,

Philip, called the Tall, king of France, was the first in France who charged a denier for a minot of salt [around 38 liters]. Philip of Valois added a second, Charles VI increased it by two more, and Louis XI pushed this tax to twelve deniers. But Francis I, on the pretext of the necessities of war, multiplied this tax to 84 pounds per muid [around 1,808 liters]. Since then, they have continued to increase it on different occasions. They have said many times that if the king wanted to fix his salt rights in the places where they make it and leave the people free to do business, His Majesty would get a greater revenue than it does and unburden the State of the expense of countless officers, clerks, guards, and police who consume almost half of the tax profits.

The first kings of France had no domains and no taxes, but after having gathered the Estates of the kingdom, they settled the expense that was owed for the houses as well as for the cost of war and decided how to levy on their subjects what they thought they could afford. Pepin came to the crown and annexed all the beautiful lands that he possessed in Austrasia and elsewhere, which were called at that time "the domain of the Crown." The kings of the third line greatly increased this domain by the regulations they made about fiefs that remained vacant in large part due to the wars in the Holy Land (supplement to *The State of France*, vol. 2, toward the end). To this other kings added lands that they possessed before coming to the crown, for example Philip of Valois, Louis XII, Francis I, Henry IV. Others, finally, increased the taxes and levies, which became very numerous and very heavy on the people.

The first domains of the Crown, although very considerable, were not sufficient to supply the needs of the State and the cost of war, so they were forced to levy certain subsidies on the people that they called "tailles," which were at first only levied for certain extraordinary needs

and emergencies. The king Saint Louis was the first who called these taxes "tailles," which were imposed on every family to raise money for these needs. Charles VII made it common practice for the maintenance of the police force that was set up regardless of war or peace, which expedited the uprising of almost all of France against Louis XI, his successor, under the leadership of the Duke of Berry, brother of the king, and the Dukes of Brittany and Bourgogne, who adopted the pretext of wanting to relieve the people of these impositions that were once extraordinary and freely given but now had become common. And for this reason they very speciously called this rebellion "the War of the Public Good." But Louis XI at first found ways to satisfy the ambition of these princes, then separated them from each other, punishing them individually. After they were pacified, he finished up with what he had started before with the "tailles," which had until then been paid without opposition and without having to assemble the Estates. The "taillon" was then set up by Henry II in 1549 to increase the pay of soldiers. The "subsistance" is another tax that began to be levied some years ago; it is so named because it is used to maintain the troops in winter quarters so that the people do not have to.

King Charles VII was the first who earned the right to impose taxes at his pleasure without the consent of the Estates of his kingdom. At that time there was good reason for this, as much for garrisoning the conquered country as for dispensing the soldiers who were pillaging the realm and for this the lords of France agreed to certain pensions, which were promised to them for the money that was levied on their lands. But with what has happened since then and will continue to happen, the King burdened his soul and the souls of his successors and cruelly wounded his kingdom, which will bleed for a long time. [And now it is bleeding more than ever and in all appearances will bleed more and more every day if no remedy is found.]

King Charles VII at the time of his death levied 1,800,000 francs for all the things in his kingdom and Louis XI at his death had levied 4,700,000 francs. So, we should not be surprised if he thought and imagined that he had not done well and was afraid in this. Surely he took compassion on people seeing their misery and poverty; for, he had taken from the poor to give to those who had no need. (Philippe de Commines [*Memoirs*])

It is certainly much worse today than before. And if in past times the misery and poverty of the people were already piteous and lamentable, they have now become much more piteous and lamentable since the people are incomparably more burdened and tyrannized in every way than before. And proof of this is that in the times of Charles VII the entire revenue of the Crown amounted only to 1,800,000 francs and in 1614 the income of the king was already more than 63,000,000 francs. And today it is even more than that.

## 56. WHAT AN AUTHOR SAYS ABOUT THE TYRANNICAL GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGS OF FRANCE

**H**ere is how an author of the last century spoke of the conduct and tyrannical government of our latest kings of France, Louis XIII and Louis XIV:

You would have been surprised that France offered peace in the midst of its victories, if the history of this reign had not taught us by deadly experience that peace is more useful than war to further its conquests. So, it will be wonderful if some French writer tells us satirically one day that because of the peace and the breaches, it finally will achieve the universal monarchy that we see it approaching at full sail. But what is more outrageous in its behavior is that, not being satisfied with violating all the treaties, it makes no invasions that are not coupled with the most enormous cruelties, as if after putting themselves above all human and divine law it believes it is authorized to pursue with impunity all its impulses of fury and impiety that its spirit can inspire. Sword, fire, desecration, and the most excessive license imaginable for the soldiers were used to ravage wherever its armies could reach; no consideration for age or sex or any ecclesiastical or secular honor, no respect for the sanctity of places or for what is holiest in religion. Nothing should remain there but what it could keep. As a result, if there is a peace to expect from it, it can no longer be anything but what Tacitus said were the miserable results of a general desolation: “to rob, massacre and ravish, that is what their lying vocabulary calls ‘authority’ and to drive everyone off the land they call ‘pacification’” (*Agricola*, 30). It would be superfluous to enter here into detail about these ravages and cruelties, as much because the examples are very recent as because the telling of it could only give a very vague idea of it. It is not a matter of the disorders that follow the heat of action like in all wars. The commands of the court were very precise, the generals were supposed to execute them, and if anyone were lax in their duty because of the indignity of the crime, they were severely punished as an example.

This indicates a plan formed to direct all its conquests in the future based on the maxims of the most barbarous nations.

But what best illustrates the general corruption is that at present the clergy bring all their ecclesiastical prerogatives to authorize the violence of the government. For, we see the prelates justify the commotions in the provinces sometimes on the pretext of religion and sometimes on the pretext of public need, and the secular and regular preachers mix up together the glory of the king and the word of God in their sermons, and the jurists and theologians devote all their subtleties to dignify its usurpations and make them conform to all human and divine laws. It is by this kind of prostitution that one becomes famous at court; the vilest and often the most criminal stand out the best.

It would be useless to talk about the oppression of the people because everyone knows it. Suffice it to say that the violence of the reign has so worn out the people that there hardly remains anything to bear their misery; but what is worse for them is what establishes the power of the monarchy outside. For, that is what generates the expenses of its arms, which have never been so numerous on land or sea, and what also arouses their industry by fastening them to business and manufacturing, which is used to bring all the riches of foreign countries into France. What is remarkable here is that the Parliament, which was once the mediator between the king and the people and between the authority of the one and the obedience of the other by its moderation, wisely maintained the rights and liberties of the kingdom—this body, I say, which in past centuries earned the admiration of neighboring countries by its justice and integrity, is no longer anything but a mercenary organ for the court to legalize all its injustices and misappropriations. But we might forgive this vile complacency in a time when opposition is so dangerous, if it had kept its old integrity in the administration of justice—and this is what we no longer see. We could say that the courts have become the stumbling block of natural equality because the delays and formalities constantly knock it down; or rather it is a public theater where the ploys and favor of the court and individual interests toy with justice and the laws with impunity. In short, this once so august body is now nothing but a futile ghost of what it was, no longer having anything of old but its name, its robes, and its hats.

It seems only too clear that the natural order has been entirely perverted in the kingdom and that France itself is the first victim of the

ambition of its kings, seeing that everything is related to a vain image of the grandeur and glory that is only for them, and that this image serves to weigh down more and more every day the chains in which it has groaned for the last two or three reigns. We can also be surprised that the French, who claim to be the most cultured and enlightened people of the world, could have spent so long in these false opinions. We can also add that if the ministry had less authority, it would be much less committed to injustices and violence in matters of the State and religion. (Félix Constant, *Le Salut de l'Europe de l'An 1694*)

## BLINDNESS OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE REGARDING THEIR KINGS

But this is preaching to the deaf. They have been trained in slavery for a long time, the pleasure of the king is a sovereign law to them and it would be a kind of sacrilege for them to not sacrifice their goods, lives, honor, and consciences so that if it is true, as Livy said, that it is particular to barbarians to have no other law but the commands of their masters, then there is today no nation more barbarous than France.

Thus, that France groans under the burden that devastates and ruins it is not what the ministry is concerned with. It is the glory of the king to conquer all the states of Europe and it is up to his subjects to second his ambition without asking if the wars he undertakes for this end are just or unjust. Indeed, they steal, they destroy, they sacrifice themselves—there is nothing the French cannot do to distinguish themselves in this, content to be unhappy as long as they can serve as an instrument of adversity to its neighbors. It is with similar maxims that the Ottoman Empire has always grown, but there is still this difference that the ministry of France has rejected this kind of good faith that we often observed because it has created a new morality and new laws so that everything now conspires to bring about injustice, violence, and usurpation. (Félix Constant, *Le Salut de l'Europe de l'An 1694*)

Everything I have reported here of the tyrannical government of the princes and kings of the earth and especially of our last kings of France and even the present reign clearly shows that they are only tyrants and

they greatly abuse their power and authority, seeing that this power and authority was only given to them or conferred on them to govern the people wisely in justice and equality and maintain them happily in peace.

It was well said by du Moulins [Honorat de Meynier] that

the people are not made for the princes, but the princes are made for the people and can rightly be called “public servants”: there were people in the world before there were princes and kings. The prince’s duty is to obtain for the people rest from their labor and security from dangers and by their vigilance to make their subjects sleep safely; in brief, he is taken away from himself when he is given to the republic. They should love their subjects like fathers should love their children. But a tyrant does just the opposite: he treats his subjects as slaves; a good king is loved, a tyrant is feared; a good king puts himself at risk for the safety of his people, but a tyrant sacrifices his people for his pride, ambition, or vengeance. To take away from the poor people all the pleasures of life, to snatch from their hands the bread that they produced with so much pain and labor, to make them miserable and unhappy in life and to make them groan in their miseries—this is very cruel and detestable; it is very disgraceful to the quality and dignity of kings and princes. And this should have produced their shame, confusion, and condemnation everywhere.

The good king subjects himself to the laws, but the tyrant wants everything permitted to him. Alexander and Caesar, the two greatest princes or emperors whom history talks about, were only two blasting torrents that ravaged the world in different places, “each having devastated everything in their way” (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 9.525).

“God uses evil princes as executioners and henchmen to punish the provinces and kingdoms that he rules over; nevertheless, after he is done with them like old switches he throws them in the fire,” as is said in the *Life of St. Antoninus*.

Antoninus Pius the emperor said that he would rather save the life of one of his subjects than kill a thousand of his enemies (*Roman History*, 7). King Louis XIV was far from having this so gentle and humane sentiment; he would certainly have preferred to destroy a thousand of his subjects than to pardon a single one of his enemies.

The wise Mentor says to Telemachus,

What a detestable maxim to believe that security is only found in oppressing the people, not in educating them, not in leading them to virtue, not in ever loving them, but by fear pushing them into despair, into awful need so that they can never breathe freely or shake off the yoke of tyranny! What kind of rule is this? Is this the road that leads to glory? Remember that the countries where the rule of the sovereign is more absolute are the countries where the sovereign is less powerful. They seize, they ruin everything, they alone possess the whole State, but the whole State also languishes, the countryside is a wasteland and deserted, the cities diminish every day, commerce dries up. The king (who cannot be king alone and is only so through his people) ruins himself little by little in insensibly ruining the people whose riches and power he took away. His absolute power makes slaves of his subjects; they pretend to worship him, they tremble at his slightest glance. But wait for the slightest revolution; this monstrous power pushed to the excess of violence cannot last. It has no resource in the hearts of the people, it has wearied and angered the entire body of the State, forced all the members of the State to sigh equally with relief after a change: with the first strike the idol is knocked down and trampled under foot. The king who did not find in his prosperity a single man who dared to speak the truth finds in his adversity no one to excuse or defend him against his enemies. (Fenelon, *Telemachus*)

## 57. KINGS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO TYRANNIZE THE PEOPLE OR TO IMPOSE ANY TAXES ON THEIR OWN AUTHORITY WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE STATES

**T**here is no king or lord on the earth," says Philip de Commines (in his *Memoirs*),

who has the power beyond his domain to impose a penny on his subjects without the consent and approval of those who have to pay, except through tyranny and violence. One could respond that there are times that need not wait for the Assembly; it would be too long. To begin a war or at the beginning of a war there is no need to be in such a hurry, we have time enough when need requires.

In the *Roman History* it is told that

when Pertinax succeeded to the Empire he cared greatly for the public and relieved the people of the taxes that the tyranny had imposed on all the provinces of the empire, the ports, bridges, and traffic of cities and rivers, which made business thrive again and reestablished the former freedom of the republic everywhere. He also gave all uncultivated lands, even those belonging to the princes, to the public to farm. And to become the envy of the world, besides the limitless possession for those who worked them, he gave them in addition ten years of exemption and freedom from all kinds of taxes and charges.

The emperor Marcus Aurelius displayed a wonderful sign of his kindness in that after he had spent all his finances in the long war against the Germans, he did not want to ever impose any extraordinary tax on any province of the empire, but seeing the need for money he sold and auctioned the imperial ornaments in Trajan's Forum, the beautiful gold and silver vases, gems and precious tables that were among his furniture or in Hadrian's chambers, and he made such a considerable sum that he could support whatever expenses he had and even offer to refund the buyers if anyone wanted to return what they had bought.

And as for those who did not want to part with them, he did not force them.

We see nothing like this in the history of our latest kings; they were far from doing such good things.

A Turkish emperor, being at death's door and remembering a tax he had recently imposed on his subjects, ordered in his last will and testament to retract it. A Christian prince should have done this, who has, as Lord d'Argenton said, "no reasonable authority to impose anything on his subjects without their leave and permission" (*Philip de Commines, Memoirs*).

## 58. WHAT THE FLATTERERS OF KINGS AND PRINCES SAY ABOUT IT

**B**ut the flatterers of our kings convince them that they have the right to be the most absolute rulers of all the earth, that they are the only masters of everything in their kingdom, that they alone can make alliances with foreign princes and states, that they alone have the power to impose taxes and duties as they want, and, finally, that they alone can make laws, edicts, and orders as they want; that is why they always end things with these absolute words (for such is our pleasure): “I want it, I order it, for a reason let my will suffice” (*Juvenal, Satires*, 6:223). These same flatterers try to persuade them that all the reforms that the wise mentors advise would be dangerously excessive; they want them for their own interest: if, they say, you make the people wealthy, they will not work, they will become proud and uncontrollable, they will always be ready to revolt. Only weakness and misery make them pliable. Therefore, the flatterers tell the kings, if you want to comfort the people you will diminish the royal power and thereby do irreparable damage to the people; for, they need to be kept lowly for their own interest.

To all this the wise Mentor answered:

What? Can you subjugate people without making them die of hunger? What inhumanity! What brutal politics! How many people who are very loyal to their princes do we see treated with care? What causes revolts is the ambition and anxiety of the rulers of a state when we give them too much license and allow their passions to run wild; it is the crowd who lives in softness, luxury, and idleness; it is the excessive wealth of men devoted to war who neglect all the useful occupations that are necessary in times of peace; finally, it is the despair of mistreated people, the hardness and haughtiness of kings, and the flaccidity that renders them incapable of watching over the whole state to anticipate troubles. That is the cause of revolts and not the bread they let workers eat in peace after they have earned it by the sweat of their brow. When the people are burdened with insupportable demands because of the avarice or

pride of princes who raise money in inhumane ways like taxation, there is always danger of mutiny. (Fenelon, *Telemachus*)

In the final count we find forty-five Greek emperors, half of all there were, who ended their lives in a violent death, a worthy punishment of their tyrannical pride. Eleven of these emperors or blood princes had their eyes put out and six their noses cut off.

"It seems that Seneca yielded a little to the tyranny of emperors in his day. For I am certain that it was with a forced judgment that he condemned the cause of the generous murderers of Caesar" (Montaigne, *Essays*, 2:10). "Savages are less offensive with their roasting and eating the bodies of the dead than those who torture and persecute the living" (*Essays*, 2:11). So, we can say that tyrants are worse and more appalling than cannibals.

As is said in *Telemachus*, "The people are unhappy because of the ambition of the kings and their extravagance and imprudence; for, the people normally suffer only because of the faults of the kings, who should watch over them constantly to prevent suffering. The Achaeans pay for all the faults of kings [Horace, *Epistles*, 1.2.14]. A king is king only to take care of his people, like a shepherd his flock or a father his family." It is a lot harder to govern the people wisely than to command them imperiously.

Cardinal de Richelieu himself, as much of a flatterer and idolater as he was of the grandeur of his king Louis XIII, could not help acknowledging and saying in his *Political Reflections* that a king became extremely shameful to his state if he no longer kept in view in all his actions the common good rather than the contentment of a few individuals:

Good emperors have always preferred the state to their fathers and children and they should indeed have such consideration that they are obliged to have no regard for their own will when they desire something against it. The civil good, which is the goal of princes, is nothing but the good of the people in general. A king does not deserve to wear the crown if he allows the oppression of his subjects with impunity. God has confided in him the hand of his justice only to keep them in obedience and safeguard them from offenses. Individuals have to take care of their individual interests; the duty of a king is to consider nothing but the public good.

The oppression of the poor is a crime that rises up to God demanding vengeance for the outrages. It has this advantage over the rich and in exchange for the goods of fortune, God concedes this and receives the individuals like parts of his body so that considering the violence done to them an attack on his divinity, he does not let it go unpunished. He gives enough power to the rulers to defend themselves and having no agreement with the people he makes himself their protector and strictly obliges the kings (who have the honor of being the living images of his power and his lieutenants on earth) to do them right.

That is why he says again in another place that “the good of the State is the objective that God himself has offered to all kings in putting the crown upon their head; there is nothing more commendable for them to do and that is the goal to which all their actions should aim.” Because kings, as is said in *Telemachus*, “are only kings to take care of their people, like shepherds of their flocks or like good fathers take care of their children”; and they are not made so much for imperiously commanding men as for wisely governing them.

However, although most princes and kings of the earth are now only proud and haughty tyrants and most people are only poor and unhappy slaves under the yoke of their tyrannical domination, nevertheless we see no one who dares to speak against them or even openly condemn or reprimand their conduct.

On the contrary, we see instead thousands of cowardly and villainous flatterers who, in order to get ahead and get more, force themselves to indulge in everything, hiding the flaws and vices of the kings and even turning the vices into virtues or the little talent and virtue they may have they pretend is a rare and exceptional and even heroic virtue; and they wonderfully exaggerate the little good they happen to do sometimes for some individuals. That is why we often enough see the excessive, empty praise and panegyrics on their behalf. The judges and magistrates, who were established to suppress vices, to maintain justice and good order everywhere, and to severely punish the guilty and wicked, do not dare to do anything about the vices and injustices of kings; they pursue and punish severely the petty criminals; they hang and torture petty thieves and murderers, but they dare to do and say nothing about the great and powerful thieves, the great and powerful murderers and arsonists who

devastate the entire earth, who burn and bleed and kill thousands upon thousands of men.

And what we especially notice in this is that those who, in their character or profession of piety and religion, in their so-called quality as ministers of God, spiritual fathers, and pastors of the people—particularly our holy fathers the popes, our lords the archbishops and bishops, our gentlemen scholars, and, generally, all the priests and preachers of the Gospels who brag about infallibility in their faith and doctrine and who, therefore, should also be incorruptible in their manners and sacrifice themselves for truth and justice on behalf of the people of whom they are called pastors—these men, I say, who should be the most zealous defenders of truth and justice and who should be the strongest and most faithful protectors of the people against the unjust vexations and attacks of the princes and kings of the earth, are often the ones who flatter them the most and who most cowardly and shamefully betray the duties of their ministry. As a result, we can say today with as much truth as ever what many ancient so-called prophets of the Lord said of the kings and priests and false prophets of their day:

*The princes and kings are in their midst, amidst the people like ravaging wolves and roaring lions searching for prey; they are always ready to spill blood and take men's lives and the priests as well as the false prophets, who are intelligent, flatter them in their vices and viciousness; they publish their crimes, violence, and injustices and make people believe that God has spoken, though he has not. (Ezek. 22:27-28)*

This is what we clearly see every day in the princes and kings of the earth. For, the kings and princes are really like ravaging wolves and roaring lions who search for prey; they are always ready to burden and overburden the people with taxes, always ready to set up new ones and increase the old ones and always ready to ignite the fires of war, and, consequently, always ready to spill blood and take away men's lives. They are always ready to devastate the cities and ravage the country. And the priests, who are the ministers of religion, applaud them in their evil designs like false prophets. They consent to their evil wills and approve all their unjust and violent procedures. Those who rail against them, who scream and thunder in their pulpits with so much zeal and vehemence against the smallest vice and the

slightest disorder of the people, are the “silent dogs” with respect to the abominable vices and disorders of the princes and kings of the earth. They even teach that they were established by God, that it is necessary to obey them and submit to them in everything; consequently, they say and make the poor, ignorant people believe that *those who resist them are opposed to the order of God and earn eternal damnation* (Rom. 13:2).

And as if it were very important for the good and safety of the people that they always have tyrants to command them and tyrannize them, they say public prayers every day for their preservation and for the prosperity of their arms. If, however, it happens that the fortunes of war are not favorable to them, that their armies are routed by their enemies or their cities are seized and pillaged, they blame it right away on the sins of the people. They make them believe that God was upset with them, that they have to try to sway and appease his anger by works of penitence and by a true conversion of their heart to God. That is why we hear them chant so mournfully, “Lord, treat us not according to our sins. . . . Do not remember our iniquity,” and “Lord, help us . . . and free us,” etc.

But when, on the other hand, it happens that they win some signal victory over their enemies, rout their armies, take their cities, ravage their countryside, and carry off some considerable loot, they consider all this as visible signs of the protection and blessing of their God. That is why the magistrates and people everywhere light bonfires and have public celebrations and crowd into their temples or churches to sing in celebration with their priests the magnificent “Te Deum,” i.e., the magnificent songs of joy and praise of their God’s gracious actions, as if to thank him as fittingly as possible for the victorious carnage, ravages, and devastations that they made on the land; and so, all of them, however many there may be, are so blinded that they consider so many deadly and detestable evils as subjects of joy and rejoicing. We could well say that *they are insane in their joys and rejoicing* as in one of their so-called holy and sacred books (Wis. 14:22).

And since these same priests and clergymen, cowardly flatterers of the rich and the rulers of the earth, know that the tyrants are not self-confident and that they are always afraid of what they deserve to get every day, to please them and make them a little more self-confident they publicly teach that it is forbidden for any individual to kill a tyrant

and they even declared and defined in one of their councils of Constance that it was a heresy to believe that any individual was allowed to kill a tyrant.

This clearly shows that the Christian religion allows and approves and even authorizes the tyranny of the princes and kings of the earth, as well as all the other abuses I just spoke about, and since all these abuses and tyrannies are completely opposed to justice, natural equality, and the good government of the people and they are, as I said, the source, origin, and cause of all the vices, evils, miseries, and viciousness of men, it is obvious that the Christian religion allows, approves, and even authorizes the bad government of men. Consequently, it is obvious that it instigates, maintains, and even authorizes the vices and disorders of men instead of openly condemning them and working to prevent and entirely eradicate them, as they should. And that is what it would certainly succeed in doing if it really were established by God and if it really were as pure and holy as they claim.

From this I form this clear and conclusive argument:

A religion that teaches errors in its doctrine and morality, that allows abuses opposed to justice and natural equality, opposed to the good government of men and detrimental to the public good, that approves and authorizes them and even authorizes the tyranny and the tyrannical government of the princes and kings of the earth, that makes the people groan under the tyrannical yoke of their hard and cruel domination, cannot be a true religion or have been truly established by God.

This proposition is clear and evident and cannot be disputed.

Now, the Christian religion teaches all these errors. It also allows, approves, and even authorizes the abuses that I just spoke about. And finally, it authorizes the tyranny and the tyrannical government of the princes and kings of the earth, which I just demonstrated and which the experience that we have every day clearly shows.

So, the Christian religion cannot really be based on the authority of God. And consequently, it is false and even as false as any religion can possibly be.

I will refrain from refuting here many other abuses in particular like the pious invocation of the dead, the religious and devout worship of the images and relics of the so-called saints, pilgrimages, jubilees, indulgences, blessings that the priests and bishops make for the people, and

all other kinds of similar superstitions, because all these vanities and stupidities are and will be sufficiently refuted as much by what I said here as by everything I will say afterward.

## 59. SEVENTH PROOF: OF THE VANITY AND FALSITY OF RELIGIONS TAKEN FROM THE FALSITY OF THE OPINION OF MEN CONCERNING THE SO-CALLED EXISTENCE OF GODS

**B**ut since all these abuses, as well as all the other abuses and errors I spoke about, are only based on the belief and persuasion or opinion that there are gods, or, at least, that there is a God, i.e., an all-powerful, infinitely good, wise, and perfect sovereign being who wants to be worshipped and served by men in such and such a way, and that the princes and kings of the earth also claim to base their power and their authority on that of an all-powerful God, by the grace of whom they say they were established to govern and command other men—it is necessary now to prove and show clearly that men are still deceived in this and that there is no such being, i.e., *there is no God*. Consequently, men falsely and abusively use the name and authority of God to establish and maintain the errors of their religion, as well as to maintain the tyrannical power of their princes and kings.

This is what I am going to show clearly by conclusive arguments taken from the principles of metaphysics, physics, and morality; and this is the seventh conclusive proof that I have to give of the vanity and falsity of all the religions that we see in the world.

## 60. MOST OF THE LEARNED AND WISEST OF ANTIQUITY DENIED OR DOUBTED THE EXISTENCE OF THE GODS

**B**ut beforehand, it is a good time to remark here that the belief or the conviction in the existence of a God has not always been so universally or so consistently accepted among men; there have always been many people who not only called it into question, but who also denied it completely. For, without mentioning the many nations who recognized no divinity according to what was recorded in their histories, we can say that in all past centuries many of those who were the most enlightened, the most learned, and even the wisest, at least in the eyes of the world, were the ones who believed the least in the existence of God.

Take as an example Socrates, the philosopher who was judged to be the wisest in his time and was even, they say, judged so by the oracle of Apollo; when he was accused of having a bad opinion of the gods, he did not condescend to justify himself and be freed of the crime but with unparalleled steadiness swallowed the poison he was ordered to take.

Take Aristotle, the greatest philosopher of his time, who was named “the genius of Nature” because of his great mind; when he also was accused of having bad opinions about the gods, he was forced to retire to Chalcis where he died at the age of sixty-six. Take also Plato, called “the divine” for his great natural talent, who in his Laws forbade the intimidation of men through any fear of the gods.

Take Diagoras and Pythagoras, both great philosophers, who were exiled and banished from their country; their books were burned because they spoke badly about the gods and wrote against them. And many other philosophers like [Giulio Cesare] Vanini, the famous atheist; and Theodorus the Atheist, Josiah, Aëtius; Averroës, the famous Arab doctor; and Pliny, the famous naturalist who mocked men’s opinions about the creation of the gods and said that if he had to meet any divinity, he would meet none but the sun.

Take Tribonian, the famous jurist; Lucian, the famous, witty writer; Rabelais, the curate of Meudon near Paris, who made fun of all the religions of the world; and Spinoza, who recognized no divinity. And take Julius III, the 225th pope, who himself mocked his dignity and his religion; and finally, without mentioning many other examples, Leo X, the Florentine pope from the famous house of Medici, a scholar who, when making fun of his religion, said sneeringly to his friends, "Ah! How rich we are from this fable of Christ."

It seems very likely that our famous Duke of Orleans, Regent of France, had similar opinions about his religions, if it is true as they say that he told his mother when she piously reprimanded him that he feared nothing in this world and hoped for nothing in the other.

But I do not need to cite the individual sentiments of so many people here, seeing that we clearly see almost everywhere that this is the true sentiment of most people in the world, especially the rulers of the earth and the scholars of this age. This is what is clearly seen every day in the cavalier indifference with which they treat the matters of religion and consider the worship of the gods. This is what is clearly seen in the love and excessive attachment they have for the present life and for all the goods of the land, as well as in the lack of enthusiasm and affection they have for the glory of their God and for the individual salvation of their souls, and in the reluctance to go enjoy the so-called great and eternal rewards of heaven that were promised to them so magnificently, and, finally, in the lack of fear they have of the so-called terrible and dreadful punishments of hell that are so frighteningly threatened.

All this, I say, clearly shows that they are little convinced of what is told to them and even the priests themselves are not convinced of what they tell others. For, if they were really convinced and really believed such important things, it would be morally impossible for them to be so little affected and so little moved.

And so, what faith and belief they have (or rather seem to have) is certainly only a vain semblance of faith and religion, not wanting to openly declare or uncover the true sentiments of their hearts for political reasons. As far as common man is concerned, we see very well by their manners and conduct that most of them are hardly more convinced of the truth of their religion or of what it teaches them, although they practice it more dutifully. And those people who have either so little

intellect or common sense, being as ignorant as they are of the human sciences, still glimpse and feel in some way the vanity and falsity of what they are made to believe about this, so that it is only as if by force, despite themselves, against their own lights of reason and against their own sentiments that they believe, or rather are forced to believe, what they are told. And this is so true that most of those who are the most submissive feel the loathing and difficulty that there is to believe what religion teaches them and makes them believe. Nature feels a secret loathing and opposition to it. Natural reason clamors, so to speak, against what it is forced to believe; wherefrom our Christ-cultists hold as a maxim in their religion that it is necessary to hold the mind captive under the obedience of faith, which they themselves confess had often been shaken in their greatest saints, particularly when they saw the prosperity of evil men. And they claim that *it is a very great merit for them to be held captive like this in their mind under the obedience of faith* (2 Cor. 10:5). Natural reason, as I said, clamors against this violence that they do to it. Now, to constrain and hold the mind captive in this way under the obedience of faith and to want to renounce one's own lights of reason to be forced to believe something against one's own sentiments is not really to believe.

On the contrary, it is showing that one really does not believe and that one cannot really believe because a true belief is an intimate persuasion of the soul and an internal consent of the mind, which sees, or at least believes it sees, the truth of what it believes. For, as St. Augustine himself says: "God persuades us internally so that we will believe and want to believe; for, there is no real belief where there is no real persuasion or conviction. And man, though free, cannot believe unless he be persuaded and unless there be something to be persuaded of" (*On Spirit and Letters*, 34). Now, there is no persuasion or conviction where there is no constraint of the spirit and, consequently, there is no true belief where there is no constraint of the spirit. Therefore, this so-called constrained and forced belief that almost all men have of things of faith, since it does not come from an intimate persuasion of the soul but rather from an intimate loathing of the soul and mind, which do not see and cannot see the truth of what they are made to believe, is not a true belief. It is as if a man with common sense saw the brightness of the sun at midday and nonetheless wanted to be forced to believe that it was

night. Or as if this same man saw the darkest obscurity of deepest night and nonetheless wanted to be forced to believe that it was noon. It seems evident to me that such an effect and such a belief, which is constrained and forced in this way, is not a true belief and cannot be a decisive proof of the truth. "Some," says Montaigne, "make others believe what they do not and the others, who are in greater number, are made to believe it, not being able to fathom what it means to believe" (*Essays*, 2:12).

So, seeing that this so-called belief in the so-called truths of religion and the belief itself in the existence of God is in most men, even in all men, only a blind belief and a forced belief, as I just said, we cannot only say that it is not a true belief but we can also ensure that such a belief is not a proof of the certainty of the existence of a God. And so, it is in vain that our Christ-cultists pretend to boast about such a belief to demonstrate the certainty of the existence of a God, seeing that such a belief is clearly a certain proof of the uncertainty rather than the certainty of its existence.

For, we see that if its existence was as certain and evident as they claim, men would not have to be constrained and held captive, as they are, to believe and there would not be so many intelligent men who deny it or call it into question. This makes it clear to see already that the belief in the existence of a God is not as certain and decisive as they claim, and, consequently, that atheism is not as strange or monstrous or as twisted an opinion as our superstitious God-cultists make it out to be.

It was good to say this here before entering on more important proofs.

## 61. WHERE DO THE FIRST BELIEF AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE GODS COME FROM?

Furthermore, it seems clear enough that the first belief in gods comes only from certain men, shrewder and craftier, more subtle and maybe even more vicious than others, who wanted to raise themselves above others by ambition and maybe also exploit their ignorance and stupidity, so they dared to take the name and quality of God and sovereign lord to be much more feared and respected by men. And the others, either through fear, stupidity, complacency, or flattery, let them do it and so they were made masters. And being masters, they kept the name and quality of sovereign lords!

Just as we see today that the great conquerors, i.e., the great thieves and usurpers of provinces and kingdoms of the earth, are given the name and title of duke, king, emperor, and sovereign prince, being qualified as the greatest, highest, and most powerful lords, and it matters very little that they are not qualified now with the name and title of all-powerful gods, so much does their pride try to raise them above other men—it seems clear enough, I say, that it is only from this that the first origin and knowledge of the gods come.

This is what appears especially in the belief of that God of the Jews and Christians of whom they speak in their story of the so-called creation of the world because it is expressly stated there that this God spoke the language of men, that he reasoned, that he walked and strolled in a garden, neither more nor less than a man would normally do, and it is stated there that this so-called God created the first man in his image and likeness (Gen. 1:27), a clear enough indication that this so-called God had the form and face of a man and, consequently, that he was actually only a man, seeing that he had the form, image, and likeness of a man or that man had his image and likeness.

But apparently this so-called God was a shrewd and crafty man and wanted to toy with and mock the simplicity, crudeness, and stupidity of that other man called Adam, who was, apparently, only an oaf, a simpleton, and an idiot, seeing that it is stated in the same history, or rather

fable, that he let himself be very easily and stupidly seduced by the words of a woman and by the deceitful promises of a snake who was shrewder and craftier than he.

Likewise, we have to believe that this same so-called God who spoke to Moses was really no more than a man or even only an imagined man since Moses himself attributed to him not only a voice and human speech, but also the limbs of the human body and all the passions of man, and this so-called God, wanting to mock Moses when he asked to see his face, answered him pleasantly enough that he *could if he wanted look upon his back and buttocks, but he would not see his face* (Ex. 33:23). This so-called God apparently had a human face, a back, and buttocks since he himself said so, and, consequently, was really only a man who wanted to counterfeit God or disguise himself as God. But since he wanted to show his back and not his face, apparently he was afraid to reveal who he was by showing his face, which is again a clear enough sign that he was really only a man and not a god. This is unless these so-called words and speeches of God to Moses were only the words of Moses himself that he invented and attributed to a god in order to give more credit and authority to what he said to men by means of this deceitful ploy.

## TRICKS OF MOSES

This could very well be because for a long time impostors have used these kinds of tricks to deceive men, which would make it very stupid to want to be deceived again.

## 62. IN THE END THE GOD-CULTISTS HAVE BEEN FORCED TO RECOGNIZE THE FALSITY OF THE PLURALITY OF GODS THAT THE ANCIENTS WORSHIPPED

**B**esides, we cannot deny that all the other gods and goddesses who came afterward and were worshipped in all past centuries, for example, under the names of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Apollo, Mercury, Asclepius, Cybele, Diana, Minerva, Pallas, Venus, and thousands of other gods and goddesses, were all only men and women, perhaps renowned princes and princesses, for example, or other distinguished people who gave to themselves or were given (as I said by complacency, flattery, ignorance, or stupidity) the name of god or goddess, since men in those times were so blind and stupid as to believe that weak and mortal humans, as everyone is, could nevertheless become immortal gods before or after death.

And what is more surprising is that philosophers let themselves (or seemed to) be persuaded of such a vain and stupid thought as this. Take Plutarch, great and renowned philosopher, who, in the words of Montaigne,

said it was necessary to firmly believe that the souls of wise and virtuous men, according to nature and divine justice, become holy men, holy demigods, and demigods after they have been perfectly cleansed and purified like in sacrifices of purgation, being freed from all corporality and mortality, and not by any civil order but in very truth and with convincing reason they become whole and perfect gods, earning a very happy and glorious end. (*Essays*, 2:12)

I will not bother refuting here such a vain argument and opinion, which negates itself. It is enough for me only to mention here that there is no certitude or real basis in this belief that people have in the existence of gods, seeing that the first knowledge of them that men had came only

from error, ignorance, and imposture. This is so true that for a long time already most men have recognized the error of the Ancients in this. And they have so clearly recognized the vanity and falsity of all these ancient divinities that they have been forced to reject the belief in all corporeal and human gods and in all other material and visible gods of wood, stone, gold, silver, etc., that the ignorance and stupidity of men of old made them worship.

But our Christ-cultists and the other god-cultists did not want to reject all belief in God, so they were forced to limit themselves at least to the belief in a single God, one in substance and nature, as they say, but triple in persons, as our Christ-cultists claim. This being so, you have already suddenly annihilated many gods there, seeing that from so many divinities that the superstitious god-cultists recognized and worshipped in past centuries, their descendants had to be reduced and restricted to the belief and worship of one God, and even an invisible God, an incorporeal and immaterial God, and, consequently, a God who does not have flesh, bones, body, or limbs, who does not have a back, belly, arms, legs, feet, hands, eyes, head, mouth, tongue, ears, teeth, finger or toenails, or any other part, and who, consequently again, does not have any form, figure, or color outside, nor any configuration inside, or rather who does not have any inside or outside, any side or above or below. Nevertheless, a God who, according to them, is everywhere, who sees everything, makes everything, knows everything, leads everything, governs everything, maintains everything; who is entirely in every place and in every part of every place; who is all-powerful, infinitely good, wise, just, kind; and, finally, who is infinitely perfect in all kinds of perfections, whose nature is unchanging, unmoving, and eternal, whose nature is his very power, wisdom, and will, and reciprocally whose power, wisdom, and will are his very nature and essence.

This is certainly a very surprising idea of being, but we can also very certainly say that it is an idea of a being completely imaginary and totally chimerical, and it does not even seem that we could, if we really wanted to, form or fabricate an idea of a being more chimerical than this.

The chimera of the Ancients, the sphinx of Phycus, and all the fictions of the poets and writers of stories had nothing that approached the absurdities contained in the idea that our new god-cultists form of their God. I call them "new" since they have been forced to limit themselves,

as I said, to the belief in one God and forced to cut away from him the whole body, form, and material and sentient figure. In this respect we can say that they have wandered farther off into the vanity of their minds and reasoning, and though they believe they have become wiser and subtler than others, they have really become crazier and blinder than they were before. *They wandered off into vain arguments. They became mad calling themselves wise* (Rom. 1:21-22).

## 63. THEY ARE NOT BETTER FOUNDED IN THEIR BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF ONE GOD

**B**ut let us see if they are better founded in the belief of a one-and-only God than in the plurality of gods that they have been obliged to reject after having recognized the error and vanity. Let us see if they are better founded in the belief of a totally invisible and immaterial God than before in corporeal and visible gods. For, it seems to me at first that neither the one nor the other is any better. So, let us examine this.

What obliges our superstitious god-cultists to recognize and believe at least in the existence of one all-powerful, infinitely good, wise, and perfect God, is the view of so many great, beautiful, and wonderful things that they see in Nature, imagining that they could not have been made or set in the order and situation where they are except by the omnipotence of a sovereign being, infinitely good, wise, and perfect, to whom they give the name and quality of "God." "I cannot open my eyes," says one of our famous arch-GodChrist-cultists (Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambrai), "without admiring the art that shines throughout Nature: the slightest glimpse is enough to perceive the hand that made it" (*On the Existence of God*).

However, since this hand that they believe to see at the first glance is only an imaginary hand and all of them have been obliged to recognize that there is no visible being or any corporeal or material being to whom they can really attribute an infinite power and wisdom, or, consequently, to whom they can really attribute divinity, this has forced them to form in their imagination the idea of an invisible, incorporeal, and immaterial being to whom they have attributed omnipotence and an infinite wisdom and, consequently, divinity, and to whom they have given the name of God, persuaded that there must necessarily have been such a being and that this being is the first efficient cause and the first preserving and governing cause of all other beings. And at the same time

they maintain that just looking at the wonderful beauty and perfection in the works of Nature clearly shows us the necessity of the existence of this so-called infinitely perfect being. Let us see if what they say is true.

## 64. THE BEAUTY, ORDER, AND PERFECTION THAT ARE FOUND IN THE WORKS OF NATURE DO NOT AT ALL PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF A GOD WHO MADE THEM

In the first place, as far as the beauty, order, and perfection that we see in the works of art, we have to agree with them that their beauty and perfection necessarily prove the existence, force, power, skill, wisdom, etc., of a worker who made them because we see very well that they could not be made by themselves as they are if some skillful worker had not laid his hand on them. But, we have to recognize that the beauty, order, and other perfections that are naturally found in the works of Nature, i.e., in the works of the world, do not in any way prove the existence or, consequently, the power or wisdom of any other worker than Nature itself, which makes all the most beautiful and wonderful things we can see. For in the end, whatever our god-cultists may say, it is absolutely necessary to recognize that the infinite perfections that they imagine are in their God likewise prove that he himself had been made by another; or they have to say that they are not proofs.

If they say that the infinite perfections that they imagine are in their God likewise prove that he himself had been made by another, they must say again for the same reason that the infinite perfections of this other also prove that he had been made by another, and this one again by another, who himself had been made by another, and so on forever going back from cause to cause and gods to gods unto infinity, which would be absolutely ridiculous to say. And this is not what our god-cultists would like to say because for an infinitely perfect God as they would like to imagine they would have to necessarily recognize and admit an infinite number of others who would always be more and more perfect than one another—this is entirely offensive to good judgment.

And if, on the contrary, they say that the infinite perfections that they imagine are in their God do not at all prove that he had been made by another, then why do they want the perfections they see in the world

to prove that they had been made by another? Certainly, there is no more reason to say the one than the other unless maybe it is that the greater, more infinite perfections that are in an infinitely perfect God would necessarily prove even more that he had to have been made by another because a greater perfection demands a more perfect cause. And in this case, the existence of a God would prove the necessity of an infinite number of gods rather than that the existence of a world would prove the existence of a God, which is again an obvious absurdity that our god-cultists do not want to admit. Therefore, they have to tell the reason why they claim that the perfections that they see in the world necessarily prove the existence of a God who made them and why, on the contrary, they claim that the infinite perfections they imagine in this God do not prove that he himself had been made by another.

The whole reason they can put forward is that their God is of himself and by himself everything he is and, consequently, all his divine perfections are of themselves and by themselves everything they are without ever having any need of any production or any other cause but themselves, and that the world cannot be by itself what it is and the perfections that we see there cannot at all exist if an all-powerful God had not created and formed them as they are, which is, they say, the great difference between them.

Now this reason is clearly vain, not only because it presumes without proof what is at question, but also because it is as easy to say and suppose that the world is what it is of itself as to say and suppose that God is what he is of himself and, consequently, it is as easy to say that the perfections that we see in the world are what they are of and by themselves as to say and suppose that the perfections of a God are what they are of and by themselves. Being so, there remains only to see which of the two is the truest and most likely.

Now, it is obvious that there is much more reason to attribute necessary existence or existence by itself to a real and veritable being that we see and have always seen and that is always manifest everywhere than to attribute it to a being that is only imaginary and is not seen and not found anywhere. Likewise, it is obvious that there is much more reason to attribute existence by itself to perfections that we have always seen than to imaginary perfections that we have never seen anywhere; this is clear and evident.

Now, the world that we see is obviously a very real and veritable being; it is seen and is manifest everywhere. Its perfections, also, are very real and veritable: they are seen and are manifest everywhere and have always been seen.

On the contrary, the so-called infinitely perfect being that our god-cultists call "God" is only an imaginary being that has never been seen anywhere. Likewise, its so-called infinite and divine perfections are only imaginary—they are seen and found nowhere; no one has ever seen them.

Therefore, there is much more reason to attribute existence by itself to the world itself and to the perfections that we see there than to attribute it to a so-called infinitely perfect being who is seen and found nowhere and who, consequently, is very uncertain and doubtful in itself.

Since, then, our god-cultists have to recognize that there is some being and some perfections that necessarily are what they are of themselves and by themselves independent of any other cause, it is clearly an abuse, error, and illusion for them to want to attribute such perfections to an imaginary being that has never been seen anywhere rather than to a real and veritable being that has always been clearly seen everywhere.

From this it follows that the perfections that are seen in things in the world do not at all prove the existence of an infinitely perfect God.

Moreover, it is clear and unquestionable—just pay a little attention—that the assumption of this so-called divine being furthers no knowledge or explanation of natural things: it is clear and evident that this assumption does not at all relieve the difficulty that they find. . . .

Now, the creation they assume for everything is a mystery that certainly is also hidden and at the very least as difficult to explain and imagine as the natural formation of things, supposing that they are what they are of themselves. And so, since the difficulty is or might appear to be the same on both sides, there is no more reason to say that the world and everything in the world was created by God than to say that they have always been of themselves and that they were formed and arranged of themselves in the state they are in, matter having been of itself for all eternity. For in the end, it is no more difficult and not even more impossible to imagine that matter is what it is of itself than to imagine that God is what he is of himself.

This first argument should be enough at least to make us suspend

our judgment on the subject for a little while because in a dispute like this where it is a matter of finding the truth of a thing, if there is no more semblance of truth on the one side than the other, then there is no reason to judge in favor of the one or the other.

But, to better understand it let us examine it more carefully and see first if the difficulty proposed is really the same for both or if it is not much greater in the system of creation than in the system of the natural formation of the world made by the matter itself of which it is composed.

In the first system, that of creation, I see many insurmountable difficulties present themselves to my mind. The first is to explain or imagine what the essence and nature of this sovereign being could be that created all other beings.

The second is to show by convincing arguments that we have to attribute eternity and independence to this being rather than to matter itself, which we can assume to be eternal and independent of any other cause the same as having been created because both assumptions acknowledge a first being and a first uncreated cause that is eternal and independent of any other cause. So, in the system of the creation of the world, it has to be shown by convincing reasons that the first being is necessarily other than matter and that matter cannot be eternal and cannot be what it is of itself—this is definitely not a small problem since our god-cultists, as many as there are, have not yet been able to overcome it.

The third difficulty is to understand or imagine how it would have been possible to create and make something from nothing, which is unquestionably much more difficult to understand and imagine than simply to imagine matter that is what it is of itself. So why not want to suppose in the first place that matter is indeed what it is of itself and why want to resort to an unknown being and an incomprehensible mystery of creation to make it exist, seeing that we have to suppose not only an uncreated and eternal being in the system of creation, but also that this being could create another, which is absolutely inconceivable and entirely impossible, as I will show you below.

It is evident that in recognizing matter alone as the first cause, the eternal and independent being, we would avoid many insurmountable difficulties that are necessarily found in the system of creation and we would easily enough explain the formation of everything.

The fourth difficulty in the system of creation is to indicate precisely where this being is that is supposed to have created all other beings and be the most powerful of all. Where is it staying? Where did it go? What has it been doing since it created all beings? We do not see it, feel it, or recognize it anywhere! It is not, for example, the sun or the earth! It is not air or fire! Though we may check thousands and thousands of times and list all things, we certainly would not find it in any being or any place! What could have happened to this being that was not in the ranks of beings and that nonetheless gave being to all beings? Where could it be? This is what has to be explained in the system of creation because we have no particular or distinct knowledge of this being. It is not the same with matter since it is certain that it exists, no one can doubt it: we see it, feel it, find it everywhere; it is in all beings. So, why is it so complicated, why is it so offensive to say that it is of itself this first eternal and independent and uncreated cause about which they argue so heatedly?

## 65. CHIMERICAL IDEA THAT THE GOD-CULTISTS FORM OF THEIR GOD

**I**t is no use answering this last difficulty by saying, as they normally do, that this first and sovereign being, creator of all things, is equally everywhere and whole in all places, without division and without multiplication of its being. For, this is to say that we do not and even cannot possibly understand it; it is multiplying the difficulties instead of reducing them and the more we would examine the different attributes that they are forced to give to this so-called sovereign being, the more we would sink into labyrinths of inexplicable difficulties that would lead us to obvious absurdities and necessarily make us fall into obvious and inevitable contradictions.

Take this enigmatic or chimerical description that one writer made so ingeniously:

God is his own beginning and end; however, he has no beginning or end. He has no need for either since he is the author and father of both. He has always been and is always beyond the vicissitudes of time; with respect to him the past does not pass and the future does not come, all time is equally present. He reigns everywhere without being anywhere; he is unmoving without staying put, active without movement. He is everything outside of everything, in all things and contained in nothing. From without he creates and from within he governs. He is good without quality and great without grandeur. He is a whole without parts and unchangeable although he changes all things. His will is his power and his power is his will; his work is his will and his will is his work. He is simple in himself without any mix of act and power; he is actually everything that can be or, better said, he is pure act, being the first, second, and final act. Finally, he is everything, in everything, above everything, outside everything, below everything; he is before and after everything. (Vanini, *Amphitheater of Eternal Providence*, ex. 2)

It is clear that this description is full of contrasts, absurdities, and palpable contradictions, which clearly shows that they can only be talking about a being that is, as I said, totally imaginary and chimerical. From this it is evident that the system of creation or the assumption of a system of the creation of the world necessarily involves us in an almost infinite number of inexplicable difficulties full of unsupportable contrasts and absurdities.

An almost infinite number of different opinions and opposing sentiments arise among the philosophers and theologians who admit the system of creation, about which they have not yet and never will be able to agree—this certainly cannot give a good opinion of the system of creation.

It is not the same with the natural formation of things made by the matter itself of which it is composed. For, this system contains no contrast or contradiction and, consequently, it can be assured that it contains nothing impossible. For example, we only have to suppose that matter is eternal, that it is what it is of itself and that it moves by itself, which assumption is very simple and natural, and we see clearly enough that there is nothing impossible in this assumption.

First, we clearly see that matter exists and that it is not an imaginary and chimerical being.

Second, we clearly see that a certain portion of matter is capable of division and that all matter is capable of movement and even that matter really is moved: we cannot doubt any of these things. So why could we not suppose that matter is indeed eternal and that it does indeed move by itself, seeing that we see nothing offensive in this and we do not and even cannot see anything that could have created it or given it movement?

Finally, we cannot doubt that being in general has its existence and movement from itself. From what could it have received the one or the other? Certainly it could only have received it from what exists. Now, matter itself is this being in general that can have its existence and movement only from itself.

And only supposing this, we have a clear principle that cannot only straightway remove all difficulties, contrasts, and absurdities that necessarily follow from the system of creation but also at the same time can open an easy way to enter into the physical and moral knowledge and

explanation of all the things of Nature. For, only the idea of a universal matter that moves in different directions and that by different configurations of its parts can always be modified in thousands upon thousands of different ways, clearly shows us that everything that exists in Nature can be made by the natural laws of movement and by the configuration and combination alone or modification of the parts of matter.

## 66. IT IS USELESS TO RESORT TO THE EXISTENCE OF AN ALL-POWERFUL GOD TO EXPLAIN THE NATURE AND FORMATION OF NATURAL THINGS

I know well enough that it is not easy to imagine what it is precisely that makes matter move or what it is that makes it move in such and such a manner or with such and such a force and speed. I cannot imagine the origin and efficient principle of this movement, I admit. Nevertheless I see nothing offensive, no absurdity, no complication in attributing it to matter itself and I do not see how you can find any; and the partisans of the system of creation cannot find any.

All that they can say against this is that large or small bodies do not have in themselves the force to move themselves because, they say, there is no necessary bond between the idea they have of their bodies and the idea they have of their movement. But certainly this proves nothing, because though we see no necessary bond between the idea of a body and the idea of a moving force, it does not follow that there is not one: the ignorance we have of the nature of a thing does not at all prove that it does not exist. But the obvious absurdities and contradictions that necessarily follow from the supposition of a false principle are convincing proofs of the falsity of that principle.

And so, being unable to imagine and show with reason that matter has the force to move itself is not a proof that it does not have it. But, on the contrary, the obvious absurdities and contradictions that follow from the supposed principle of creation are, as I said, convincing proofs of the falsity of that principle. And since it is certain that matter moves and no one can deny it or even doubt it, unless they be total skeptics, it is necessary that it have its existence and movement from itself or that it received both from elsewhere. It cannot have received it from elsewhere, as I will demonstrate below; it follows, then, that it has its existence and movement from itself and, consequently, that it is useless to search outside of it for the principle of its being and its movement.

But let us see if we can show with some examples that although we cannot perceive a necessary bond between a cause and an effect, it does not mean that there really is not one. So here are some examples.

We see, for example, no necessary bond between the natural construction of our eye and the sight or vision of some object. We cannot understand how vision takes place, yet it is certain that we ourselves see by our eyes. So, there has to be some necessary bond between the construction of the eye and our vision, even though we cannot see precisely what this bond consists of.

We do not see a necessary bond between our will and the movement of our arms and legs. We do not even know the nature or employment of the hidden springs that are used to move our arms and legs. However, this does not stop all these springs from working when we want to move; we see every day that those who know the construction of their bodies the least are often the ones who move their limbs more easily and adroitly.

So, there has to be a natural bond between our will and the movement of the parts of our bodies even though we do not know what it consists of or how it works.

There is also no doubt about the bond that exists between the movement and shaking of the fibers of our brain and our thoughts. We do not see a bond between the two or how there could be; however, that does not mean there is not any, since our thoughts depend on the movement or shaking of the fibers of our brains and the movement of the animal spirits that are in our brains.

But let us take an example of our own origin and our own birth. I assert, in fact, that the most skillful philosopher and the subtlest mind in the world could never develop a true idea of his origin and birth if he had never seen or heard about the generation and birth of humans or any other animal. Would he figure out, for example, using only his natural reason that he was conceived and formed little by little in the belly of a woman? And that he came out afterward in such and such a manner at the end of nine months? Certainly not. He could never imagine this. And he would never even think that a woman had suckled him if he had never seen or heard of such a thing.

And if this so skillful philosopher or subtle mind, thinking only about the ideas of other things he learned or saw done, pretended to

deny his real origin and attribute it to something else that he could imagine, on the pretext that he could not perceive a necessary bond between the belly of a woman and the formation and generation of a man, would we not laugh at him? Would we not make fun of him? Yes, surely.

Yet, that is just what they do when they deny the eternity of matter and deny that it has the force of its movement of itself, on the pretext that they do not see a necessary bond between the idea of matter and its movement. For, they do not want to acknowledge the one and only cause of the common origin of all things, on the pretext that they cannot understand what it is and at the same time they suppose a false cause that is a thousand times more incomprehensible than what they reject, on the pretext of not understanding and not seeing a necessary bond between a thing and its properties. This is not the way to shed light on the difficulty or to advance in the knowledge of things of Nature.

So, although the idea we have of matter may not reveal to us and show us clearly that it has the force to move itself, it does not follow that it does not actually have it, in view of the fact that *it moves*, and that there is nothing offensive in it moving by itself. If the actual movement were essential to matter, I would want to believe that we could see a necessary bond between the idea we have of it and its movement; but, since it is certain that the actual movement is not essential to it and that it is only a property of its nature, we should not be surprised that we do not see the necessary bond. For, since its movement is not essential and necessary to it, there does not have to be a necessary bond between the two.

And so, although the idea we have of matter may not make us see the necessary bond between it and its movement, it is not a proof that it cannot move by itself.

## 67. BEING CANNOT HAVE BEEN CREATED; TIME CANNOT HAVE BEEN CREATED. LIKEWISE, EXTENSION, LOCATION, AND SPACE CANNOT HAVE BEEN CREATED AND, CONSEQUENTLY, NO CREATOR

**B**ut, to better clarify the truth of these things and, moreover, to show you more clearly that matter is what it is of itself, that it moves by itself, and that it is really the first cause of all things, let us begin by a principle that is so clear and evident that no one can call it into question.

Here is the principle: we clearly see that there is a world, i.e., a sky, earth, sun, and countless other things that are as if enclosed within the sky and the earth. Nobody can reasonably doubt this unless he really is a skeptic and doubts everything in general, which would be to close his eyes to all the lights of human reason and completely oppose all the sentiments of Nature. If someone were capable of this, he would have to have totally lost his mind; and if he absolutely wanted to persist in such sentiments, it would be more appropriate to consider him mad than to reason with him uselessly in order to instruct him. But, I believe that there is no one, as skeptical or as mad as he may be, who does not know and feel and even is not convinced that there is at least some difference between pleasure and pain, between good and evil, as also between a good piece of bread that he might eat in one hand and a stone that he holds in the other. Skepticism does not go so far as to doubt such things. So, we can say that it is more imaginary than real and more just a mind game than a real persuasion of the soul. That is why we will leave aside this feigned universal doubt of skepticism and follow the clearest lights of reason, which clearly show us the existence of being because it is clear and evident, at least to ourselves, that being exists and that we would not exist and could not even have the idea of being if being did not exist.

Now, we know and feel with all certainty that we are and we think; we can in no way doubt this: so, it is certain and evident that being

exists. For, if it did not exist, we certainly would not exist; and if we did not exist, we certainly would not be able to think. There is nothing more clear and evident than this.

Supposing this, it is necessary to recognize the existence of being. And not only this, but it is also necessary to recognize that being has always existed and, consequently, that it was never created. For, if it has not always existed, it is sure that it would not have been possible that it existed or that it would ever have been able to begin to exist:

1—It would not have been able to begin to exist by itself because that which does not exist cannot at all be made from itself or give itself being.

2—It would not have been able to exist by any other cause or any other being that would have produced it, seeing that there would not have existed any other being or cause to produce it, as we might suppose and would have to suppose if we said that being has not always existed.

Since, then, being exists, and it is evident that it does, it is necessary to recognize that it has always existed. And not only this but it is necessary to recognize that it is being that is the first principle and first foundation of all things. For, it is evident that all things are not really and truly what they are except that they have being and that they are themselves participants in or portions of being. And it is clear and sure that nothing would exist if being did not exist: it is like the same thing.

From this it clearly follows that being in general is what is first and fundamental in all things and, consequently, that being is the first principle and first foundation of all things. And since being has never begun to exist and has always existed, as we just showed, and, moreover, that all things are only diverse modifications of being, it clearly follows that nothing has been created and, consequently, there is no creator.

All these propositions are coherent and unquestionable.

## 68. THE POSSIBILITY OR IMPOSSIBILITY OF THINGS DOES NOT DEPEND ON THE WILL OR POWER OF ANY OTHER CAUSE

I know that our god-cultists will surely say here that the being that they call “immaterial” and “divine” never began to exist and that it has always really existed, as the argument above proves; but that the material and sentient being has not always existed and would not even have been able to exist if the immaterial and divine being had not created it.

But it is easy to show the weakness and vanity of this response.

1— It is vain because it assumes without proof and without basis the existence of a being that is unknown, uncertain, and doubtful, that is seen and found nowhere and of which we cannot even form any true idea. Moreover, because they refuse to be able to give any solid and convincing proof of its existence, as I will show more fully below, this so-called response is vain.

2—It is vain because, as it is absolutely necessary to acknowledge the eternity of some being, it is evident that we should attribute it to a real and actual being whose nature and existence we know but whose origin and beginning we cannot show rather than to a so-called being that is entirely unknown, uncertain, and doubtful, whose nature and existence we do not know and, consequently, that can only be imaginary. I say “imaginary” because a being that is uncertain and doubtful, that is seen and found nowhere and that we can form no true idea of, certainly has to be considered an imaginary being rather than a real and actual being. Moreover, this so-called divine being is so uncertain and doubtful that for the several thousands of years that they have argued its existence, they have never yet been able to give any clear and unquestionable proof of it.

3—It is necessary to acknowledge a first being from which all things are made, which is in all things and to which all things are reduced in the end. Now, it is obvious that material being is in all things, that all

things are made from material being, and that all things in the end are reduced to material being, i.e., to matter itself. This cannot be said of a being that is not material. So, it is material being that should be acknowledged as the first being. If it is the first being, it cannot have another before it. If it cannot have another before it, it cannot have been created and, consequently, it has always existed. And so, the answer that assumes without proof and foundation that material being was created by an immaterial and divine being is a vain answer.

4—It is vain because the above argument obviously proves the existence of being and the eternity of being as agreed and as we must agree. We cannot say that it obviously proves the existence and eternity of an unknown, uncertain, and doubtful being that we can form no idea of, for it would then no longer be unknown, uncertain, and doubtful if the argument really proved its existence and eternity. Therefore, the argument does not prove the existence and eternity of an immaterial and unknown being, but of an obviously known, certain, and indubitable being, a being of which we have a clear and distinct idea. Now, material and extended being is the only one that we have a clear and distinct idea of, so . . . etc. The being whose existence is proven by the above argument can be none other than being in general that we conceive with a clear and distinct idea, even as extended and being equally and necessarily everywhere. For, we will not say that this argument proves the existence of a being that we cannot have a clear and distinct idea of, or that is nowhere or is only in one particular place, for there is not and there cannot be any reason to say or think that being in general is here and not there or in certain places but not in others. And so, the being whose existence is proven here can be none other than the one extended and generally and necessarily existing everywhere. Now, this being is material being; therefore, it is the existence of material being that is proven by this argument and not the existence of another, because there cannot be another. Consequently, the answer given by the above argument is vain and frivolous. Now, material being clearly and generally known to all is alone certain and indubitable and, on the contrary, the so-called immaterial and divine being is obviously unknown, uncertain, and doubtful and we cannot even form any real idea of it. Therefore, it is the existence and eternity of material being that is proven by this argument.

5—It is vain because even supposing that you wanted to doubt the eternity of material being or that it has always existed, you could not doubt that it at least has always been possible and that it has always been possible in itself independent of any other cause.

In the first place, I say that you cannot doubt that it at least has always been possible because if it had not been always possible, it is evident as well that it would never have been able to exist as it does. For, it is clear and evident that what is not possible in itself can never exist or become possible.

Second, I also say that you cannot doubt that it has always been possible in itself and independent of any other cause

1—because being the first cause, it cannot depend in its possibility on any other cause, and

2—because things that are possible or impossible do not take their possibility or impossibility from the arbitrary power of any external cause, as you might imagine, but they take them only from themselves, as if from the depths of their own nature. As a result, there is no external cause that can by will or whim make possible what is absolutely impossible or make impossible what is possible.

I am not talking here only about a moral possibility or impossibility because we know that men themselves can often do many things at certain times and under certain circumstances that they cannot do at other times and under other circumstances. Likewise, there are many things that are impossible sometimes and under certain circumstances that are not impossible otherwise. So, it is not this kind of possibility or impossibility that I am talking about, but only of a real and absolute possibility or impossibility and we have to admit that there is no being who can by will or whim make possible what is impossible in itself or make impossible what is possible in itself. As a result, things are possible or impossible in themselves, independent of the power or will of any being.

And if you doubt this, here is the proof: if it was only up to the power and will of some being to make things absolutely possible or impossible as it wished, there would be nothing possible or impossible except what this being wanted to make so. Therefore, if this being wanted, for example, the sky and earth to be impossible and to have always been impossible, would they then have been impossible? And now that they are possible, since they actually exist, could this being, if

it wanted, make them impossible? Likewise if it wanted to make possible a mountain without a valley, would it be possible? And if it wanted or dared to want now to make two and two not equal four or the part not be greater than the whole, could it do this? Could it make a triangle without angles? Could it make a thing be and not be at the same time? Could it make itself not exist? If it did not exist, it certainly would not be possible because it could not make itself or be made possible if it did not exist and there would be nothing else that could make it possible; and so there would be absolutely nothing possible.

All these effects are obviously absurd and therefore it is evident that things are possible or impossible in themselves, i.e., they take their possibility or impossibility from themselves and from the depths of their nature and independent of the power and will of any other cause.

Against this conclusion here you might say that the essence and existence of only the first immaterial and divine being are absolutely necessary and independent of all power and will and, consequently, the first being cannot make itself impossible or cease to exist or be less than what it is. But with respect to the other things that are material and perceptible, visible or invisible, they are in truth possible or impossible in themselves independent of any other power or will, but nonetheless they cannot or could not ever actually exist of themselves independent of the existence and will of the first immaterial and divine being, called "God," and, consequently, they cannot exist independently of his power and will. And since we see that they actually exist, you may say along with our god-cultists, we must acknowledge the existence of an immaterial and divine being that created them.

But this cannot be and should not be said,

1—because it is as always wanting to assume without proof and without basis what is in question; so, this argument proves and concludes nothing, and

2—because if all material and perceptible things are possible or impossible in themselves independent of the power and will of another being, as we just proved and have to acknowledge, they are likewise possible or impossible independent of its existence and will; for, you will not say that things that cannot depend on the power or will of a cause can or must depend on its existence. And so, since material and perceptible things are possible or impossible independent of the power and will of

any immaterial and divine being, i.e., of a God, they are necessarily also possible or impossible independent of its existence; they can exist independently of the existence of God, i.e., if there were no God, they would not stop existing.

Being so, it is clear and evident that it is not necessary and it is even totally useless to want to suppose the existence of a God creator of the world and of the material and perceptible things therein, seeing that it has to be acknowledged that all these things do not lose their ability to exist and even to truly exist if there were not such a creator.

From this it follows that material things are possible or impossible of themselves, i.e., they take their possibility or impossibility from themselves and from the depths of their nature, independent of the power and will of any other cause. Consequently, since material and sentient being has always been possible, as I demonstrated, it can take its possibility only from itself and from the depths of its own nature, independent of any other cause. And if it has always been possible, we must necessarily conclude that it has been able to exist of itself, independent of any other cause. And if it has always been able to exist independently, we must acknowledge that it has always really existed because it is clear and evident that if it had not always existed, it would not have been able to give itself existence when it did not have any. And since we cannot doubt that it has existence now, we must conclude that it is always had it or say that it did not and could not have it except depending on some other cause; and we cannot say this because we just demonstrated that since it was always possible, it has always been able to have its existence of itself from the depths of its nature and independent of any other cause.

This argument already proves clearly enough the independence and eternity of material and sentient being. But, what confirms this even more is that there is no necessary bond or relation between the idea of material and sentient being and the idea of so-called immaterial and divine being or between the existence of the one and the existence of the other. For, we obviously have a clear and distinct idea of material and sentient being: we clearly know its existence, its nature, and its properties; though we have no knowledge of this so-called immaterial and divine being nor even any thought about it and, consequently, no idea of it.

Furthermore, let us suppose there is not any immaterial or spiritual

and divine being: we will not stop having a clear and distinct idea of material and sentient being and all things will not stop subsisting in their entirety, in their being, and in their form. The sky and earth, for example, and everything we see between will not stop subsisting; we will still have a clear and distinct idea of them and still see their existence as we do even though there be no spiritual and divine being. In a word, the destruction or negation of God in no way implies the destruction or negation of any material or sentient being. On the contrary, the destruction and negation of material and sentient being at the same time destroys the idea of every sentient being. For, supposing that there is no material or sentient being, you will destroy the sky and the earth and everything in between because we clearly see that if there is no material and sentient being, there could not be a sky and earth; but if there were no spiritual and divine being, we do not see that there would not still be any material and sentient being.

Finally, imagine as much as you want the existence of one or many immaterial and spiritual beings, as our god-cultists do, i.e., beings who have no form, figure, body, or extension—imagine, I say, as much as you want: we do not see from this the existence of any material or sentient being or any real being, we do not see the existence of the sky or earth or even the existence of a single fly or even that it could exist because there is no relation between a material and sentient being and a so-called unknown being that has nothing material or sentient. Likewise, if we imagine the complete destruction of every spiritual being, we do not see from this the destruction of the sky and earth or even of a single fly because there is no relation between the one and the other.

It is not the same with imagining the existence or destruction of material and sentient being. For, only imagine the existence of material and sentient being and at the same time you have the essence and nature, or at least the foundation of the essence and nature, of all actual or possible material being, of the sky and the earth and everything they contain; and not only everything they contain now, but also everything they have ever and could ever contain, because it is only of material and sentient being and its modifications that consists all the essence and nature of everything that exists, has existed, will exist, and could ever exist. This is what our god-cultists should have recognized since it is expressly stated in their own so-called holy and divine books that

nothing new is made in the world and that everything there is in the world now is nothing but what has already been in the past centuries and what will be in the centuries to come: *What was there in the past? This will be in the future. What was done? This will be done again. Nothing is new under the sun and no one can say, "Here is something new"; for, it already was in the ages that passed before us* (Eccl. 1:9–11). No one, it says, can ever say this or that is new, etc. And on the contrary, suppose the destruction of material and sentient being and at the same time you destroy the sky and the earth and everything in between.

Being so, it is clear and evident that material and sentient being has no bond or relation or correspondence with so-called spiritual and divine being. It is clear and evident that material being supposes no other being but itself. And if it supposes no other being but itself, it must exist of itself independent of any other being.

## 69. LIKEWISE, THE FIRST AND FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS ARE ETERNAL AND DEPEND ON NO OTHER CAUSE

**I**t is somewhat the same with the independence and eternity of certain first and fundamental truths that are so necessary and unchanging in and of themselves that there is no power capable of making them change their nature, i.e., to make them false or prevent them from being true.

Such as these truths: two and two is four, three times four is twelve, etc. The whole is greater than its part. A triangle has three angles. A thing cannot be and not be at the same time. Everything real is possible. Everything that cannot be is impossible. And nothing can do what is absolutely not possible. And many other similar propositions that are so true by their nature that they can never be false. For, it is not possible that two and two not be four, that the whole not be greater than its part, etc. We cannot deny or doubt these kinds of first and fundamental truths unless we want to entirely renounce all the lights of reason and reject all human reasoning because these truths are known by themselves and do not need any other proof, being themselves clearer and more certain than all other proofs. It is certain and indubitable, clear and evident that these truths are eternal, necessary, and even independent of any other power.

Now, the eternity and independence of these truths clearly prove the eternity and independence of material and sentient being because it is clear and evident that for these truths to be eternal and independent as they are, they have to have always been true and could never have been false. Consequently, for it to be and always have been true that two and two is four, there has to have always been two and two. For, if there had not always been two and two, it would not have always been true that two and two is four. Likewise, for it to be true that the whole is greater than its part, there must always have been a whole with parts because if there were not a whole with parts, how could it be true to say that the

whole is greater than its part? And since it has been shown that all these truths are eternal and exist independently of all power, we must conclude that there have always been two and two to really equal four and there has always been a whole for it to really be greater than its part.

This proves clearly enough the eternity and independence of material being because only material being can really make or form a whole composed of several parts. We can even say that the truth, generally speaking, is so independent of everything we can think or imagine that although there be no body or mind, no form or matter, no creator or creature, even no thing in the world, there would still at least be a truth because in this case, it would be true that there was nothing; so true is it to say that the first and fundamental truths of things are eternal and unchanging in themselves and entirely independent.

But maybe you will object here to what I just said about the independence, the possibility, and the actual existence of material being, saying that a house, for example, a city, a man, horse, tree, watch, etc., are things that are possible independently of all human power and yet can exist only dependently on some other cause that made them exist or gave them existence. A house, for example, cannot exist by itself unless workers made it. A man, horse, tree, or any other plant or animal cannot have its existence of itself and would not exist at all if they were not engendered or produced by some other cause and, consequently, you will say, although material and sentient being be possible of itself and even always has been possible independently of all power, it does not follow that it had to have or could have had its existence of itself, seeing that we see every day that things that are possible in themselves nevertheless cannot have their existence of themselves.

But it is easy to respond to this because it is clear that the possible things alleged above, for example, and everything like them are, as to their "form," only works of art or Nature in which they have their beginning and end; and in this respect, we cannot deny that they are really dependent on art or Nature, i.e., on the material being that formed them. But as to their "substance," which always remains beneath any form, they are certainly only portions of material and sentient being and portions of that eternal being that I said had its possibility and existence of itself; and in this respect, we cannot say that they are works of art or Nature or that they are really new beings because they are always

the same portions of material and sentient being and of the eternal being that appears under new forms and figures. This is done not by any external force or power but by the moving force and power alone of Nature itself, i.e., of material being, which by its natural movement takes from itself all kinds of forms and figures and by different modifications and configurations of its parts as well as by its different movements and agitations or tremblings inspires or gives to men the industry of arts and sciences, to animals the instincts and inclinations that are appropriate, and to plants as well as other inanimate things all the powers and properties found in them. From this it is clear and evident that the so-called objection says nothing against what I said concerning the independence of the possibility and eternal existence of material and sentient being.

All these arguments taken from the principles of metaphysics are entirely conclusive in their kind, but we need to use our minds a little to see the proof perfectly well.

We clearly see, as I said, that there is a world; this world is the material and sentient being that I proved to be not only possible in itself independent of another being's power and will, but also to have its existence from itself independent of another being's power and will. And being so, we must conclude that the world has always existed, at least as far as its substance is concerned; all the more so because if it did not always exist with respect to its substance, it would never have been able to give being or existence since it would not have had any; and since we see now that it exists and we cannot doubt that at all, we must conclude that it always has, at least, as I said, with respect to its substance.

I add the following to confirm this.

Every day we see new productions in Nature. These new productions have their imminent and immediate causes and although these causes are themselves produced by other more distant causes, it is necessary in all productions that there be a first, nonproduced cause and, consequently, that it be what it is of itself independent of any other cause. Or if there is no such first, nonproduced cause, it will be necessary to go back from cause to cause unto infinity. So, it is necessary to recognize that there is a first, nonproduced cause and that it be, consequently, what it is of itself independent of any other cause. There is no one who cannot agree with this principle or with this reasoning. We also see that the atheists agree with it as well as the god-cultists; and if the

god-cultists do not agree, they could not say, as they do, that their God was the creator of all things.

But, they do not agree on the name or particular qualities that befit this first cause: the god-cultists call it "God" and the atheists call it "Nature" or "material being" or simply "matter." If it were only a matter of the name, it would be easy to make them agree because as the names do not make and do not change the nature of things it would not matter if this first cause was called God or Nature or matter; and so we would not have to argue so much about it. But since the god-cultists attribute to it the power to create and to govern everything with a supreme intelligence and with an omnipotent will, from which they then draw many false conclusions and many vain pretexts for imposing at will laws and orders on men and for making them believe whatever they want them to, etc., and that the atheists absolutely deny this power to create and this supreme intelligence as well as this so-called omnipotent will—it is mainly in this that they are opposed and it is this that is necessary to examine in detail here, refuting the opinion of this so-called power to create and this so-called government of all things by an omnipotent will and by a wholly perfect intelligence.

## 70. CREATION IS IMPOSSIBLE AND NOTHING CAN EVER HAVE BEEN CREATED

First, as to this so-called power to create, I will prove that it cannot exist because to create is to make something from nothing. Now, there is no power that can make something from nothing; so, there is no power to create. I know very well that you will normally answer that there is indeed no created or limited power that can create something from nothing, but an uncreated and infinite power, like an all-powerful God, can and, consequently, it can create. But, apart from the fact that this answer is not satisfactory because it supposes "gratis" and without basis what is in question, I will prove that there is absolutely no power that can make something from nothing. Here is how:

There can be no power to create or to make something from nothing unless there is something that could have been created or made from nothing; this is unquestionable. Now, there is nothing that could have been created or made from nothing, so . . . etc.

I will prove the second proposition of this argument, which alone can be denied. If there were something that could have been created or made from nothing, it would be, for example, time, place, space, extension, and matter. For, if none of these things can really have been created and made from nothing, it will be easy to show that there is nothing creatable, seeing that there is really nothing else in Nature but time, place, space, extension, and matter that we could think of having been created or of being creatable. (For, I am not talking here about what you normally call "spirits" or "spiritual substances" because as these so-called substances do not exist and are not even possible, as I will show below, they cannot have been created or, consequently, made from nothing). Now, I will show you that time, place, space, extension, and matter are not at all creatable and cannot have been made from nothing. Therefore, there is no power that can create and make something from nothing. I will begin, then, with time, which I named first, and I will prove that it is not creatable, i.e., that it cannot have been created. Here is how I will tackle it:

If time was something creatable and if it had been created, as our god-cultists claim, it could certainly not have been created except by a being that had preceded it; for, if this being had not preceded it, how could it have created it? And if it had preceded it, it could have only been through time itself that it had preceded it, because to say that it had preceded through eternity and not through time is a pure illusion since eternity is nothing but a perpetual continuity of time without beginning or end. And so, to say that it had preceded it through eternity is to consent without thinking it through, because this is saying that it had preceded it through an infinite time, i.e., through a time that never had a beginning and, consequently, that could never have been created or been preceded by another cause. For, it is clear and evident that nothing can precede what has never had a beginning, which is just what we wanted to prove.

If they say that it preceded it only by a limited time, equivalent, for example, to a few days, months, or years, this cannot be:

I—Because it is not reasonable to say that a so-called sovereign creator of all things that they necessarily imagine is eternal preceded its creatures and works only by some quantity of time equivalent to a finite number of days or years. For, if it preceded them only by some time, it would necessarily have had a beginning itself; if it had a beginning, it could not have always existed; if it had not always existed, it could not be eternal, as they imagine. And not only could it not be eternal, but it could not ever have even begun to exist, because if it had not always been, it could not have given itself being since it did not have it; nor could it have received it from another because there was nothing capable of giving it being. So, we cannot say that time was created by a being that preceded it by only a limited and finite amount of time.

In the second place, I say that if this so-called creator of time preceded time only by a limited and finite amount of time, this limited and finite amount of time could not have been created, seeing that it preceded time itself. For, if it too had been created, it would not have absolutely preceded the creation of time, but only the creation of a certain time that was afterward created; or if this amount of time was created, the argument comes back to where it started and I say that it could not have been created except by a being that preceded it, even by a certain amount of time. And if this time again had been created, we must

then go back unto infinity and admit infinite creations of times, one before the other, and admit a creator who had preceded them all, which is totally offensive to reason since nothing can precede time, which is infinite.

Moreover, we would have to admit a new creation of time at each moment of time because, since time is essentially in a constant state of flux and there are not two parts of time, no matter how small, that can exist together, we would have to admit a new creation of time at every imperceptible instant, which would be ridiculous and absurd to say. Or, on the other hand, if we claim that this being who created time had preceded it by a time that was not created, then it is useless to assume a creator of time since we would necessarily have to acknowledge a time that had not been and could not have been created. For, if there is a time that we can say had not been created, we also have to say that there is no time that could have been created because there is no time that is more or less creatable than another since it all has the same nature.

2—Time could not have been created by a cause that preceded it. Now, nothing could have preceded time; therefore, nothing could have created time. Here is the proof:

If something could have preceded time, this thing or being would be before time and not before time. This is contradictory, so it is evident that it cannot be. It would be before time because it preceded it; however, it would not be before time because nothing can be before time without time itself, which would necessarily be as old as it.

Perhaps you will say that this being, this creator of time, preceded it only by a priority of nature and not by a priority of time. So, although the one was not before the other with respect to time, it could still be the cause of the other and, consequently, could have created it. For example, although the sun and its light are not before one another with respect to time, nevertheless this does not keep the sun from being the cause of the light because it is the sun that produces or makes the light.

To this I respond that if this being, so-called creator of time, preceded time only by a priority of nature, then time and this supposed creator of time have to be as old as each other with respect to time, i.e., they both have to be eternal, seeing that the so-called creator is eternal. Just like with the sun and its light, they both have to be as old as each other and if the sun were eternal then light also would have to be

eternal, assuming the one preceded the other only by a priority of nature. Now, if time and this supposed creator of time are eternal, neither one could have had a beginning: what has no beginning cannot have been created. Therefore, if time is eternal and coeternal with its creator, as we have to suppose, it cannot have been created; and so, no creator of time. I will prove this with another argument here.

If time were something creatable and if it really were created, it would have to be in itself something real and individual, different from every other being. For, creation has to have ended up at something real, i.e., at some individual being that was made from nothing, because it is impossible to imagine that there was any creation when nothing is made from nothing. Therefore, if time were really created, it would have to be something real and individual, made from nothing, and different from every other being.

I say "different from every other being" because time is not, for example, what we call the sky or the earth or any particular being contained within; for, we do not say that the rocks or plants or the men or other animals are time. Moreover, these beings have in themselves some permanent consistency; all their parts can actually subsist together. But time passes continually and none of its parts can subsist together. The past, for example, cannot exist with the present or the present with the future, and even the present is so brief and short that it almost does not exist instead of ceasing to exist; it is like an indivisible point that has no extension. Furthermore, we easily imagine that all individual beings could not exist and cease to exist. We can even easily imagine that the sky and the earth could not exist and stop being what they are. But we cannot possibly imagine that there be no time and that time could end and cease to exist. And at whatever point we suppose that there could be an end or beginning, there is necessarily a before that preceded the beginning and an after that would follow the end. Now, this before and after necessarily indicate a difference in time and if there is a difference in time, then there is time, because there could be no difference in time where there is no time. From this it follows that if time is something creatable, i.e., a being that could have been created, it has to be a real and individual being, different from all other beings.

I will show this clearly again by this argument. If time were a real being, different from other beings, the properties of time could apply to

other beings; and likewise the properties of other beings could apply to time; for, according to the maxim of the philosophers, "Things that have the same nature as a third thing have the same nature as each other" (Axiom of Euclid).

If time and other beings have the same nature as each other, then the properties of time must apply to other beings and vice versa. Now, it is evident that the properties of time do not apply to other beings or vice versa. Therefore, if time is a real being capable of having been created, it has to be a real and individual being different from other beings.

1—That the properties of time do not apply to other beings, here is the evident proof: the properties of time are to be able to be divided into past, present, and future, into centuries, years, days, hours, and minutes; now, there is no other being but time that can be divided in this way. Therefore, the properties of time do not apply to any other being.

2—The properties of other beings do not apply to time, and here is the proof: all other beings are corporeal or mental according to the opinion of our god-cultists, i.e., bodies or mind; the properties of bodies are to be able to be divided into three dimensions, length, width, and depth, and to be impenetrable and to be limited by some shape. Now, time cannot be limited by any shape because we cannot say that it is round, square, or triangular; nor can we say that it is soft or hard like a body or that it can have the three dimensions of a body. For, although we can say in a sense that it is long or short, nevertheless we cannot say that it is wide or narrow or thick or thin. So, the properties of bodies do not apply to time any more than the properties of time apply to bodies.

Likewise, the properties of the mind (if what they call "mind" is different from the body) are to be immaterial substances capable of thinking and willing, knowing and feeling good or bad. Now, time is not an immaterial substance or a material substance; it is not a substance capable of thinking and willing, etc. Therefore, if time is a real being, it must be a being different from the body and the mind and different from all other individual beings. Now, it is impossible to think that time can be some other real and individual being; therefore it is not something that could have been created.

However, it has to be said that it is not completely a nothing and nothingness, because a nothing has no properties like we see in time. Years, for example, hours, and moments, which are parts of time, are not

nothing, since we count them every day and multiply them every day. And if they are not nothing, then they have to be something and something not created or creatable, seeing that only real beings could have been created.

So, what could time be, seeing that it is not a nothing and that it is not a positive and substantial being? If we think about it, we will unfailingly find that time can be nothing else but *duration*, so that it is really duration that makes time and it is only with respect to the brevity or length of duration that we can say that time is short or long. Likewise, it is only by the different divisions of the parts of duration that we count the hours, days, years, and centuries.

But, as this term *duration* or “to endure” is said and can only be said of what exists and actually endures, and what exists and endures cannot exist without its duration nor duration without what endures, and that, moreover, it is not the duration of things that begin and end that makes time because time did not not exist before its beginning and does not stop existing after its end—it follows that it is only the duration of a stable and permanent being that could have made time. And since it is only the first being that is stable and permanent and that is without beginning and end and, moreover, that could never have been without duration nor duration without it, it follows that its continual duration makes precisely what we call time.

So, time is not a being that could have been created and, consequently, no creator for time, no more than for the first being, which no one could say had been created.

Confirmation of this is that if time were really something created or something real and positive, it would follow that hours, years, and entire centuries would be real and positive beings and they could have been created all together in the same instant, which is completely absurd. Therefore, time is not a real and positive being that could have been created.

You may respond that time is of such a nature that the moments that compose it cannot be created except successively one after another and so hours, years, and entire centuries can only come one after another and not all together in the same instant.

I agree with the truth of this response, but it is for this very reason that we cannot say that time is a being that could have been created, because if it really were, all its parts could have been created together

like other beings. But to say that time is a real being but all its parts cannot have been created together is to say that *time has to exist in order to create time* and there needs to be, for example, an hour of time to create an hour, a year of time to create a year, etc., which is totally ridiculous and absurd. For, it is like saying that to create matter you need matter, to create a foot of matter you need a foot of matter, to create a world you need an entire world. It is clear that this cannot be; it would be ridiculous to say this. So, we must conclude that time is not a being that could have been created.

If time was a being that could have been created, there is no doubt that it could have been created alone. For, what need would there have been to create another being with it? Apparently none. Now, if time had been created alone, I would readily ask if this being had been body or mind? Was it corporeal or mental? What idea could be formed of such a being? For in the end, when we talk, we have to know what we are talking about and have distinct ideas about everything we are proposing. It is unreasonable to want to ensure something we know nothing about. "It is shameful," says a sensible writer (Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, 1:18), "that intelligent men and philosophers, who are obliged to search after and defend the truth for all kinds of reasons, talk without knowing what they say and are satisfied with what they do not understand."

That is enough to prove that time cannot have been created. Let us see now whether we can also demonstrate that place, space, or extension, which are like the same thing, could have been created, since it does not seem that these things could have been created.

1—If place, space, and extension, which are pretty much the same thing, were something created, as our god-cultists claim, it is sure that there would not have been any place, space, or extension before they were created. By "extension, space, and place" I mean here the same thing with only this difference: *place* is only a space or a limited extension that contains a body, *space* is a more spacious extension that contains or can contain several bodies, and *extension* in general is space without limits, without ends, which contains all beings, places, and all imaginable space.

So, I say that if place, space, and extension are something created, there has to have been no place, space, or extension before they were created because if they already existed, it would not have been necessary

to create them, seeing that they would have been everything they could be before their so-called creation. But if, then, there were no place, space, or extension, where was the one who created them? It is evident that he could not have been in any place or location, since there was not any place or location where he could have been! Therefore, he was nowhere. Now, what is nowhere does not exist and what does not exist cannot create anything. So, place, space, and extension could not have been created.

It would be useless to say here that what created them was not really in any place or location in particular, but that it was in itself and being all-powerful in itself created all place, space, and extension. It is useless to say this because what is nowhere does not exist at all and can have no "itself" and cannot be something in itself because to not exist and to be nowhere is the same thing. Therefore, if this so-called creator of place, space, and extension was nowhere, it could not be something in itself and, consequently, could not do anything outside itself seeing that there was no "itself." For, just as to not exist excludes all kinds of ways of being, so also to be nowhere excludes all kinds of ways of being.

Furthermore, what is nowhere cannot act or do anything anywhere. Therefore, what was nowhere could not have made or created anything anywhere. It would really be a wonderful thing if that which were nowhere could really have made everything that is everywhere: this exceeds all intelligence and all possibility.

Furthermore, this being that they imagine to have been in itself, although it was really nowhere, this being, I say, was extended in itself or else it did not exist. If it was extended in itself, it already had extension and space where it was itself, because it is not possible for there to be extension without space, or space without extension. And since they imagine that this being was nowhere, they have to say, then, that this extension and space were nowhere; this again is unthinkable from a reasonable point of view.

And following the same supposition, since this extension or space preceded all creation, it follows that it could not have been created. Consequently, extension and space could not have been created since they preceded all creation.

On the other hand, what if we say that this being that was nowhere and was, nevertheless, in itself had no extension, how then could it have

created all space, which is a very vast extension and even an infinite extension? This is absolutely impossible, not only because nothing can give what it does not have, but also because it is necessary to have at least some relation or some proportion between cause and effect, between that which does a thing and the thing done. Now, it is evident that there is no relation or proportion between a being that has no extension and a being that has an infinite extension. Consequently, the being without extension cannot be an efficient cause of a being with an infinite extension. The finite cannot make the infinite and what has no extension is necessarily finite and is even so finite and so small that it could not even exist.

So, what has no extension cannot have created extension, which is necessarily infinite. I say "necessarily infinite" because as far as you can extend limits, there is necessarily always a beyond that necessarily supposes again a farther extension that cannot have limits or ends. Therefore, extension has no end and, consequently, it is infinite and so cannot have been created by a being without extension.

Moreover, everything that is made or created necessarily depends in its creation or production on the will and power of its maker or creator. Now, since extension, as I said, is necessarily infinite in its totality, it can depend on nothing, on the will and power of no creator because if it did, the creator could have created or made it as it wanted, i.e., it could have created it bigger or smaller, as big or small as it wanted or even not created it at all and could even now destroy it completely. But no, this cannot be. Extension in its totality is necessarily infinite; it is actually and necessarily everything it can be; we cannot add anything to it or reduce it; it has always been and will always be necessarily such as it is, independent of whatever will or power there may be. Consequently, it cannot have been created.

2—To create you have to act; to act you have to move; and to move you need space and extension. For, it is evident that it is only in space that movement is made, and that it is only by movement that action is done, so that just as it is impossible that there be action without movement and change, as much on the part of that which acts as on the part of that which is acted upon, so it is impossible that there be any movement or change, either of place or situation, without there being some space or extension. Therefore, since all creation is action and all action

carries some movement or change, either of place or situation, and all movement and change necessarily supposes some space or extension where they are done, it necessarily follows that space and extension precede all action and all movement and, consequently, they cannot have been created by any action.

Perhaps you will say that the creation of time, space, and all other things was done without any movement or change on the part of the creator. But this cannot be because, since it created nothing before it began to create, it would not have been able to begin to create or do what it did unless there was some change in it. Here is the proof: every action is the modification of the being that acts and different actions are different modifications. Now, creation was a new action on the part of the creator; so it caused a new modification of being in it and, consequently, a new change, because if there were no change in it, it could not have done anything new.

And here is more proof. "What always remains the same, always does the same" [*idem manens idem, semper facit idem*]; this philosophical maxim is incontestable. Now, this being that they suppose created all things created nothing before it began creating them. Therefore, it could have created nothing if it always remained the same as it was when it was creating nothing; this is evident according to the maxim I just cited: "*idem manens idem, semper fuit idem*" [what always remains the same, always is the same]. And yet they want it to have created all things, so it must not have remained the same as it was when it was creating nothing. Consequently, some change came over it when it began to do what it was not doing before, which is clearly opposed to the response to the above argument about the movement and change that is necessarily in all action. Therefore, this response is destroyed and the argument stands.

So, when they consider this being as acting and not acting, which are two different states and two different ways of being, it is impossible to imagine that any being could go from one to the other without alteration and some change, and since no alteration can be made without some movement and change either of place or situation and all change of place or situation is necessarily done in some space or extension, it follows of course that space necessarily precedes all movement and action. Consequently, it could not have been created by the movement of any action.

It is confirmed again by this argument: If space was something created, it is sure that what created it could not have created it except where it was not, i.e., that it could not have created space and extension except where there was no space and extension. For, if they were already there, it is evident that it would have had nothing to do to create them and could not even have created them since they were already as much as they could be. For, what is already of itself in being as much as it can be cannot receive its being again by creation. It would be ridiculous to say that God created things that were already created or created things that already had their being and their existence as much as they could. As a result, if space or extension had been created, they have to have been created where there was no space or extension and, consequently, that which created them did not need space or extension to create space and extension. All this is clear and evident.

Supposing this, an obvious absurdity ensues, which is that God, for example, who created space and extension as he wanted where there was none, could again now, if he wanted, create similar spaces and extension where there are not any or where there are very few, i.e., he could, for example, create a space or extension as big as all the universe in an empty bottle or in a nutshell or even in the eye of a needle, which is totally absurd. For, it is absurd to say that there could be as much extension in a nutshell or in the eye of a needle as in the entire universe. However, it is evident that this absurdity would ensue if space and extension had been created, as our god-cultists claim, because what would prevent this God who had created all the space and extension in the universe where there was none before from being able to re-create as many of them as he wanted thousands and thousands of times in the eye of a needle or in a nutshell? For, it would not be the lack of power to create that would prevent him, since we imagine him equally all-powerful at all times. It would not be the lack of place or extension in the nutshell or in the eye of the needle, since he does not need any to create as much as he wants and it would be through the creation itself that he would make as much space and extension as he wants. So, it is evident in this supposition that nothing would prevent him. However, since this consequence is absurd, it obviously follows that it is false and, consequently, that space cannot at all have been created.

What confirms this is that it is impossible to imagine there being no

extension. If it is impossible to imagine there being no extension, then there necessarily has to be; and if it necessarily has to be, then it necessarily has to have always been and always will be. For, if there were not always extension, it would be no more necessary now than before. And if it has always been, then it is eternal and never had a beginning; and if it never had a beginning, then it was never created and, consequently, no creator of space or extension any more than for time.

There remains now to prove that matter could not have been created. And if this is proved, we have to consider it decisive and unquestionable that there is absolutely nothing created and, consequently, no creator.

If all our god-cultists and all the philosophers felt like our Cartesians, who make all the essence of matter consist in extension only and who make no difference between matter and extension or between extension and matter, both being absolutely one and the same thing, it would be easy to prove that matter could not have been created because the same reasons and arguments put forth above, which conclusively prove that extension could not have been created, would likewise conclusively prove that matter could not have been created any more than extension since they are both but one and the same thing according to the Cartesians. But since all the god-cultists do not agree with this, nor do I myself, we have to prove by other arguments that matter could not have been created.

Here it is. If matter had been created or if it could have been created, it could not have been created except by a being that was not matter. For, if this being that created matter was also itself matter (as many serious writers once thought, giving a body to God), it would only be one matter that created another; this cannot be because where would the power or ability to create come from to such and such a matter rather than to another? And why would one matter not be as uncreatable as the other that created it? There is certainly no reason to attribute the power to create to one rather than the other. Matter for matter, it is always matter. It is not possible to imagine and it is absolutely impossible that one matter can create another. Could one atom, for example, create another atom? Could one grain of sand create another grain of sand? Could one mountain create another? Could this entire world create another world? Or only one atom more than there is? Certainly not.

That is why there is no reason to say that such and such a matter was created and another was not. As a result, if we agree that there is some matter that was not created, then we have to agree that no matter was created, i.e., was made from nothing.

For, that is what the word *create* means, to distinguish it from *engender* or *produce* or *construct*, which all mean to make something from something else that already exists. Now, we easily imagine that a material being can engender, produce, or make something or some being that will also be material, because we see this happen every day in the arts and industry of men and in Nature in the generations and productions of new beings that result from a new assembly of the parts of matter. But that matter or a material being could make some other matter or material being from nothing is not done and cannot possibly be done. So, we cannot say that matter was created by a being that was itself matter.

Let us see if it could have been created by a being that was not matter, because it also seems that this is impossible. Here, indeed, is the proof.

A being that has no body, no parts that can move or be moved, can make or create nothing. Now, a being or rather a so-called being that is not matter has no body or parts that can move or be moved. Therefore, such a so-called being that is not matter cannot have made or created matter. That a being without body or parts to move or be moved could not have made or created anything is evident. For, as I said, to create is to act, to act is to move, and a being that has no body or parts to move would necessarily always remain in the same state and could not start acting at all; and what cannot start acting cannot act or do anything. Therefore, what has no body or parts to move cannot act or create anything and, consequently, a being that has no matter, since it has no body or parts, cannot act or do anything and cannot at all have created matter.

Moreover, beings without body, matter, or parts and that are, as they claim, purely spiritual (if there were such beings, which is not agreed upon), could not at all act on matter or have any effect or impression on it because to be able to act and make an impression, it has to be able to touch and handle it. Now, what has no body or parts and cannot move cannot touch or handle matter. Therefore, it cannot act or make an impression on it "because only bodies can touch and be touched"

(Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, 1.304). Their normal response to this maxim is that a being that is not matter is a spiritual substance and so does not act corporeally by the movement of its parts, but spiritually by understanding and will without any movement of body or parts. But it is evident that this response consists only in vague terms that signify nothing real, for:

1—To say that beings that have no body or parts are substances is to say something inconceivable; it is almost like saying that nothing or things that are nothing are substances.

2—To say that there are beings and even substances that are purely spiritual and entirely free of all matter and extension is to pretend, to guess, and to suppose without necessity and without basis things that are inconceivable and that they do not understand and that it is even impossible to understand since no idea can be formed of these so-called beings and substances.

3—To say that beings that have no movable body or parts nevertheless act by understanding and will is likewise to say what they do not understand and is impossible to understand and, consequently, is not even worth hearing.

4—To say that beings and purely spiritual substances without body or parts are capable of understanding and will is to say that they are capable of vital actions because understanding and will are indeed vital actions. Now, to say that these beings are capable of vital actions is also a sham and a shot in the dark, unnecessarily and without basis assuming things that cannot be and cannot be imagined. For, vital actions are not possible without life or life without movement, seeing that life itself is essentially movement and really a vital movement. It is impossible to think of life without vital movement. Action and life are essentially modifications of beings and different modifications necessarily bring different changes, which cannot be found in beings without movable bodies or parts.

5—To say that spiritual substances act by understanding and will is only to say that they are capable of thought and will. Now, simply to think, to desire, and to will do and produce nothing outside themselves. Therefore, beings that could only think, desire, and will could do and create nothing outside themselves by their thoughts, desires, and will.

You may say here that to think and will in created and limited beings

really produces nothing outside themselves, but to think and will in an uncreated and all-powerful being makes everything. But I say again that this is pretending and supposing "gratis," without necessity and without basis, things that are completely inconceivable and impossible. To speak like this is not to philosophize or to reason because it is speaking without knowing what you are saying, and it would be madness to want to put any faith or make someone put any faith in such fictions. For, in the end, everything they say about these kinds of spiritual substances and their so-called power and will are only fictions of their hollow imaginations that have never shown any real and veritable effect.

6—These kinds of so-called spiritual substances without a doubt have no extension in themselves. If they have any extension, they are therefore reduced to points that are imperceptible to all senses, to mathematical points and even, if possible, to something smaller than mathematical points. Being so, how could a being of such strange smallness have created matter, which has infinite extension; this is totally ridiculous and absurd to think and say.

But, you may say that there is an uncreated, sovereign, and all-powerful being and, even though it does not have extension or parts, it can still be immense and in its immensity be present and all-powerful everywhere. But, I say again that to speak in this way is to speak without knowing what you are saying, to continue to multiply the absurdities and propose things that are more and more impossible, more and more inconceivable and absurd. For to say that a being that has no extension or parts is nevertheless everywhere by its so-called immensity is to say a thing totally offensive and contradictory, because it is saying that a being that has no extension has an infinite extension and is a being infinitely extended: for, what is an immensity without limits if not an infinite extension that has no limit? Again to say that this being is everywhere in its immensity although it is found nowhere and to say, nevertheless, that it has no parts that correspond to the different parts of all this immense space that it contains, but that it is all entire everywhere because of its immensity and all entire in each part of this immense space because of the simplicity and indivisibility of its nature—this is pushing the absurdities over the line, it is saying and making things up that are not only the most impossible but also the most absurd and ridiculous that one could imagine.

You see to what extremes our god-cultists are necessarily reduced in

wanting to maintain the existence of a being that is only imaginary. They have to say thousands and thousands of absurd things that are inconceivable and that they themselves do not even understand. They speak without knowing what they are saying, since they themselves do not understand what they are saying. And they would like, as a sensible author said, "by these arguments that they do not understand, to force us to believe opinions that they do not understand" (*Malebranche, The Search after Truth*, 6:4).

Now, these people who talk in this way without knowing or understanding what they are saying certainly do not even deserve to be heard. That is why it is obvious that our superstitious god-cultists are in error and are no better based today in their belief in a one and only spiritual and immaterial God than they once were in their belief in many corporeal and material gods. And since they have been forced to recognize their error about the belief they had in all those false material and corporeal divinities, they should now recognize clearly enough their error concerning the belief they have in a one and only spiritual and incorporeal divinity, seeing that such a divinity can only be imaginary and chimerical.

## 71. BEING OR MATTER, WHICH ARE THE SAME THING, CAN ONLY HAVE ITS EXISTENCE AND MOVEMENT FROM ITSELF

**B**ut let us follow our thoughts and always try to say nothing that is not supported by solid reasons. It is difficult to know the principle of movement and to know how matter can move. The god-cultists maintain that it cannot move by itself at all.

“We have to say that it is only the will of God that can move a body; and so, the moving force of bodies is not in the bodies that move since this moving force is nothing but the will of God” (*Malebranche, The Search after Truth*, 6:3).

(How is it that an essentially unchanging and unmovable being could move another body? Do the Cartesians really think this can happen? Do they see a necessary bond between the will of such a being and the movement of a body? Is it not an illusion rather than a true vision? What are they thinking?)

According to them it would not only be inanimate bodies that did not have the force to move themselves, but all bodies, even the most animate, would be just as powerless because they do not see how there could be a necessary bond between the idea of bodies and their movement. They do not see how a large or small body is capable of moving itself. And that is the only proof the author can assert for his sentiment concerning the movement of bodies. Neither he nor anyone else can give any real proofs of what they say and yet they do not see that there is nothing offensive or absurd in saying that a body can move of itself. For, if any of our god-cultists could point out something offensive or absurd in this, they would not have failed to do it. And so, not having been able to point it out is an obvious enough proof that there really is not any.

Let us see if this will be the same with what this author asserts. But before addressing this, it would be good to point out here the advantage there is in the opinion I am defending. Though we see no necessary bond

between the idea we have of bodies and their movement and we do not clearly see how they can move themselves, nevertheless we do not see that it is at all offensive or absurd to say that they can move themselves. If it were offensive or absurd, then it would be impossible for them to move themselves. For, if it were impossible for them to move themselves, then it would be offensive and absurd to say that they could. So, because there is nothing offensive or absurd to fear here, we can guarantee that it is not impossible that bodies can move themselves. Or we have to show the absurdities. And this is what we challenge all the god-cultists, Cartesians, and Malebranchists to do. So, it is evident that bodies can move themselves and there is no need to search for any other cause for their movement but the matter itself of which bodies are composed.

There is no use saying that there is no necessary bond between the idea that we have of bodies and their movement, because even if there were in fact no such bond between the two, it would not follow that it would be offensive or absurd to say that the bodies could move themselves. Furthermore, we should not even be astonished that we do not see a necessary bond between the two, given that it does not in fact have to have one since movement is not part of the essence of bodies but only a property of their nature. If movement were essential to matter or part of the essence of bodies, we could believe that there would be a necessary bond between the idea that we have of bodies and their movement, but since this movement is not essential or even absolutely necessary, seeing that a body can be without movement, there certainly does not have to be a necessary bond between the two and it is vain to try to find one.

It is for this reason that we do not see and even cannot see what makes matter move at such or such a speed or up and down or from right to left or, finally, what makes it move in a straight line or a circular, oblique, or parabolic line, although it does move in all these different directions with countless different modifications. It is because none of these movements are essential to matter that is no doubt why it is impossible for us to clearly see what exactly makes the principle and determination of all these various movements. If it is only with respect to circular movement that we can say that matter by itself always tends to move in a straight line, being the simplest and most natural movement, but it cannot always do this because everything that has extension is full

of matter, so matter cannot always move in a straight line without encountering other matter that prevents it from continuing its movement and so it is forced to move in a curved or circular line, which necessarily makes certain portions or volumes of matter always move in a circle and produce many vortices of matter. And there is no doubt that it is only from this that the roundness of the earth, sun, moon, and all the stars and planets come, as our Cartesians rightly mentioned. And though we cannot clearly see what exactly makes the principle of movement of matter, nevertheless we do not see and even cannot see that there is any contradiction, drawback, or absurdity to say that all these various movements and all their various modifications come from matter itself, which is enough to guarantee that they come from matter itself and not from some other cause.

But let us see the contradictions and absurdities that infallibly follow from the opposite sentiment.

If matter did not have from itself the force to move, it could not have received this force except from a being that was not matter, because if this being was also matter, it would not have the force to move either; or if it had from itself the force to move, it would, then, be true to say that matter had from itself the force to move so that if it did not have this force from itself, it would have had to receive it from a being that was not matter.

Now, it is impossible that matter received the force to move from a being that was not matter; therefore, it has from itself the force to move.

I will prove the second proposition of this argument. Nothing can move matter except what is capable of pushing or shaking it. For, it is clear and evident that what is not capable of pushing and shaking it is not capable of moving it. What is not capable, for example, of pushing a stone or a piece of wood is certainly not capable of moving it. It is the same with respect to all other matter that is not actually in movement: nothing is capable of moving it if it is not capable of pushing and shaking it. Now, nothing is capable of pushing or shaking matter except matter itself. Therefore, nothing can move matter except matter itself and, consequently, we have to acknowledge that it has the principle of its movement from itself.

Here is the proof. Nothing can push or shake matter except what has some solidity or impenetrability just like matter, because it is evident that

what has in itself no solidity or impenetrability cannot at all push matter or make it change place. For, it could not make any effort or impression on it, not even in leaning on it or applying itself in whatever way against it, because it would penetrate it straightway without encountering any resistance so that it would be like touching nothing.

Now, only matter has solidity and impenetrability in itself since it is agreed that the so-called spiritual and immaterial beings do not.

Therefore, it is only matter that can push matter and make an effort or impression on it and move it. Consequently, what is not matter cannot move matter. And again, a being that is not matter cannot move matter and if it cannot move it, much less would it have the force or power to create.

It obviously follows that matter has its being and movement from itself and it cannot have been created any more than time, place, space, or extension.

(Being and matter are the same thing. Being is the substantial of everything, the manner of being is the formal of everything; everything consists of and is reduced to being and the manner of being. Now, it is clear and evident that being in general cannot have its existence and movement except from itself and, consequently, cannot have been created.)

In the end, it is also impossible to imagine no being. Natural reason clearly makes us know the existence of being, time, and extension and it is impossible for there to be no being, it is impossible to imagine no time and extension, and it is impossible for there to be no time and extension. Finally, it is impossible to imagine no numbers and it is impossible for there to be none. It is also impossible for things not to be infinite in themselves, each in its kind and species. Natural reason clearly shows us this with the slightest effort and we need nothing more to see that things cannot have been created. And if these things could not have been created, then nothing was created and, consequently, no creator.

I know very well that our god-cultists claim that their God, creator of all things, made everything by his will alone: he only had to will it and everything was made, as they say. This is indicated in their so-called holy books: *He spoke and all things were made; he commanded and they were created* (Ps. 148:5). This is easy to say, but I also know that they hardly know what they are saying, because not only do they have no real idea of the knowledge, power, and will of this being but they also have no

real idea of its nature. For, according to their own principles, the life, knowledge, will, force or power, learning and wisdom, etc., that they attribute to it are not and cannot be understood in the natural and ordinary sense of these terms, but only in an ambiguous sense, i.e., a sense that is completely different from our way of living, thinking, willing, or acting, etc. And if they do not know what they are saying or what they understand or what they mean when they speak in this way, they certainly do not deserve to be heard; and if they do not deserve to be heard, much less do they deserve to be believed.

But let us take up our argument again and see the absurdities that would follow if matter did not have the force of its movement from itself. It follows from this that:

1—All bodies, once they were made and formed, would be inalterable and incorruptible in their nature and, consequently, not only would they not have in themselves any principle of action but also they would not have any principle of generation or corruption, which seems absurd from the start. They would not have in themselves any principle of action because to act, it is necessary to move, as I said; so that if bodies did not have in themselves the principle of movement, they also would not have in themselves the principle of action and would be, consequently, completely powerless to act by themselves. And so, no freedom in men since they would not have the power to move or act by themselves. For, how would freedom survive with such powerlessness to act and move?

2—Living bodies would also have no principle of generation or corruption in themselves and would be inalterable and incorruptible in their nature. For, since it is the movement of the parts of matter that is the principle of the generations and corruptions made in Nature, if bodies did not have the principle of movement from themselves, they also would not have the principle of generation or corruption from themselves.

That the movement of the parts of matter is the principle of the generations and corruptions of Nature is evident enough because we see that the generations are not really made except by a new union and new assembly of the parts of matter and that the corruptions are really only made by the disunion and detachment of these same parts of matter. Now, the union or disunion of the parts of matter cannot be made except by movement; so, if bodies do not have the principle of move-

ment from themselves, they also would not have the principle of generation or corruption from or in themselves.

3—If the union or disunion of the parts of matter is not made by the moving force of bodies themselves or of the matter itself of which bodies are composed, it must be made by an external cause. If it is made by an external cause, the bodies will not be the true causes but only the accidental and instrumental causes of generations and corruptions, as well as of all the other effects and actions that are made in bodies; and not only in inanimate but also in animate bodies. As a result, it would not, for example, be the men or animals moving themselves when we see them move, act, and run or do something else, but it would be some external and invisible cause that shakes them up and starts them moving and makes them do everything that it seems they are doing themselves. And just as it is not a saw, for example, that moves of itself to saw or a knife that moves of itself to cut and a hammer that lifts itself to hit or the grindstones of a mill that turn themselves to grind grain, and as puppets do not move by themselves when they jump and dance but there are external causes that move them and make them do everything they do in this way, so also, following this principle, living bodies do not have the force of their movement from themselves. It would not be the men or animals themselves who moved the limbs of the body to act or do whatever, but it would be an external and invisible cause that was shaking them up and using their limbs to make them do everything it seemed they were doing themselves.

And so, when we see, for example, somebody who plays music well, who sings well, who speaks wisely about things, or others who dance well, jump nimbly or do all kinds of subtle and skillful twists and turns with agility, or, finally, when we see others who are carried away with anger and fury, who curse and blaspheme, who foam at the mouth, who are crazy and insane, who say countless stupidities and make countless rude or hateful and malicious remarks—it would not really be them who were acting in this way, it would not be them who were moving their arms and legs or their tongues and eyes as they seem to do, but it would be an external and invisible cause that moved them and made them do everything under control and out of control, everything good and bad in their conduct, whether in their speech or actions or even in their thoughts, desires, and affections. There would no longer be, for

example, a flea or a fly that acted of itself when it jumped or started to fly, but it would necessarily be an external cause that moved all the imperceptible springs of their body parts and made them soar up as quickly and subtly as they do. From this it obviously follows that men would not at all be the real causes of the good and evil that they do and they would be no more worthy of blame or praise than are purely inanimate things that act only by the hands of the people who handle them. This being so, on what, then, will be based the so-called justice of the rewards of the good and the punishments of the wicked, seeing that neither the one or the other could do anything of themselves and could only do what a force and a higher power made them do or did itself in them? Regarding this Montaigne said very rightly:

On what foundation of justice can the gods recognize and reward a man for his good actions and virtues, seeing that they themselves produced them in him? Why are they offended and why do they take vengeance on him for wickedness, seeing that they themselves made him in this faulty condition and with only a thimbleful of their will they could prevent him from faltering? (*Essays*, 2:12)

Let me add that the knowledge and will of animate beings in this hypothesis are of no use for the liberty of those who act since all the thoughts, knowledge, and will that they could have would only be the necessary consequences and effects of different determinations and modifications of the movement of the subtlest parts of matter, which would be no more free or less strong and effective than in inanimate bodies and so would allow no more liberty in the one than the other.

Now, it is evident that animate beings like animals naturally have from themselves more force and power to move than inanimate things, and we certainly feel in ourselves that we naturally have the force to move ourselves because we do move ourselves and we do indeed rest when we want. It is the same with animals: they move themselves when nothing prevents them. Therefore, it is not by an external force or power that animate objects move, but by an internal force and power that is their own and natural. Consequently, matter has from itself the force to move.

But you will no doubt say that this internal force and power that ani-

mate beings have in themselves to move comes not from the matter of which they are composed, but from an interior force that is communicated to them by the sovereign being, which acts internally in all animate beings and gives them all the movement they seem to do. But, if this was so, I will always draw the following conclusion: all animate beings, including men, are only instruments incapable of moving themselves and, consequently, there is no freedom in men any more than in inanimate instruments. This would be ridiculous and absurd to say.

Furthermore, if matter does not have from itself the force to move itself, there always and everywhere has to be some other being, one or many, that is constantly working on matter to make it move. And since it constantly moves everywhere and even in an infinite number of ways in all the different bodies that it composes, even in one single body like a plant, for example, or an animal, though it be only a fly, it moves in an almost infinite number of ways, so this being or beings that move matter would have to be immediately united to it and working on it. This being or beings that move matter would have to know perfectly the individual nature and needs of each thing and know perfectly the smallest parts of matter that might enter into their composition. For, if they did not know these things individually, how could they form the nature of each thing from an appropriate matter? How could they move and arrange each part of matter as necessary to form perfect bodies such as we see throughout the universe?

It is evident that the first movers of matter (if there are many and if they are other than matter itself) could not form so many excellent and wonderful works if they did not know their nature perfectly and know how best to perfectly arrange, change, and place all the largest and smallest parts of matter so as to order and situate them as they should to compose the nature and body of each thing.

It is impossible, I say, that all this could be done purposefully and willfully without perfect knowledge in the one or ones supposed to be the authors of it. For, just as in the materials of a building, for example, that have no force to ever move, assemble, and organize themselves or to ever order and arrange themselves as they should to make a perfect building, but need workers to make and assemble, arrange and place each in the order and arrangement necessary to make such or such type of complete and perfect building—so, too, since natural bodies are like

various different complete and perfect buildings composed of different parts of matter joined and bound together, if the different parts of matter did not have from themselves the force to move, whatever gave them movement would have to know perfectly the nature and properties of each thing and how to fit, assemble, arrange, and bind each part of matter so as to compose the buildings, i.e., the complete and perfect bodies, each according to its nature. What skill! What force! What subtlety! What insight! What application! What expanse of mind and knowledge would it have to have to form purposefully and willfully throughout the universe so many great and little things like so many different and wonderful machines! It infinitely exceeds the infinite. And how to imagine such a force, power, wisdom, and expanse of mind and knowledge in a being (or beings) without form, figure, body, head, or any extension and that it is impossible to form any real idea of? As the philosophers say, what proves too much proves nothing. And for this reason we could say to our god-cultists that their arguments to prove the existence of their God proves nothing because they end up in too many absurdities.

Likewise it is clear that according to the idea we have of knowledge and power, there cannot be any individual being endowed with an understanding capable of actually knowing the infinite or any individual being capable of an infinite force because every individual being is finite and no individual and finite being can contain in itself an infinite force or power.

But, what again is beyond all belief, intelligence, and possibility is that in order for an individual, all-powerful, infinitely wise and enlightened being to be able to produce all the effects of Nature in this way and imprint and regulate, as I said, the movement of all the parts of matter in any body and in any place in every body that could exist, it is necessary that this being alone penetrate internally all the bodies whose nimblest and subtlest parts it moved, i.e., that it is necessary, for example, that when it formed the bodies of animals and moved and conducted and governed all their nimblest and subtlest parts, it is necessary, I say, that it completely penetrate the substance of their bodies, all their flesh, bones, marrow, all the fibers of their flesh, their muscles, entrails, heart, brain, eyes, veins, blood, and generally everything that is part of the composition of their body. For, how could it form, move, regulate, and

conduct all these parts separately if it did not penetrate them all? How could it form and move the animal spirits in the veins and nerves and even direct as it must the course of their movements in all the parts of the body if it did not imprint on each of them immediately by itself the movement that is appropriate and particular to them in order to produce such and such effects in such and such parts of the body? It is unquestionable that all this could not be done unless the author or first mover saw, discerned, and immediately touched by itself all the nimblest and subtlest parts of all the bodies it formed. And how would it see and discern them when it had no eyes to see, no fingers or hands to handle them or touch and arrange them or to bind and join and attach them to each other as necessary?

And even though this so-called first mover and this skillful worker might have clever enough sight to discern everything, and nimble enough hands and fingers to make and fashion so skillfully so many beautiful and wonderful things of every size and shape, it would still have to completely penetrate the whole substance of all the bodies it formed; and if it completely penetrated them, it therefore has to be not only all whole in all bodies, but also all whole in each part of all these bodies, i.e., all whole in the heart of each animal, all whole in the head, stomach, intestines, eyes, liver, lungs, feet, hands, and, in the end, all whole in each part of all these parts. As a result, it would be all whole in every atom of matter, i.e., in each of the nimblest and subtlest parts of matter and this is in some way like saying that there would be as many gods as there were atoms of matter or that each atom of matter were a God, seeing that each contained in itself all the nature and substance of a god. And as all these atoms, which are the nimblest and subtlest parts of matter, are infinite in number, it is like saying that there are an infinite number of gods, all of which together would make and be only one and the same God, which, although not having any extension or any parts in itself, would still be infinitely extended and infinitely all-powerful everywhere. What is more vain, more ridiculous, and more absurd than all these wild fancies? It is clear that this cannot at all be, because if such a being were all-powerful, as they suppose, all whole in all bodies, all whole in every part of bodies, it would be either without division of itself or with division of itself; neither one or the other can be.

It cannot be without division of itself because how could it be whole

in so many different bodies so separate and distant from each other? It is inconceivable, it cannot be. Nor can it be with division of itself because it is evident enough that nothing can be divided from itself and still remain in its entirety. And this all-powerful being that penetrated all the other bodies would have to be divided from itself as many times as there are different bodies or substances or even as many times as there are atoms separated from each other in the whole expanse of matter. Now, what can you imagine more vain, ridiculous, and absurd than this? You have to close your eyes to all the lights of reason to be able to let yourself be persuaded of such things?

But how is it that such a general and intimate penetration and such a sovereign force and power to act cannot be felt or perceived anywhere? The substance of this being that so penetrates everything would surely have to be very thin, nimble, and subtle since it slips in everywhere so imperceptibly without being felt or perceived anywhere. But how again is it that the force of its power could be so sovereign and so effective, when no one can feel it or feel its impression?

Just pay a little attention and you will see that all these things are only hollow imaginations and chimeras that exceed not only all possibility, but also all intelligence, and you would have to totally renounce the lights of natural reason, as I said, to want to be persuaded of such things.

Furthermore, if an all-powerful, infinitely wise, and enlightened being forms and directs all the internal and external movements in us and in all other beings, how could there be so many wild and irregular movements? Certainly there could not be any wild and irregular movements made in us or in Nature because it would be an all-powerful, infinitely wise, and enlightened being that had formed and directed them all. Now, it is evident that we certainly feel that there are in us and in Nature thousands and thousands of wild and irregular movements made every day that cause countless evils and disorders everywhere. Consequently, we cannot say that these kinds of wild and irregular movements are formed or always directed by an all-powerful, infinitely wise, and enlightened being.

If, on the other hand, you say that a single first mover is really not enough to be able to move or imprint movement on the whole extension of matter, which is infinite and without limits, and, consequently, that it would be too overburdened to be able to move so regularly all

bodies composed of matter, but that there could be many first movers who could give them their movements and it would be this that principally produced all the natural and accidental oppositions and antipathies that are seen in so many kinds of animate and inanimate things since they would have incompatible humors or natures, some of them wanting to move their portion of matter in a different direction or a different way than the others and others moving theirs in a contrary or opposite way—I would admit we could find here an apparent and plausible enough reason for the opposition and antipathy among natural bodies. But I would still deny that such a supposition could survive because:

1—It is useless to have recourse to the plurality and contrariety of these first movers to explain this opposition and antipathy that is naturally found among many bodies.

2—The plurality of these so-called first movers is no less offensive than the unity of a single one.

For, first, as to their number, how many would there be? Two, three, four, a hundred, a thousand, millions? If one alone is not enough to do all that is done in Nature, how many then? (It is impossible to even imagine.) Two, three, four, thousands, or millions of these so-called first movers would not be enough because it would take nothing less than an infinite power and knowledge to do knowingly and willingly, with knowledge of cause, all that is done in Nature, and could thousands or millions of limited powers and knowledge together make an infinite power and knowledge? Shall we accept as many of them as there are natural bodies? Or as many as the atoms in the whole extension of matter? Then would we have to accept an infinite number since there are an infinite number of bodies and atoms in the whole extension of matter? Now, would not it be ridiculous and absurd to accept an infinite number of first movers?

Now then, their nature would be such that they would all have from themselves the force to move or they would not all have it. If they claim that they all had the force to move from themselves, why could matter itself and all its atoms not have it too? It would certainly not be more impractical to suppose that they had it from themselves than to want to attribute it needlessly to imaginary beings like these so-called first movers. On the contrary, it is much more appropriate to attribute it to matter itself, because in the end it is sure that matter exists and this

matter can be divided into an infinite number of parts that you can, if you want, call atoms; and it is sure that the parts of matter actually move. But what guarantee and what appearance is there that any of these so-called first movers exist? What knowledge do we have of their nature or existence? What knowledge do we have of their force, power, industry, and intelligence? None at all, since we cannot even form any real idea of their being or their manner of being.

Moreover, I would willingly ask if all these so-called first movers had the same or different nature. Do they have equal force and power? Or are some stronger and more powerful than others? Do they know each other or not? Do they feel pleasure and contentment in always moving around their portions of matter like this? Are they friends or enemies? And many other questions like this that we could legitimately ask about. It would be ridiculous even to want to try to answer these questions positively because it would clearly be promising to say something without basis in any knowledge, and for this reason alone they would deserve to be rejected and would be completely unbelievable.

So, it is much more appropriate to attribute to matter itself the force that it has to move than to vainly and needlessly be burdened with so many insurmountable difficulties searching outside it for a false principle of its movement. So, I will say no more to refute this opinion about the plurality of these so-called first movers, which destroys itself well enough. That is why our god-cultists do not dwell on it anymore and they all normally acknowledge only one first mover to whom they attribute a very perfect and entire knowledge of all things with a sovereign power to do everything it wants and, consequently, to move matter and do what it wants with it. But it is necessary to add here another reason that clearly shows the falsity (even though the opinion and supposition of this so-called infinite power and knowledge has already been sufficiently refuted and proven false). Here it is.

Our god-cultists avow that the single so-called first mover they call "God," to which they attribute an infinite power and knowledge, is a being that is not only without body, form, figure, and extension, but is also entirely unmoving and unchanging by and in its nature, unchanging in its thoughts, will, knowledge, and purpose in every sense and in every way, so that it cannot at all be subject to any change or any vicissitude of time. Supposing this, it is clear and evident that such a being (if it really

existed) could not at all move matter. I will prove it like this: a being that is entirely and essentially unmoving in itself and even by nature is totally unchanging and unmoving cannot move anything outside itself. For, how would it move anything outside itself if it could not move itself? It is certainly unimaginable and impossible; there is no bond or relation between the idea of an unmoving and unchanging being and the movement of any other being that moves—and there cannot be any. Now, according to the doctrine of our god-cultists, their so-called first mover called “God” is entirely unmoving and unchanging in itself and even such by nature; therefore, it cannot move anything outside itself any more than within itself. Consequently, it cannot move matter or be the first author of its movement. So we have to acknowledge that matter has its being and movement from itself, and it is entirely useless to have recourse to the existence of an all-powerful God who does not exist and could not do anything if it did exist, seeing that if it did exist, it could not even move itself since it would be entirely unmoving and unchanging by nature. And for the same reason it is totally useless for our god-cultists to worship and pray to it and offer sacrifices to it as they do, on the pretext of obtaining whatever graces or favors they can get from it.

For, seeing that the nature of their God is entirely and completely unchangeable, as they claim, and that he picked up all his thoughts, plans, and will at the beginning of eternity, as they also claim, it is sure that he will not change his thoughts and will for their sake despite all the prayers they could make and all the sacrifices or worship that they could do or make for him; nothing at all could bend him or sway him one way or the other. And so, whether we pray or not, whether we worship or not, whether we offer sacrifices or not, it will never change his resolution or will; he will never do good or bad unless he has resolved to do it from the beginning of eternity. This is even mentioned in their so-called holy prophets who make their God speak and say definitively that his counsel or his plans will remain firm and he will do everything he resolved to do: *All my resolutions will be unchangeable and all my will shall be carried out* (Is. 46:10).

And so, it is totally useless and in vain that our superstitious god-cultists amuse themselves praying so much to a God whom they recognize as being completely unchanging and unmoving. It is totally in vain that they worship and offer sacrifices to him to try to get from him some grace or favors

that they think he will not grant them otherwise. If, for example, you knew that a person or a powerful king had made a certain resolution, plan, or determination, and that he would never change his mind no matter what, would it not be useless in this case to pray to this person or this king to do otherwise or to do something other than he had resolved to do? Certainly it would be useless and even a kind of madness to want to try to make him change his mind if you knew that he never would. So, since our god-cultists know very well that their God is completely unchanging and that all his will was decided at the beginning of eternity and again that he will never change it no matter what, since he has an unchanging nature, it is clear and evident that it is useless and even a kind of madness for them to pray to him and pretend to get something from him by their prayers, worship, and sacrifices, seeing that it is sure that it will never make him change his will and that all this does not produce the results they claim.

But, they say, it is God himself who wants to be prayed to. He commanded men to pray to him, worship him, and offer sacrifices in order to grant, by the merit of their prayers and sacrifices, the grace that they asked of him and that he resolved from the beginning of eternity to grant them. But I would also say that they speak blindly about things they do not know and for which they cannot give any real proof. If they say that God has revealed his thoughts and his will to them, I also say:

1—There is no lie or error in the matter of religion that the superstitious god-cultists do not claim to base on the word and authority of their God; thus, they do not deserve to be taken on their word or even listened to in what they say without convincing proof, seeing that there is no impostor who could not say the same thing.

2—if a god, as our god-cultists say, made such a commandment to men to pray to him, worship him, and offer sacrifices to him to get from him his grace and blessings, he would have or at least should have more consideration for those who faithfully observe his commandments than for those who do not observe them, and he would be or at least should be more favorable to those who pray to him, worship him, and devoutly offer sacrifices to him than to those who do not pray and worship and hate to offer sacrifices. Now, we clearly see every day that he has no more consideration for the one than the other and that good and evil happen equally to both. So, it does not appear that a god made such a commandment to men.

3—We clearly see every day that countless men and women who pray, offer sacrifices, devotedly serve their God, appeal to him, and call on him with all their heart and all their force in their desperate needs, get nothing from their petitions and prayers but often perish miserably in their needs and languish in their miseries until the end of their days. Why are their prayers not answered? Why do not they get results from their petitions? According to our god-cultists it is because it does not please God to answer them or grant the results of their petitions; it was not his will and had not been. So if God commanded them to have recourse to him by prayer and to ask him for the grace and assistance they needed, he would have commanded them to ask with prayers and sacrifices for graces and favors that he had no will or plan to grant and that he had even resolved to never grant—this is not at all believable of an infinitely good and wise God. If a lord, for example, or a powerful king had the crazy idea to order his servants or subjects to come before him every day with humble prayers to ask him some particular graces or favors that he had resolved to never grant, would you not say this was madness and mockery to order such a thing? Yes, certainly you would and you would be right to say this because it really would be madness or mockery to do this. It is the same with God if, as our god-cultists say, he commanded men to ask him in sacrifices and humble prayers for graces that he did not want to grant and had resolved for all eternity to never grant. And we can even say that it is crazy for our god-cultists to attribute such a madness and mockery to a God, i.e., an infinitely perfect, good, and wise being. So, whatever way they take it, they are confounded in their errors and in the vanity of their thoughts. *Iniquity has lied to itself* (Ps. 27:10).

But let us return to this so-called immutability of their God. According to what they say, he is so unchanging in his nature and operations that even though they attribute to him all the various affections that are in men, for example, love and hate, gentleness and anger, fury and vengeance, sadness and joy, pleasure and pain, desire and contentment, jealousy and despair, regret and repentance, and things like that, nevertheless all these affections are in their God without any passions, alterations, or change in him.

Here is how their Grand Pooh-Bah St. Augustine talks about it while addressing his God:

My Lord, you have told me with a strong voice in the inner ear of my heart that you are eternal because you have never changed, not by the impression of a new shape nor by the vicissitude of any movement; likewise, your will is not subject to the inconstancy of time insofar as a will that varies in its resolutions in any way cannot be immortal in its duration. The same lights that you have communicated to me show me that none of your creatures' disobedience harm your person or trouble your empire either in heaven or on earth. (*Confessions*, 12:11)

And in another place: "You are jealous, although you are always without worries; you repent but without feeling sorrow; you are angry but always calm" (1:4).

Indeed, he must be calm and quiet, seeing that with all the disputes about him among men and that there are so many who deny him and blaspheme and offend him, so to speak, by their crimes and viciousness and others by their disobedience every day, he does not bother in the least to defend his own cause; only men speak for him. And they speak only from their imaginations because it is only from their imaginations that they get everything they say for and about him; and they would not bother to tell us the things they do if it was not to their own advantage. Our god-cultists would like to persuade you that their God provides for all his creatures by his providence; but how could he provide for all his creatures when he cannot even provide for himself about what concerns him most closely, which is to defend his own cause, the manifestation of his glory, and the worship of the heart that is due him with total obedience to his divine commandments?

Here is what another of their holy Grand Pooh-Bahs says about this so-called immutability of their God; it is St. Ambrose:

God does not think in the same way as men, as if new thoughts came into his mind that were not there before, and he is not angered in the same way as men, as if he were subject to some change; but we still speak in this way saying that God thinks, is angry, repents, etc. to express the grievousness of sin against God, which seems to provoke his anger, although he cannot naturally be subject to any anger or passion. (*On Noah and the Ark*, 1:4)

That is how our god-cultists talk about the immutability of their God (cf. St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 9:5).

And so, though they attribute to their god love and hate, gentleness and anger, fury and indignation, sadness and joy, pleasure and pain, desire and compassion, regret and repentance, etc., they still claim to not understand these terms literally, as if God really were irate, joyful, or sad or subject to any of these movements that we feel in ourselves when we love or hate, are sad or repent, are angry or joyful, etc. No, it is not at all this that they understand by these terms; it is something completely different, but they cannot express or make others understand it because they themselves cannot understand or imagine what they pretend to understand in their way of speaking. But we clearly see that it is as if they were saying that God loved without loving, hated without hating, was angry without anger, sad without sadness, joyful without joy, repented without repentance, etc., which is totally absurd. Likewise, in their way of speaking when they say that he is good without quality, great without grandeur, immense without extension, it is as if they were saying that he was good without goodness, great without greatness, and huge without being extended. So, according to the lovely way of speaking and the lovely doctrine of our god-cultists, the terms *to do* and *to will* something should not and cannot be taken literally any more than the others like *love, hate, anger, repent*, etc. For, just as God loves without any feeling of love, hates without any movement of hatred, is pleased without any feeling of joy or displeased without any sadness, repents without any feeling of regret or repentance, etc., so too must we say that he does everything without any movement of actions, without stirring and moving, and he wills everything without forming any act of will, which is certainly like saying that he does without doing, acts everywhere without acting, and wills without willing, which is totally absurd. And likewise we have to say that he knows without knowing, is without being, and exists without existing.

Now, our god-cultists acknowledge and agree that he wills everything without any act of will and he knows everything without any act of knowledge and he does everything without any act or movement of action, which is like saying that he wills without wanting, knows without knowing, and does without doing. Following this, then they have to acknowledge and also say that he is without being and exists without

existing, i.e., that he does not exist at all, seeing that he has no particular manner of being or existing. For, what has no particular manner of being or existing certainly does not exist and is not.

That is how far our superstitious god-cultists are reduced by their lovely doctrine to claim the existence of their God. By wanting to make him perfect and to make him seem grand, admirable, and incomprehensible in all things and in all ways, they destroy him. And by wanting to strip him and relieve him of all imperfections and all real and imaginable qualities, they annihilate him and truly reduce him to nothing. Why do they not just honestly recognize and simply admit that he is nothing and does not exist, seeing that he really is nothing and really does not exist?

## 72. IT IS RIDICULOUS AND ABSURD TO SAY THAT A BEING THAT IS ALL-POWERFUL AND INFINITELY PERFECT NEVERTHELESS HAS NO VISIBLE AND PERCEPTEBLE PERFECTION

**L**et us go on to other arguments. God, in the opinion of our god-cultists, is an all-powerful, eternal, infinitely good and wise being and perfect in all kinds of perfections, who is present everywhere, sees, knows, makes, maintains, rules, and arranges everything at his pleasure. As a result, there is nothing, according to what they say, that can escape his domination or in any way go against his unchanging command, which he established everywhere by his all-powerful and sovereign providence.

The first thought that comes to mind with respect to such a being that is good, beautiful, wise, grand, excellent, admirable, perfect, kind, etc., is that if there really were such a being, he would appear so clearly and so visibly to our eyes and our senses that no one could in any way doubt the truth of his existence. But, since this so-called sovereignly perfect being cannot be seen or felt or known anywhere in any way at all, there is certainly no reason to say or believe that there really is such a being. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe and to say that he does not exist. For, how would such a sovereignly perfect, good, and kind being be everywhere without us being able to see or perceive any of his sovereign perfections anywhere? Certainly a being that is not visible and perceptible in any way cannot be sovereign, beautiful, good, kind, and perfect because the greater the natural perfections of a being are, the more visible and perceptible they are, like a light that the greater it is the more visible it is, or heat that the greater it is the more it is felt. Since, then, we do not see and perceive anywhere this being that they say is so sovereignly perfect and since we do not see and perceive anywhere his so-called sovereign perfections attributed to him, there is no reason to believe or say that there really is such a being. This argument, as simple and natural as it is, obviously leads us only to a negative conclusion about

this so-called divine being that they say is so sovereignly perfect. But we have to confirm it further with clear and sensible examples.

If we said, for example, that there was somewhere or even everywhere a divine sun, an infinitely clear and bright sun, and that nevertheless we could not see the brightness and light of this so-called divine sun anywhere, would we not have reason to say that this so-called infinitely clear and bright divine sun did not exist at all? Yes, certainly we would have reason to say this; and we could even say that we would have to have lost our minds and common sense to say that there was an infinite brightness and light everywhere but we could not see it. If we said, for another example, that there was an infinitely beautiful being everywhere and yet we could not see the infinite beauty of this being anywhere, would we not have reason to say that it did not exist? Of course we would. If we said that there was an infinitely hot divine fire everywhere or an infinitely cold air and that nevertheless we could not feel it anywhere, would we not have reason to say that there was no such fire or air? Finally, if we said that there was a being everywhere whose substance was an infinitely sweet and pleasant odor or taste and whose voice made a sound that infinitely surpassed all other sounds and yet we could not hear it anywhere or smell or taste this so-called very wonderful substance anywhere, would we not have reason again to say that this being really did not exist, seeing that we could not see any appearance of it anywhere? Yes, certainly, we would have reason to say this. And if despite this someone got it in his head to want to maintain that such beings really were everywhere in a spiritual and invisible way, they would certainly be considered madmen, lunatics, and even fanatics because it really would be a kind of madness and fanaticism to put such thoughts and fantasies in your head.

Now, it is evident that our superstitious god-cultists fall into a similar kind of fanaticism when they maintain the existence of their God. For, they want this God to be a being that is infinitely perfect in all kinds of perfections and to be actually present everywhere. However, it is evident that we do not see, feel, or perceive him anywhere and we even cannot see, feel, perceive, or find him anywhere. So, it is a great error and even a kind of madness in them to want to maintain as they do that there really is such a being everywhere. It is as if they wanted to maintain that a sun that was infinitely clear and bright was nevertheless visible

nowhere; or that there really was an infinitely clear and bright sun where we saw no clarity or brightness: it seems that there would be no one with any common sense who would be capable of wanting to maintain such things as these. However, this is what our god-cultists do every day when they maintain the actual existence of their infinitely perfect God who is present everywhere although we cannot see, perceive, feel, meet, or find him anywhere.

Our Christ-cultists, who are exceptionally good at putting the spiritual in their thoughts and arguments, will not fail to look at me here as a totally crude and carnal man who cannot judge things except by the senses. And they will no doubt apply the words of their Grand Pooh-Bah St. Augustine who said on a similar occasion that "in carnal men the whole standard of judging and thinking is his custom of seeing; carnal men easily believe everything they see but cannot believe what they do not see" (Sermon 242). And their great St. Paul said, "The animal man does not perceive what is spiritual" (1 Cor. 2:14).

But this hardly bothers me; it is easy for me to retort to such an argument by saying that in ignorant and stupid men the whole standard of judging and thinking is to believe blindly in everything they are told. They do not want to believe what they see, touch, and handle and they stupidly believe everything they are told, against their own sentiments, according to that other maxim of their Grand Pooh-Bah Angelical Doctor (Thomas Aquinas), who said, in speaking of his lovable and adorable God of flour and dough, that sight, touch, and taste are deceived and we surely have to believe and have faith in what we hear them say about it, i.e., in what their faith teaches them by hearsay: "Life, touch, taste here fall short, but by hearing alone is my faith reassured" (*Oro Te Devote*).

Would it be possible for a sovereignly and infinitely perfect being to have no visible perfection or perceptible quality in itself? If it were, though it is mentally inconceivable, we would have to say that all perceptible qualities and all visible perfections were incompatible with the nature or with the invisible perfections of this sovereignly perfect being, or at least that they were not appropriate for the supreme dignity of this infinite being. For, if they were not incompatible with its nature or invisible perfections or unsuitable to the dignity of its sovereignly perfect nature, why would it not have them? If it had them, why would they not

appear? If they appeared, why would we not see them? No doubt we would see them and we would see them so much more clearly since they would be in the highest degree of perfection. If our god-cultists say that these perceptible qualities and visible perfections are incompatible or unsuitable to it and, consequently, are not in it and cannot be in it because of the purity and simplicity of its nature—I will let it slide for the moment.

But despite this, how can they say that their God is an infinitely perfect being, seeing that he lacks such a great number of perfections? For, it is sure that a being that lacks an infinite number of perfections cannot be infinitely perfect. Now, their God, according to what they themselves say, lacks all visible perfections and all perceptible qualities, which are almost infinite in number. Therefore, he cannot be infinitely perfect.

Furthermore, if this God that they say is infinitely perfect has no perceptible quality or perfection, he must then have invisible and unperceptible qualities and perfections and these so-called perfections have to be infinite in him! But, I ask them: *how do they know?* And how can they know that he has these invisible perfections and that they are infinite in him? For, seeing that they are invisible and unperceivable in any way, they cannot see or feel them at all or, consequently, know them in any way. For, it is not by the senses that they know them since they are, as they say, totally invisible and unperceivable.

It is not through reason that they know them, because good judgment does not reveal that an infinitely perfect being does not and should not have any perceptible quality or perfection. Nor does it reveal that all perceptible qualities and perfections would be incompatible with the invisible perfections of a sovereignly perfect being. So, if reason and the senses cannot show or reveal to us what they say about the invisible perfections of their God or about the incompatibility of perceptible perfections with them, it is in vain and without basis that they say it. They talk without knowing what they are saying and consequently they do not deserve to be listened to, as I have already said. And if they do not deserve to be listened to, much less do they deserve to be believed. But, if they listened to their reason, it would show them clearly that a sovereignly perfect being would be sovereignly and perfectly lovable and, consequently, perfectly knowable. For, how could it be perfectly lovable if it were not perfectly knowable? A good is lovable only as far as it is

knowable and it would not be lovable at all if it were not knowable at all: "We do not desire what we do not know" (*Ovid, Art of Love*, 3.397). Now, in the opinion of our god-cultists, the sovereignly perfect being that had no perceivable quality or visible perfection in it would not at all be knowable; so, it would not at all be lovable. If they want it to be perfectly lovable, then they have to say that it is perfectly knowable; and if it is perfectly knowable in itself, then it has to have in itself perceivable qualities and visible perfections, since it is only by qualities and perfections of this kind that we could really know it and distinguish it from any other being that might be sovereignly perfect.

And so, far from reason revealing to our god-cultists that the visible and perceivable qualities and perfections are incompatible with the so-called invisible perfections of a sovereignly perfect being, it should rather reveal to them that such perfections are inseparable from its nature, if there really were any such sovereignly perfect being. That is why, since we do not see or notice any appearance of this being anywhere, there is no real reason or real basis for believing that it exists or ever could have.

Do not these so spiritual and subtle scholars see that in wanting to exalt the incomprehensible excellence of this so-called divine nature and spiritualize it, taking away all matter and all perceivable qualities, they destroy it; and in wanting to exaggerate all the so-called divine perfections, they annihilate them, like in proving too much, they prove nothing and in saying too much, they believe in nothing.

For, what else are they saying about an infinitely perfect being without any body, form, color, shape, with nothing at all imaginable, except that it is nothing at all?

What else are they saying about an infinitely perfect being without any color or shape or even any perceivable beauty or bounty or any visible perfection, except that it really has no perfection? Indeed, what idea can they have of a being that has no body or form?

What idea can they have of the beauty of a being without any color or shape? What idea can they have of the bounty of a being that is felt or perceived nowhere? What idea can they have of the wisdom of a being without a mouth to speak or a brain to think? What idea can they have of the force and power of a being without arms or hands or any movement to act and cannot even move itself? What idea can they have of the pleasure and contentment, the happiness and bliss of a being without

eyes to see, tongue to taste, ears to hear, nose to smell, hands to touch, or feet to walk? It is unquestionable that no one—not even our Christ-cultists, as spiritual as they are or think they are—can form any true idea of what they claim to mean by the terms *nature*, *bounty*, *beauty*, *wisdom*, *force* or *power*, *pleasure* or *contentment*, and *bliss* that they attribute to their God.

So, when they say that it has an infinitely perfect nature, that it is infinitely beautiful, infinitely good, infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, and infinitely happy, they do not really know what they are talking about because they do not really know what a nature is without any body, form, and extension; they do not know what a beauty is that does not have any color or shape or what a kindness is that cannot be felt or perceived in any way; they do not know what a wisdom is that has no brain or a force and a power that cannot move; they do not know any of this—their intelligence can only go so far. Likewise, they do not know what it is to see without eyes, to hear without ears, to taste without a tongue, and, finally, to be happy without pleasure or joy. And so, when our god-cultists strip their God of all corporeal form and all perceivable qualities or perfections, they destroy his nature and annihilate his so-called divine and infinite perfections.

That is how they go wrong and get lost in the vanity of their thoughts. Believing that they become wiser in spiritualizing their God so finely, they become more insane than they were. I say “more insane” because just as it was a great madness to attribute divinity to inanimate things, to irrational animals, or to weak and mortal men as the pagans once did, so it is also a great madness to want to attribute it, as our god-cultists do now, to an imaginary being that has no body or form and is left stripped of all real and perceivable qualities and perfections and that is, consequently, less than everything that is real and perceivable. They must certainly have very little reason or make very little use of their minds to believe things that are so far from good judgment and so ridiculous and absurd.

Our god-cultists have by now got over most of the errors of the Ancients; there is reason to hope that they will also someday get over the errors they are in at the moment. We already see in most of them a strong enough tendency to this, because they show by their speech and manners and by their whole conduct that they do not put much faith in

the mysteries of their religion or in the most important lessons that it gives them concerning the right conduct of their life, with respect to the grand and magnificent promises that it makes to them of the so-called eternal rewards of a paradise if they do good, or with respect to the so-called terrible punishments they threaten them with if they do evil. For, if they were persuaded of what their religion teaches and makes them believe, they would certainly live with more restraint and precaution than they do—or else they would be the most insane people on earth to risk losing an eternally blessed life, as they do every day for things of very little consequence, and to incur the cruelest and most dreadful eternal punishments imaginable. So, as we know that most of our god-cultists, and particularly those who are the leaders and chiefs among them, and even the leading ministers and the greatest preachers of religion, do not make a big deal about trying to earn such great rewards by their good life and their good works and barely even try to avoid such terrible punishments, this is a very sure sign that they themselves do not put much faith in everything they say and that they are hardly persuaded of these so-called great and important truths that they want to make others believe.

(Could we say that a simple modification of being would still really be something after it ceased to exist? Certainly not. Now, it is evident that each of us personally is only a simple little modification of being; consequently, we are no longer anything from the moment we cease to exist.)

Sincerely, how can we be persuaded that we can still be truly happy or unhappy when we no longer perceive good or evil? And even when we will no longer be anything at all, as I will talk about more fully later. For, to be persuaded that we will be happy or unhappy after death is to be persuaded that we will be happy or unhappy when we no longer exist: for, from the moment that we die, we no longer feel anything, as experience shows us every day. From the moment that we die, we start to decay and rot to ashes. This is, I say, what experience clearly shows us every day, and our god-cultists have never had or seen the experience that we can still perceive good or evil after death; they have never seen or perceived the great and magnificent rewards that they boast of enjoying in heaven after death. They have never seen either, never felt or perceived these dreadful torments with which they threaten the wicked

and with which they say that they will be eternally punished in hell after death. Everything they say of the good or evil of another so-called life is only based on illusions, hollow imagination, lies, and impostures.

But again, in what does this so-called sovereign and charming beatitude consist that they promise with so much assurance to good and just people? I have to say it again because they make it very peculiar and full of mysteries. They make it consist in the vision and perception of God himself whom they call their sovereign good, and this vision and perception of sovereign good renders perfectly happy all those who are fortunate enough to see and possess it. But let us look a little more closely at this so-called sweet and charming vision and perception of God.

Our god-cultists say that their God, as I mentioned, has a wholly spiritual nature, i.e., an incorporeal and immaterial nature and, consequently, an invisible nature, without body and form, color and shape, and even without extension. How, then, do they claim that their sovereign beatitude consists in seeing and possessing such a being? Can we see and possess an invisible being? A being without body, form, or extension? Can we see a being without any color, shape, or extension? Certainly this is inconceivable: it exceeds all imagination and all possibility because it is as if they were saying that their sovereign beatitude consisted in seeing what could not be seen and possessing what could not be held or touched, which is obviously absurd if we take these terms in their proper and natural meaning.

But as we know that our god-cultists, and especially our GodChrist-cultists who say they are the only true worshippers of God, diligently profess to attach themselves mainly to the spirituality of their cult and to interpret spiritually everything regarding the mysteries, maxims, and ceremonies of their religion in order to better cover up all the falsities and absurdities under this lovely and attractive pretext of spirituality, they are careful not to make their so-called sovereign beatitude consist in a vision or in a real and bodily possession of their God: this would be too crude for them; they would think it would belittle and demean the glory, excellence, and ineffable grandeur of this so-called sovereign beatitude if they made it consist in any pleasure of the senses! They are persuaded, or at least they want to persuade others, that it is for the crude and carnal to wait for a sensual and carnal beatitude in heaven, like the Jews and Muslims do, who know nothing else. But, for those who are much more

spiritual and have much more elevated and sublime knowledge, who aspire to infinitely greater and worthier goods than of the body and senses, they are careful, I say, not to play with such trifles and make their sovereign beatitude consist in any pleasure of the senses. This would be too low for them!

So, when they say that their sovereign beatitude consists in the vision and possession of their God, they do not mean a bodily vision like with eyes, but a purely spiritual vision that is made, according to what they say, with the eyes of the soul, i.e., with a very clear and perfect knowledge that the soul has of the infinite beauties and perfections of this sovereign being. For, they also claim that the soul has no other eyes than its own thoughts and knowledge. Likewise, as far as the possession of God, they do not mean a bodily possession, since their God possesses no body; this again would be too crude for them! But they mean a spiritual possession that is made, according to them, by a very perfect love of this so-called sovereign good. From this the souls that are lucky enough to possess him in this way end up with a joy and spiritual contentment that infinitely exceeds, they say, all the pleasures and contentment that we could ever have with our senses.

### 73. THE SOVEREIGN BEATITUDE OF OUR CHRIST-CULTISTS, ACCORDING TO WHAT THEY SAY, IS ONLY AN IMAGINARY BEATITUDE

**N**ow that seems all well and good to imagine; but, there is nothing more vain than all that. For, if it were so, it would clearly follow that their so-called sovereign beatitude consisted only in an imaginary happiness and bliss and not in a real and true happiness and beatitude. Proof of this is that, according to what they say, to see an object clearly and spiritually is nothing else but to have very perfect ideas, thoughts, and knowledge of this object. Likewise, to possess an object spiritually is nothing but to love it perfectly. From this it follows that the more perfect the ideas, thoughts, and knowledge that we form of an object are, the more perfectly we will see it; and the more we love an object, the more perfectly we will possess it spiritually. Now, to form ideas, thoughts, and knowledge more or less perfect of some object that we do not really or truly see is only an act of the imagination; and the love of such an object that we do not really and truly see and possess is formed only on the ideas, thoughts, and knowledge formed of such an object. Therefore, to see an object spiritually is only to see with the mind and imagination; for, I make no distinction here between mind, understanding, and imagination, or between ideas, thoughts, and imaginings because all these terms properly mean the same thing. For example, *mind*, *understanding*, and *imagination* only mean the power or faculty that men have to think, know, reason, and have true or false opinions about what they conceive. And *ideas*, *thoughts*, and *imaginings* properly mean nothing but the acts of thoughts and knowledge by which they perceive and know things and by which they reason or form true or false judgments about what they think.

Therefore, as our god-cultists recognize no other vision of their God except one made by thought and knowledge, which are acts of understanding, mind, or imagination, and they recognize no other possession

of God except one made by love (which is a natural result of thoughts and knowledge that the mind or imagination has of an object that seems good and lovable) and, moreover, they make all their sovereign beatitude consist in seeing and possessing their God spiritually, it obviously follows that their so-called beatitude is only an imaginary beatitude since it is only based on an imaginary vision and an imaginary possession of an imaginary good.

Confirmation of this is that our god-cultists expressly say that this beatitude does not consist in the pleasures of the senses, of drinking and eating, or likewise in the pleasures of the body, of seeing and touching and hearing, but that it consists only in the peace and joy of the spirit. *For the kingdom of God*, says their Grand Pooh-Bah St. Paul, *consists not in eating or drinking, but in the justice, peace, and joy that the Holy Spirit gives* (Rom. 14:17).

Where will this peace come from, please, if it does not come from anything that can affect the senses? It can only come from the imagination. Consequently, their so-called sovereign beatitude or happiness, as I just said, consists only in an imaginary beatitude. Would they not only have the vain pleasure of enjoying an imaginary beatitude after death? For, to enjoy an imaginary beatitude, you have to "imagine" enjoying some great good and "imagine" being really happy. Now, there is no longer imagination after death. How, then, might the dead enjoy an imaginary beatitude after death, seeing that they will not any longer even be able to form any thought or imagining and they will be as if they had never been? This is the state to which each of us will be reduced after death: we will all return to the state we were in before we were born or before we existed, and just as at that time we thought about nothing, imagined nothing, and were nothing, so also after death we will think about nothing, feel nothing, and imagine nothing any more. So, it is really in vain that our god-cultists and Christ-cultists boast of a great beatitude after their death, since they will not even have a mind to think about beatitude or anything else.

Our Christ-cultists cannot rant and rave too loudly against this sentiment because it is expressly stated by one of their sages whose words they revere as divine. Here is what he says about it:

*The living know at least that they will die, but the dead know nothing and they wait for no reward; no feelings of hatred or love or any desire at all affect them and they take part no longer in all that is done in the world. Go, then, in peace and joy to enjoy the goods that you have! Drink and eat the fruits of your labor in peace and rejoice with your friends and loved ones; for, that is all the good you can hope for in life.* (Eccl. 9:5-9)

These words clearly confirm what I just said.

So, it is really in vain that our god-cultists and Christ-cultists brag about enjoying such a great bliss after death since they will not even have minds to think about themselves. In fact, how could they think, seeing that they will no longer exist? We often enough see in life many kinds of sicknesses or disabilities in which people are entirely incapable of thinking anything. A simple heart attack, for example, or blackout, a coma, or some other sickness like that can put us in this state, although we are still alive and our bodies are still whole. So if a simple sickness, which only disturbs the regulation or just temperament of the humors and only impedes the function of the senses without destroying them, can remove all feelings and knowledge from us, even more so will death, which completely destroys us, deprives us of all feelings and knowledge.

But what? Do we not even see and experience every day that a sweet and profound sleep, which pulls us slowly, harmlessly down, takes us out of all thoughts, feelings, and knowledge? Even more so will death, which destroys everything in us, deprives us of all thoughts, feelings, and knowledge. Therefore, having such strong proofs of this truth and a daily, perceptible experience of what happens in us, it is a wonder that people who seem intelligent have the opposite opinion and can be persuaded that even after death they are full of life, feelings, and knowledge and more than ever in a state of happiness or unhappiness, the righteous enjoying a perfect beatitude in possessing God eternally in heaven and the wicked suffering eternal torments in hell.

It is a wonder that intelligent men can have these opinions, because it is a kind of madness to put such thoughts in your mind and it is a kind of madness that often enough approaches fanaticism, as it seems, in those who get these kinds of thoughts in their heads a little more strongly: religion is a real nursery of fanatics, it is truly the theater where they play their parts best.

That is also why I said that most of those who maintain them by their authority or who teach them to others by the false duty of their profession barely put any faith in what they say to others and barely try to do what they so carefully advise others to do to get this so-called incomparable happiness of enjoying the eternal bliss of heaven or to avoid the so-called terrible unhappiness of eternally suffering the dreadful punishments of hell.

You would think that these kinds of opinions would have been completely abolished a long time ago if those who maintained them by their authority or who taught them by the obligation of their profession did not get something so fat and hearty out of it and benefit from the support and public preservation of these errors, thus keeping the poor people miserably captive under their tyrannical rule, holding for a maxim of their politics that it is necessary that the people not know many true things and that they believe in many false things.

## 74. THE EVILS, MISERIES, VICES, AND VICIOUSNESS OF MEN CLEARLY SHOW THAT THERE IS NO ALL-POWERFUL, INFINITELY GOOD AND WISE BEING WHO COULD PREVENT OR RELIEVE THEM

**B**ut let us return to our so-called sovereignly perfect being. If it really were such as our god-cultists say, it would undoubtedly be infinitely good and wise; we cannot deny this consequence. Now, it is evident that there is no being that is infinitely good and wise. Therefore, there is no being that is sovereignly and infinitely perfect and, consequently, there is no being that they call God.

Here is clear proof of this. If there were such a being, it would perfectly love good, peace, justice, virtue, and good order everywhere, and it would protect the good, just, and innocent everywhere; and on the contrary, it would infinitely hate evil, all vices, injustices, and viciousness, and would punish the wicked everywhere because, being all-powerful, as also supposed, it would not fail to obtain the true good everywhere and to establish and maintain good order and justice everywhere. In the same way if it really hated all evil, vices, injustices, and viciousness, being all-powerful, it would not fail to prevent evil, vice, injustice, and disorder everywhere or, at least, it would not fail to severely punish all those who did evil or who were maliciously the cause of some evil, because it is the nature of kindness and wisdom to make everything the best it can be and to prevent all evil that could be done just as it would be the nature of an infinite light to spread its brightness everywhere and dissipate darkness everywhere and as it would be the nature of an infinite heat to spread out everywhere and chase away the cold. For, just as light is incompatible with darkness and heat is incompatible with cold, even more so is an infinite kindness and wisdom incompatible with all kinds of evils, vices, viciousness, and disorders. Therefore, there could not be any evil, vices, viciousness, or disorder in a world under the direction, power, and gov-

ernment or an all-powerful being, if it were, as they say, infinitely good and wise, because by its all-powerful kindness and wisdom it would prevent any evil from happening and any injustice, viciousness, or disorder from being done.

Now, it is evident that the world is almost completely filled up with evils and miseries. The men here are all full of vices, errors, and viciousness; their governments are full of injustices and tyrannies. We see a torrent of vices and viciousness; discord and division reign almost everywhere. The just and innocent are oppressed and groan almost everywhere; the poor are almost everywhere in dearth and suffering, without support and consolation.

On the other hand, we often see the vicious, impious, and those most unworthy of living, nevertheless enjoy prosperity, delight, honors, and an abundance of all kinds of goods; you cannot deny anything I say about this—it would take too long for me to say everything. Whoever would want to detail all the evils and pitiful miseries that are in the world, as well as all the vices and detestable viciousness of men, would need multiple volumes. So, as it is evident that the world is almost everywhere filled up with nothing but evils, miseries, vices, viciousness, cheating, injustice, robbery, larceny, cruelty, tyranny, imposture, lies, discord, and confusion, etc., it is a certain and evident proof that there is no infinitely good and wise being who is capable of bringing suitable relief and, consequently, there is no all-powerful being who is infinitely good and wise, as our Christ-cultists claim.

How could an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise being allow such a great and unjust disproportion among men? How could it allow the law of the strongest to be established against all reason and justice? And even against all good intentions and good will? Could the work of men, who are weak and mortal and can do nothing by themselves, as our Christ-cultists say, be stronger than the work of an all-powerful God? This is totally unbelievable, it is entirely contradictory to the bounty and wisdom of an all-powerful and infinitely perfect being.

So, since we clearly see and have always seen everywhere a reversal of good order, justice and equality, a general torrent of vices, evils, and misery, which miserably devastate most men and often the just and innocent rather than the guilty, vicious, and impious, this is a certain and decisive proof that there is no all-powerful being and no infinite kindness

and wisdom that could prevent all these evils and inviolably establish everywhere justice and good order, as would be fitting for an infinite bounty and wisdom to do.

So, seeing so many evils and vices, so much misery and viciousness reign everywhere clearly shows us that there is no God. This is what de la Bruyère very clearly meant when he said, “Put authority, pleasures, and idleness on one side and dependence, worries, and misery on the other; either these things are out of place because of the malice of men, or God is not God” (*Characters*, “On Great Minds”). According to the thought and sentiment of this writer (who is surely the most sensible among the god-cultists), we have to acknowledge that either the things of the world, such as they are right now, are out of place because of the malice of men, or God is not God.

To say that things are out of place because of the malice of men, we have to suppose that they really were placed in a better order and in a more perfect state in the past, which would, perhaps, be difficult to prove given the fact that we see no sign of it. Nevertheless, I do not want to absolutely deny that things were ever in better order, at least with respect to the customs and government of men, who could have been better in past centuries; and we cannot doubt that they could even now be in a better state and order if men were really wise, i.e., if they conducted themselves in all things following the true lights of reason and according to the rules of justice and natural equality. But, with respect to the weaknesses and infirmities of Nature, the sicknesses and suffering, the distressing accidents, and especially death, which is inevitable and puts an end to every living thing and ends all suffering as well as all pleasures, we cannot believe that things were ever in a much more perfect state or order than we see them now. Men have always been inclined to evil; they have always been subject to sicknesses and disabilities of the body as much as the mind; and they have always been subject to death just like today. And though you might say that once upon a time men lived for hundreds of years, nevertheless none of them have survived until now; they all ended up dead, as all men do today.

So, whether things were once better or not, my plan is not to deny that they could in fact be better, but I only claim to say that if ever human matters were established in a better order or placed in a state of perfection by the kindness, wisdom, and omnipotence of an infinitely

perfect being, they would have persisted and stayed firm in this order and state of perfection where they were first placed and never would have been out of place by the malice of men; and not only because nothing could have ever prevailed against the designs and will of an all-powerful God, but also because there never would have been any malice among men. For, how could it have been introduced and slipped into men contrary to the designs and will of an all-powerful God? It could not have happened, unless you want to say that the malice of men prevailed over and was more powerful than the all-powerful will of an all-powerful God, which would be absurd to say.

As a result, we would certainly have much more reason to say that "if God were God, things would never have been out of place because of the malice of men" because the same power, kindness, and wisdom of God that first put them in such good order and in such a perfect state would have seen to it that they would never have been out of order because of the malice of men and that there would never have been malice among men. So, whether things are out of order or they have never been in a better state than they are does not much matter now, because it is enough to see the sad and pitiful, unjust, wicked, detestable, and vicious state where they are to conclude that they were never made, governed, or conducted by an infinitely perfect being, because it is not at all believable or even possible that an infinitely perfect being would have wanted to do anything so badly or in any way to let any evil, malice, viciousness, or disorder slip in among its creatures.

Gentlemen god-cultists and Christ-cultists, you say that your God is the sovereign father of all men and living creatures. You say that he is the sovereign shepherd and pastor of men and especially of your souls. You say that he is the sovereign judge of all men and, finally, the sovereign master and lord of the whole universe; or rather it is he himself who gave himself all these lovely and honorable qualities.

How, then, can you say he is an infinitely good and wise father, seeing that he has abandoned his whole family, i.e., the entire world, to the hazards of chance and let so many of his children, i.e., human beings, become so ugly, deformed, vicious, mean, and subject to so many sicknesses and disabilities, and let them commit all kinds of crimes and viciousness with impunity and insolence? In your view does this correspond to a perfectly good and wise father of a family?

How can you say he is an infinitely good shepherd, seeing that he so negligently lets his flock be infected by all kinds of errors and vices and so universally abandons the good to the malice, cruelty, and treachery of vicious men? Does this correspond to a perfectly good shepherd?

How can you say he is a perfectly just judge, seeing that he makes no discrimination between the innocent and the guilty and he punishes both equally? Does this correspond to a perfectly just judge?

Finally, how can you say that he is a perfectly good prince and sovereign lord of the world, seeing that he does not clearly reveal his intentions and will to men and he lets them be robbed, persecuted, ruined, desolated, and cruelly massacred by constant divisions and wars? Does this correspond to a perfectly good and wise prince and sovereign lord of the world? You will reproach and condemn every day such conduct in men who were established to conduct and govern others! By what principle of reason can you, then, gentlemen god-cultists and Christ-cultists, approve of it in a being that you say is sovereignly and infinitely perfect? Will you make them seem lovable and infinitely perfect virtues in your God what are very blameworthy and punishable vices in men?

You say, gentlemen god-cultists and Christ-cultists, and you want us to believe that your God can do all kinds of good for man, that he can protect them and save them from dangers and evils, that he can make them perfectly happy and content, and that he can also make them perfectly good, wise, and virtuous. However, you and everyone with you see very clearly that it would not take much for him to do all these good things and safeguard against all kinds of evils. How, then, can you say and how will you make us believe that he is all-powerful and infinitely good and wise, seeing that the effects clearly show us the complete opposite?

Do you not know that the better and more perfect a being is, the more perfectly and wisely it should act? As a result, if God were all-powerful, infinitely good and wise, he would certainly have made and ordered all things very wisely and perfectly.

There is an axiom in philosophy that “everything given is in accordance with the giver.” If this is true, then it is no less true that “everything produced is in accordance with the producer” so that if it were an all-powerful and infinitely perfect being and worker that made all things, it would have infallibly made them all perfect and, consequently, without

any vice or flaw. But far from seeing all things in this noble, happy, and desirable state of perfection, we see, on the contrary, that they are all in a mess, in disorder and confusion, in a sad and distressing state of misery and infirmity. What appearance is there, then, that they were made and governed by an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise being? There is certainly no appearance at all.

It is sure that the bounty and wisdom and even the glory of an infinitely perfect being would want to make itself perfectly known and loved by everyone because, according to the maxim, "the nature of the good is to communicate itself; the good tends to spread itself about" (Thomas Aquinas). The greater the bounty, the more it should communicate itself and spread out, the more it should make itself felt and loved. Consequently, an infinitely perfect bounty and wisdom would not fail to communicate itself perfectly by making itself perfectly known and loved. Indeed, what is this good that does not communicate itself in any way, i.e., that does not make itself felt or known in any way? It is a good that remains completely useless, which is even mentioned in their so-called sacred books: *What is the use of a wisdom or treasure that is hidden; there is no use of either. He who hides his flaws and imperfections does better than he who hides his wisdom and virtue* (Ecclesiasticus 20:32–33). That is also why it is said in one of their so-called holy prophets that *the glory of the Lord God appears everywhere and all men will hear the word of the Lord* (Is. 40:5). In another prophet it is said that *the glory of the Lord will be so visible and manifest everywhere that no one will need to learn how to know it. I will put my law in their bowels, I will write it in their hearts. No one will need to teach his brother or neighbor how to know me because all will know me from the least of them to the greatest* (Jer. 31:33–34). And not only did he say that he would make himself known, but he even said that he would make himself praised and glorified by wild beasts: *The beasts of the fields, the dragons and snakes and ostriches will glorify me* (Is. 43:20). *For, I will make all things new* (Rev. 21:5).

According to these prophets, then, God attributes to himself this glory of making himself known and glorified, in preference to another, and he says that he is jealous of his glory and will communicate it to no one (cf. Ex. 20:5; Is. 45:23).

So, it is clear and evident by the reasons and evidence I just cited that the bounty, wisdom, and even glory of a God, i.e., an infinitely perfect

being, should make itself perfectly known and loved by everyone. Now, it is evident that there is no infinitely perfect being that does this, because if it did, no one would or could deny or even doubt its existence, as so many do. And our god-cultists themselves would not need, as they do, to make such an effort to prove his existence; they would not have to preach so much to try to make people know him. Therefore, seeing that there are countless people who do not know him, who deny his existence or doubt it and that our god-cultists cannot prove it with reason or opinion, it is an evident proof that there is no such being and, consequently, there is no God.

Likewise, it is clear and unquestionable that an all-powerful and infinitely good and wise being would have the kindness and wisdom (and it would be for its glory) to make everything perfectly well and, consequently, to never allow any vice, flaw, or imperfection and for the same reason to always maintain and preserve its works in a whole and perfect state. If it does not do this, it is no doubt because it cannot or does not want to. If it is because it does not want to, then it is assuredly not perfectly good, since it would not want to do the good that would be appropriate to do and that it could do. And if it is because it cannot, then it is certainly not all-powerful, since it could not do everything well that was appropriate to do.

And so, whether he lacks the power or kindness, it obviously follows that it is not infinitely perfect and, consequently, there is no God, as our Christ-cultists understand it.

Is it possible that an infinitely good and wise being would not want to do all the good things that it possibly could and that would be appropriate for its glory? Is it possible that it would not want to prevent all the evils it possibly could and that would even be for its own glory? Is it possible that an infinitely good and wise God who could painlessly and without difficulty make all his creatures perfect and happy forever would nevertheless want to make them and leave them always vicious and flawed, weak and imperfect, to see them and then leave them always to haplessly suffer all kinds of evils and miseries in life? Is it possible that an infinitely good and wise God would take pleasure in seeing evil, disorder, vice, and confusion among his creatures? Would he take pleasure, for example, in seeing them ugly, deformed, crippled, and poorly made in body and mind? Would he take pleasure in seeing them languish and

die of hunger and misery? Would he take pleasure in seeing them hate each other, persecute each other; tear apart, destroy, and consume each other cruelly, as they do? This is certainly not believable.

How can we be persuaded that a perfect, infinitely good and wise being would be capable of wanting such things? It cannot be, because it would be completely opposed to the nature of an infinitely good and wise being. It is destroying an infinite bounty and wisdom only to think that it was capable of wanting to make or allow so much evil and viciousness in his creatures. It is such a wonderful, praiseworthy, and honorable thing to do everything well; it is so sweet and lovable and worthy of the perfection and grandeur of a noble and generous heart to be beneficent everywhere that it is unimaginable that an infinitely perfect being would want to avoid or neglect any opportunity to do good.

Just as men who do not have the benevolent soul or heart and in urgent matters do not want to do good to their fellow men do not deserve to be rewarded but rather to be miserable and unhappy, so too I dare say if gods were capable of doing all kinds of good and preventing all kinds of evil and did not want to or could not, they certainly do not deserve to be gods or to receive any divine honor. I dare say that they deserve to be whipped instead of worshipped.

*Do not fear, said God to Abraham, because I am your protector, I myself will be your reward and a very great reward* (Gen. 15:1). *If you hear my word, said the same God speaking to the people of Israel through the mouth of Moses (FOR GODS NEVER SPEAK EXCEPT THROUGH THE MOUTHS OF MEN), and if you faithfully obey what I command you today, all these blessings will come to you, you will be blessed in the cities and fields, the Lord will pour out upon you the treasure of his blessings and lavish upon you all kinds of goods* (Deut. 28). And on the other hand, he threatens sinners with all kinds of punishments and torments. He says he will pour out his anger and fury upon them: *If you do not hear my voice and do what I command, you will be cursed in the cities and fields. You will be stricken with famine, plague, and wars; you will be heaped with all kinds of evils, etc.* And there is a lot of other similar evidence we see in the so-called holy and divine Scriptures concerning the rewards of the just and the punishment of the wicked. So, it is unquestionable that it would be just for an all-powerful and infinitely perfect being to punish all the guilty and vicious men and to prevent the fulfillment of their evil designs.

Now, it is evident that the beautiful promises of protection made to the just and the terrible threats of punishment made to the wicked are not accomplished. It would not take much for the just to be always protected and their virtue to be always rewarded. And it would not take much for the wicked to be always punished as they deserve. Very far from this, however, we see every day countless just and innocent people miserably oppressed, who perish in their innocence without having received any reward for their virtues; and on the other hand, we see every day countless impious, vicious men who triumph in their malice and die peacefully without having received any punishment for their crimes and their viciousness. Consequently, there is not any infinitely perfect being who can reward the just and punish the wicked as they deserve to be. For, if there were such a being, it would not fail to fulfill its so-called promises with respect to both. Could an all-powerful and sovereignly good being want to remain insensitive to the complaints, tears, and groans of so many just, poor, unhappy, innocent people who appeal and cry out to him every day so devotedly, affectionately, and insistently in their prayers and every day call upon him so piteously for help? Could it want to show favor to none of them, to abandon them and let them perish without giving any help? Could it not want to be feared by the wicked and always want to suffer their pride, blasphemies, impieties, and all their viciousness without punishing them? It is unbelievable! It is unimaginable! If God really is such as our god-cultists say, let him show himself! Let him defend his own cause! Let him take vengeance on his enemies and on those who scorn his laws and commandments! *May the Lord rise up and his enemies be scattered* (Ps. 68:1). *If Baal is God, said the father of Gideon, let him take vengeance on those who overthrew his altars* (Judges 6:31).

If this supposed infinitely perfect being showed itself to men in all its beauty, no one would not love it perfectly because the will is naturally bound to love the good. Also if it severely punished all the wicked and guilty, no one would not fear and dread to do evil; and maybe even no one would be bold enough to be vicious. What am I saying? If it punished all the wicked and guilty, it would not be necessary to punish so many to make all men wiser and better than they are! If only the thunder, for example, fell only on the heads of the wicked and guilty, it would make all sinners tremble and no one would be bold enough to be

vicious because we naturally fear death and punishment too much to want to expose ourselves so easily to it. And it is sure that it is the impunity of vices and crimes that make men as bold and stubborn as they are in their malice and viciousness. Our god-cultists cannot deny this because their so-called Holy Scriptures say the same thing (cf. Eccl. 8:11-14, 9:1-3).

The god-cultists cannot resist the force and proof of this argument, so they subtly thought of saying that if their God does not always reward the virtues and good deeds of the just on earth or always punish the vices and crimes of the vicious in this world, he will not fail to do it in another life. But besides the fact that this so-called other life is an illusion and pure fiction of the human mind, which is pleased to fool itself and others, I say that this interpretation and response is clearly opposed to the evidence of their own "Holy Scriptures," which only talk about a visible protection of the just by the bounty of God and visible punishments of the wicked by his justice. It is not believable that the said "Scriptures" would only talk about the rewards and punishments of another life because it would make completely vain and frivolous all the promises and threats that were made concerning the rewards of the just and the punishments of the wicked, seeing that the so-called rewards and punishments in another life are only imaginary just like this so-called other life that our god-cultists make such a big deal about. The vanity of these lovely so-called promises is clearly shown to us in their own "Holy Scriptures" so that we should be astonished that they can consider them divine books and still, after what they say, flatter themselves with such an empty hope as living after they will no longer exist.

Here is what one of their so-called holy and divine books says:

*What advantage can a wise man hope for more than a fool, that is to say, what advantage can a good man have more than an bad man? Will he go onto a better life after this one? It is better to see what you love and to hold what you have than to desire what you do not know because it is vanity and presumption of the mind to want to cling to what you do not know. (Eccl. 6:8-9)*

So, according to the doctrine of these so-called Holy Books, it is vanity and a deceitful presumption to wait for another life; consequently, no

reward if it is not in the present life (cf. Eccl. 9:1–10). *There are no accusations to make or accounts to render after death* (Ecclesiasticus 41:5, 7).

Therefore, since it very often happens that the just die without receiving any reward for their virtues and good deeds and the wicked also die without receiving the punishments they deserve for their crimes and viciousness, it follows that there is no sovereign justice for either and, consequently, there is no infinitely perfect being. For, if there really were such an infinitely perfect being, it would be perfectly just; and being perfectly just it would reward the good and punish the vicious. And as we clearly see that this is not done, it is a clear proof that there is no God or infinitely perfect being.

## 75. IF THERE WERE SOME DIVINITY WORSHIPPED, AND SERVED BY MEN, WOULD IT FAIL TO MAKE ITSELF SUFFICIENTLY KNOWN TO THEM AND TO MAKE ITS WILL SUFFICIENTLY KNOWN TO THEM?

**H**ere is another argument that leads to the same conclusion. If there really were some divinity or some infinitely perfect being that wanted to make itself loved and worshipped by men, it would be reasonable and just, and it would even be the duty of this so-called infinitely perfect being to make itself clearly or at least sufficiently known to all men and women by whom it wanted to be loved, worshipped, and served.

Likewise, it would be reasonable and just and its duty to make its intentions and will clearly or at least sufficiently known to them. For, it would be ridiculous for any being endowed with reason and understanding to want to be loved without wanting at least to make itself sufficiently known. Likewise, it would be ridiculous and totally unjust for a master or lord to want to be served and obeyed without at least making his intentions and will sufficiently known, because there could be no master or lord capable of demanding such a thing from his servants or subjects without making known what he wanted. It is sure that he would be taken as a fool and a madman. And if this master or lord came to such an excess of madness and injustice as to want to severely punish his servants or subjects who did not do what he had not made sufficiently known to them to do, he would again be taken as the most unjust, brutal, and cruelest of the world. It would be difficult enough for a man to ever come to such an excess of madness and injustice, how much more so would it be unworthy to think that an infinitely perfect God could be capable of wanting to do this. Being so, it obviously follows that if there really were some divinity or some infinitely perfect being

who wanted to be loved and worshipped by men, it would be reasonable, just, and even its duty to at least make itself and its intentions and will sufficiently known to men.

All these propositions are as clear and evident as the light of the noonday sun.

Now, it is evident that this so-called divinity does not make itself sufficiently known to men and also does not make its intention and will sufficiently known to men. For, if it made itself sufficiently known, it is sure that no one would be ignorant of, deny, and doubt its existence; and so, there would not be as many disputes as there are among men about its so-called existence. Therefore, since there are so many people who are ignorant of, deny, and doubt its existence, so many who would like to know it and cannot, and so many, finally, who attribute it either to mortal men, to dirty and nasty animals, to inanimate beings, or to mute idols that have no movement or feelings, and they believe in these very things without seeing or knowing it—it is a clear proof that it does not at all make itself known to men.

Likewise, this so-called divinity does not make itself sufficiently known to men because if it did, they would all be sure and certain about what they should believe about it and how to please it; they would all agree on the same belief, the same truths, and the same worship. And then they would not have as many disputes and different opinions about the precepts, mysteries, and ceremonies of their so-called holy and divine laws and they would not have to hate and persecute each other in fire and blood as they do every day to maintain and defend so many false opinions that are opposed to each other.

So, as we clearly see (and have seen for many thousands of years) that men cannot agree on the same belief of the principal points of their religions or on the same worship, and that they do not stop hating, persecuting, and cruelly destroying each other to maintain the separate mysteries, precepts, and ceremonies of their so-called divine laws, and that each of them even believe that in doing this they are doing the greatest service they can to God—this is a clear proof that there is not any divinity that makes itself or its intentions and will sufficiently known to men. For, if there were one that was capable of making itself sufficiently known to men, it is not believable that it would want to leave them always in such a miserable and unhappy state of ignorance and

error concerning its will, seeing that they all claim to be fighting for its honor and glory and they all believe that they are doing right in following and maintaining the separate commands and ceremonies of their religion at the expense of their goods and at the peril of their lives.

If, for example, people who were fond of the glory and service of their prince differed and disagreed among themselves about the interpretation of the laws and will of their prince and about the execution of his commands, some saying, "It is like this that the king commands and intends," and others saying, "It is not like that, but in this way that he wants it," and because of this difference the people began to take up arms against each other, to fight, kill, cut each other's throats, destroy, and burn each other alive on the pretext that it was in the interest of the prince and that they wanted to make his orders carried out as they believed they should be, what would the king or prince do in such a situation? If he were a good and wise prince, at the moment he was advised about what sparked such a division among his people, he certainly would not fail to clearly interpret his orders and make his intentions and will clearly known. In this way, he would right away stop all the troubles and divisions and immediately reestablish the peace and good union among his subjects. But if this prince were a madman, a mean and mocking prince who wanted to take pleasure in seeing troubles and war among his subjects and seeing them fight, pillage, tear apart, and destroy each other for love of him, he would let them go, he would not say a word, he would not take the trouble to announce his will or have it explicitly announced.

There you go, all men are unfortunately in a similar situation as these people: they differ and dissent among themselves concerning the laws and commandments of their God; they all claim to worship and serve the true God, even according to his true intentions and will. Some say he wants to be worshipped and served in such a way and others maintain that they are all deceived and it is in another way that he wants to be worshipped and served; others again are of different opinions. In the end, all men are divided into thousands of different opinions concerning the laws and ceremonies of their God and their religion. Those who even profess the same religion cannot always agree among themselves on the principal points of their doctrine, which breeds a multitude of different kinds of ridiculous opinions with which they reproach and

condemn one another. For a long time men have disputed and contested these kinds of subjects; for several thousands of years they have waged war and persecuted one another in fire and blood for the love and glory of their God, on the pretext of religiously defending and maintaining his laws and commands. However, we see no God bringing an end to these deadly divisions and horrible troubles or trying to bring peace among men by making them clearly know and by clearly declaring to them his intentions and will, as he could very easily do if it were true, as our god-cultists say, that there is a divinity who wants to be religiously served and worshipped by men.

What can we judge and conclude about the silence on the part of this so-called divinity in such a critical situation as this? Except to say that there really is no divinity or if there were one, he must scorn and mock the worship of men and be more pleased to keep them in division and trouble than to obtain peace and do them any good. I see no semblance of truth to say there really is such a divinity. Therefore, it remains to conclude that there really is not any. It is a conclusion that is clearly drawn for all the reasons I just said and will say afterward.

And as to the so-called knowledge of the will of God that our superstitious god-cultists claim was sufficiently made known to them in the laws and orders that he established and commanded men to observe, it is a pure illusion. For, in all sincerity, what are these laws and orders that we can clearly and sufficiently really know came from God? Are they the pagans', who recognized and worshipped many kinds of divinities and were rejected by everyone who worshipped only one God? Are they the Jews', who worshipped only one God whose laws and orders they claim were only ever observed in a little corner of the world, and only by a people who were considered the vilest, most despicable, and most wretched of the whole earth? Are they the Christians', who take their source and origin from these vile and wretched people and who now condemn these Jews and pagans, although the Christian religion is itself only a ridiculous mixture of Judaism and paganism? Are they the Muslims' that the Christians consider as having been made by an impostor and false prophet? Are they of the Indians and Chinese? The Iroquois and Japanese that are not at all known to us? Or, finally, some other similar so-called divine laws and orders that we have not heard of yet? Certainly not.

For, if men clearly and sufficiently recognized that one of all these different kinds of laws and orders really came from God, then they would all agree on it in peace! They would all willingly embrace this so-called divine law that would be sufficiently known to them! They would all follow it and observe it in common consent without wanting to wrongly persevere in error or fight so much against one another! And without wanting to persecute one another so cruelly as they do! It is certain that the prudence and love of truth would oblige them to do this if one or another religion were clearly and sufficiently recognized as truly coming from God.

But, as we clearly see that men have never been able to agree altogether on one and the same religion and that even in each religion there are many different sects that reproach and condemn one another and persecute one another in fire and blood for the diversity and opposition of the opinions and sentiments that they have about their different laws and the explanations of these so-called divine laws—it is obvious proof that the will and intentions of their God are not clearly and sufficiently made known.

## 76. THERE ARE MANY FALSE PROPHETS AND MANY FALSE MIRACLES

**S**ince there is not one of our god-cultists, whatsoever their law or religion, who does not imagine and claim that theirs is the only true law of God that all men should follow, so there is not one of them who does not claim that their religion comes from God himself, who made his intentions and will sufficiently known to them either through the ministry of his angels or his prophets and thereafter all men were obliged to hold fast to the testimony of these angels or prophets, firmly believing everything they said and religiously observing everything they ordered them to do for God, who inspired them and sent them explicitly to declare his will to men.

But it is entirely in vain that they claim that God sufficiently made known his will to men because:

1—That they all believe that their law is divine and that they follow the right law and religion, although they are all opposed to one another in their dogmas and worship, is an obvious proof that they all (or at least most of them) are in error and that God does not make his law and will sufficiently known to them, since they think they do well in doing what they do and in believing what they believe.

2—What sufficient knowledge and certainty can they have that these so-called angels or prophets were really sent and inspired by God? None at all. For, even supposing there were angels (which I do not want to get into here), they will say that there are good angels, which they call “angels of light,” and bad angels, which they call “angels of darkness”; and they say that the angels of darkness often transform themselves into angels of light to deceive and seduce men. That is why their Grand Pooh-Bah St. Paul explicitly forbade his followers to believe anything but what he taught them (Gal. 1:8–12).

If it is true that there are bad angels, it is no less true that there are bad prophets. I will go further: it is not certain that there was any true prophet as they understand it. I guarantee there is not any. But it is certain that there are many false prophets, who nevertheless masquerade as

true prophets and, on this lovely and specious pretext, spout their lies and impostures with as much boldness and self-confidence as if they really were specially and expressly sent by God to make his will known to men. But really more than just swindlers they are mockers; as one of their group said, *illusive swindlers who follow their passions and seek only to fulfill the wild desires of their heart* (Jude 1:18).

Our god-cultists cannot deny this since we see that of all the religions in the world, there is not one that does not claim to be based on the authority and testimony of some so-called prophet specially sent and inspired by God. Our Christ-cultists especially cannot deny this since they have seen in their religion, all holy and divine as they believe it to be, a great many of these false prophets, even at the beginning of their institution.

This is what their great St. Paul complained about in his time when speaking of these false prophets he called *false apostles, deceitful workers who turn themselves into apostles of Jesus Christ. And do not be surprised because Satan transfigures himself into an angel of light* (2 Cor. 11:13–14). In another place they are called *false scholars* (2 Pet. 2:1), *seducers* (2 John 1:7), *swindlers and scoffers* (2 Pet. 3:3), and finally *Antichrists and impious men*, who were already quite numerous at the beginning of Christianity (1 John 2:18). And our Jesus Christ himself suspected that many like him would come and seduce many people. That is also why he carefully warned his disciples to be on guard and not put faith in what they might say (Matt. 24:23–24).

Being so, what confidence can we wisely put in what we are told by liars, swindlers, mockers, and impostors or lunatics and fanatics who contradict and condemn one another? For, it is clearly visible that those who get mixed up in that lovely occupation of prophesizing and imitating the confidants and messengers of God and who start speaking for them are only impudent liars, madmen, lunatics, fanatics, vicious impostors, and mockers, or shrewd and crafty politicians who only use the name and authority of God to play their parts better in deceiving men: *impostors who follow their wild passions and are full of impiety* or according to another, *you who mock him* (Is. 28:14), *fellow thieves* (Is. 1:23).

And though we would like to suppose that there had been some true prophets, it would be morally impossible, in such a great confusion of

errors and impostures, to distinguish the so-called true prophets from the false, given the fact that the external appearances are no better for the one than the other. As a result, not only is there no guarantee but there is no discretion in putting any faith in what all these mockers and insolent swindlers say. So, we cannot say (and I guess it would be crazy to say) that God clearly or sufficiently makes his will known to men by such vain, suspicious, and deceiving witnesses as these. There is not even any semblance of truth that an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God would ever want to use such witnesses or such channels to make his will known to men.

What? You will believe that he would only want to reveal his holiest mysteries in secret and in hiding to crazy men! To lunatics and fanatics! And that he would not want to unveil them clearly to countless wise and learned men who desire to be truly instructed? You will believe that he would only want to unveil his will in secret and in hiding to a few individuals and not declare them openly to all peoples and all nations of the earth who would love, worship, and serve him, who would praise and glorify him every day and forever with all their heart, if he made himself clearly or sufficiently known to them? You will believe that there could be a God who revealed to insane fanatics the ridiculous and absurd mysteries they want to make you believe and worship? You will believe that there could be a God who gave them these lovely laws and commands they want to make you obey on their word alone? And you will believe that after he had spoken in secret and in hiding or during the night and in dreams to such and such a so-called prophet, he would have clearly and sufficiently made his intentions and will known to men and would want to make all the people in the world, in all places and in all times, believe this so-called prophet on his word? And that he would want to make them do everything he commanded on his behalf? And this under pain of incurring his indignation and eternal damnation if they happen to fail in anything?

This is certainly too far beyond reason and truth; it is too unworthy of the sovereign bounty and wisdom of an all-powerful and infinitely perfect God. And so, this cannot be.

Our pious and devoted Christ-cultists do not fail to say here quite simply that their God is principally known, loved, worshipped, and served by the dark lights of faith and by a pure motive of love and charity

conceived by faith and not by the clear lights of human reason, in order to humiliate man's mind and confound his pride and in this way allow all men to practice virtue so much the more and have so much more merit by holding their minds captive under the obedience of faith. But:

1—Who would not laugh at such a response and who would be so little enlightened so as to not see the vanity and inanity here, just paying a little attention? For, it is visible that it would be just as easy to allege such a reason to support lies as to support truth, because there is no impostor who could not use this as a pretext to cover up his errors, illusions, and impostures. This alone is enough to show the vanity and inanity of such a response.

2—Furthermore, we do not see that men become more humble for this or that their God is better served and worshipped by this blind belief men have by their faith in the divine will than by a clear and total knowledge that he could give them of his divine mysteries and commandments; we do not see this, I say. On the contrary, it is certain that if an all-powerful and infinitely perfect God gave men a clear and total or perfect knowledge of his divine perfections and commandments, they would love and serve him much more perfectly than they do and they would delight in his beauty and lovable perfections; and they would become much wiser and more virtuous than they are. Therefore, it is an illusion for our god-cultists, on the pretext of devotion, to want to interpret so vainly the plans and intentions of their God and it is even stupidity for them to want to cover up his weakness and impotence on such a vain pretext as what they allege here.

3—Here is another reason that shows no less the weakness and vanity of their response: It is not at all believable that an infinitely good and wise God would ever want to use a way so full of errors, illusions, and impostures to be served and worshipped by men. It is not believable that he would want to establish and give a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures for a basis of his divine truths and for a rule of his divine commandments or orders. Now, since faith is a blind belief, it is, as I showed above, a principle of errors, illusions, and impostures because on the pretext of making people believe or follow blindly everything revealed in sanctity by some so-called divinity, it would be as easy to make people believe and follow everything invented by impostors, scoffers, lunatics, and fanatics who ridiculously imagine that all their

imaginings and dreams are divine revelations and who want to make others believe them. We cannot say that it is by these kinds of secret revelations and this blind faith that God would want to make his will known to men, seeing that these ways are so full of errors, illusions, and impostures; for, this would not be appropriate for a God to do.

Perhaps our god-cultists will say that the revelations alone made secretly to some individuals could not really be enough and that is why the prophets or angels who only had revelations do not deserve to be believed on their word; but if they showed by some other more clear and decisive proof that they were really sent and inspired by God, like if they performed miracles and prodigies that surpassed all the forces of Nature and could not be done except by a wholly divine power, then this would be sufficient proof that they were speaking the truth because it would not be believable that an infinitely good and wise God would want to perform any miracle to favor impostors or confirm any lie or error.

But though this response is a little better than the previous, there is still no more solidity in it than the other because these so-called miracles, which they make such a big deal about and whose fame and renown make such a big impression on the minds of ignorant people, are no less suspicious in themselves or less subject to error, illusion, and imposture than the so-called revelations. Clear proof of this is that there is no religion that does not claim to have their miracles and revelations, just like the Christians. Pagan religions, if you want to believe them, are full of similar miracles and divine revelations. The religion of the Jews has many; that of Christ or the Messiah, followed by the Christians, has no fewer; that of Mohammed, which is followed by the Turks, Ottomans, and barbarians, does not lack them; and we cannot forget the religion of Confucius, followed by the Chinese and Japanese, and thus all other religions that claim to be based on these kinds of so-called witnesses of divinity.

Being so, it is clear and evident that all these so-called revelations and miracles whose authority they would like to assert in the matter of religion really carry no weight at all and are not sufficient proof of any truth. For, that they are made equally in all kinds of religions and sects is a guaranteed indication that they do not come from an all-powerful God; consequently, they are not sufficient witnesses of truth because we cannot believe that an infinitely good and wise God would want to com-

municate his omnipotence to impostors or perform miracles to favor the errors and lies that are found in all false religions. Or if they claim that it is not against his bounty and wisdom to do this, as the so-called Holy Scriptures of our Christ-cultists seem to testify to when they say that their God put a spirit of lies in the mouths of all the prophets of Ahab, who numbered almost four hundred (2 Chr. 18:22) and elsewhere that *God will send a lying spirit that will persuade them through powerful impostures, making all kinds of deceitful prodigies, signs, and miracles by the power of Satan* (2 Thes. 2:9)—if, I say, they claim that it is not opposed to the bounty and wisdom of an all-powerful God to perform miracles and prodigies like this on behalf of errors and lies, I will draw the conclusion with as much certitude again that miracles and prodigies, like the so-called divine revelations, are not sufficient witnesses of truth, since we see that they are done as much on behalf of lies as truth.

I do not want to absolutely deny everything they say about certain events and extraordinary prodigies that people once astonishingly saw appear and that we may still see in the future, and I do not want to absolutely deny what we can say about certain extraordinary people who received some particular favors from Nature or who did some extraordinary and amazing things. I want to believe that there is something to that, but I can only say that all these prodigies and so-called miracles and all the most marvelous and amazing things that certain people did are really only natural effects produced by purely natural and human causes, though they still might appear to be supernatural and miraculous because they are done only during certain extraordinary encounters of several causes or by some extraordinary efforts of Nature, which sometimes seems to exceed itself or, finally, by the hard work, subtlety, dexterity, and skill of some people who have particular knowledge of the secret virtues of Nature and know how to skillfully take advantage of the time and opportunity or to subtly do everything they undertake to do.

Indeed, we cannot doubt that Nature, which is an excellent worker and produces so many wonderful works every day, is also capable of sometimes producing extraordinary prodigies; and we should not doubt either that some people, who have knowledge of the secret virtues of Nature and have the skill to use them at the right moment, would be capable of doing extraordinary things. It has to be said as well that we are used to attributing all these things to diabolic, black magic. Most of

the astonishing things are basically only lies, illusions, and impostures, as well as false miracles. For, it would be great stupidity to want to put any faith in everything they say about the power of magicians; they only brag about having such great power to scare people and make stupid and ignorant people worship them.

And with respect to what they are really capable of doing, if there is anything marvelous or amazing in what they do, it is certainly only the natural effects that come from some secret natural attributes or that are done by the hard work, dexterity, or subtlety of whoever is involved. And it is the same with so-called black and diabolic magic as with so-called holy and divine magic: they are both as vain and false as each other. That is why I said that the prophets and miracles of some were no truer than others. But if we imagined that there were some prophets and miracles truer than others, as they claim, by what sign and indication can we know them? How can we distinguish them from the false prophets and miracles? Seeing that they are all alike; they say the same things; they are all sent and inspired by God; they all claim to give convincing proofs of their so-called true miracles! Even our god-cultists themselves cannot distinguish between them. Proof of this is that for several thousands of years since these so-called prophets began to appear in the world, they have never been able to agree together or all together recognize any of them as true. That is what has divided them at all times into many different sects that are all opposed to one another and consider one another as false prophets and impostors.

Moses, for example—the great Egyptian lawmaker of the Jewish people, who, they say, did such great miracles in his time and spoke to God, he himself said, or to whom God spoke as familiarly as to a friend—was considered by the Jewish people as a very great and true prophet. His amazing actions, if what they say is true, were considered by the Jews as true miracles. But he was rejected by all the other nations as a great impostor and his miracles as fables and impostures. In his time he was not even considered so kindly by his relatives as a true prophet and many of his troupe argued about this glory. Just look at the grumblings of his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam (Num. 12:1); look at the grumblings of all the people he led and especially the uprising against him by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, supported by 250 leaders; for, if they really considered him a great prophet, it is hardly likely that

they would have risen up against him and faced him down so boldly as they did (Num. 16).

The Galilean Jesus Christ, whom the Christians call their "Savior" and worship as a true God become man, was considered by the Jews and Gentiles only an insane fanatic and wretched scoundrel. Our Christ-cultists themselves cannot deny this because they firstly and most zealously admit that the crucified Jesus Christ, whom they preach and announce to the world, was but *a scandal to the Jews and a laughing stock to the Gentiles* (1 Cor. 1:23); so, this was not to recognize him as a true prophet or true God incarnate and become man.

The Arab Mohammed, the very famous prophet throughout the East, who is revered by so many people as the greatest, holiest, and most faithful servant of God, was considered by Christians and Jews as a false prophet and great impostor. Confucius, who is known and revered in China as a very holy lawmaker, was not considered such in other countries of the world where they do not even know his name. Xaxa and Amida, who are considered divinities in Japan, are not even known in other countries. One named Apollonius from the city of Tyana in Carthage and one named Simon from Samaria, who were both great performers of miracles and prodigies, although the one was viewed as a divinity in Rome and many other places and the other was named "the great virtue of God" in Samaria, nevertheless in other places they were considered false prophets and impostors.

I will not speak here about the thousands of other lesser prophesizers who were busy in different times and places, such as the so-called prophets of Judea and Samaria and those 450 prophets of Baal who seemed to be insane fanatics rather than wise men. Nor will I speak about the so-called prophets they talk about from later centuries like Merlin of England, Nostradamus of France, the abbot Joachim of Fiore, pious Savonarola of Florence, and many others cut from the same cloth who were talked about only in their own country but even there did not have all the recognition they hoped for.

From this we clearly see that the god-cultists and Christ-cultists, all zealous as they are for the glory and worship of their God, have not yet in common consent recognized any of these so-called prophets as true prophets or any of their so-called miracles as true miracles, which is a clear and decisive proof that though there have been or may be among

them some prophets or miracles more genuine than others, they cannot at all distinguish between the one and the other, i.e., between the true and the false. And if they cannot tell them apart, it is in vain and without basis that they say and claim that their God sufficiently made known his will to men by his true prophets and his true miracles. It is, I say, in vain and without basis that they say this since they themselves cannot even agree on who the so-called true prophets are and what the so-called true miracles are. For, it is not possible to know the truth of an unknown thing by another thing just as unknown, and we cannot shed light on an obscure difficulty by another more obscure difficulty or make something certain by something uncertain.

No doubt, our idolatrous god-cultists will not fail to say here that those prophets who live more saintly and perform greater miracles should be considered the only true prophets and not the others; but this is no less vain than the previous responses.

For, as to their sanctity of life, what can we say? There is nothing more deceitful than this outward appearance of holiness. Wolves, as the Christ said, often cover themselves with sheep's hide and vices often cover themselves with the semblance of virtue. That is why men very often disguise themselves to better deceive others. And so this semblance of virtue that we can sometimes see in some of these so-called prophets more than in others is not a proof that they were really sent or inspired by God.

Moreover, the natural circumstances of time or place where these so-called miracles were made and the people before whom they were performed can contribute a lot to making them appear greater and more admirable than they would appear otherwise. This is indubitable. So, it is not at all by their appearance that we can distinguish the so-called true prophets and miracles from the false; consequently, we cannot say that God truly or sufficiently made his will known to men.

And this is so true that our Christ-cultists themselves cannot honestly disagree with it since their Christ so explicitly forbids his disciples to put any faith in what these so-called prophets and miracle makers may say to them, no matter how great or how often they see them make these prodigies and miracles. *There will rise up*, he tells them, *false Christs and false prophets who will seduce many and make such great miracles and such great prodigies that the elected themselves will be in danger*

*of being seduced. I warn you about these things. This is why if they tell you to do this or that, to come here or go there, do nothing and do not believe them* (Matt. 24:11, 24, 26). Following this clear and evident testimony of the greatest prophet of the Christians, whom they themselves call their "God" and their "divine Savior," the greatest miracles are not sufficient evidence of truth, seeing that he himself recognizes that they can be made by false prophets and he forbids them to put any faith in them. Therefore, we cannot say that God made his will sufficiently known to men through these so-called true miracles. For, in the end we will not be persuaded that he made his will sufficiently known by miracles that can be performed by impostors and in which we should put no faith.

But you will say that although there really were few people who witnessed these true miracles with their own eyes, few who knew anything about the honesty and holiness of those who made them, and a lot fewer who had the capacity or ability to examine them thoroughly and relate all the particular circumstances surrounding them, nevertheless this did not stop God from sufficiently making his will known to men because the few intelligent and honest men who did see these miracles and did know the holiness of those who made them were sufficient witnesses of the truth of what they saw and knew for those who saw and knew nothing. As a result, those who were then sufficiently informed of the truth (you will say!) were obligated to put faith in and firmly believe everything the first witnesses told them. Those who were sufficiently taught and persuaded about what they should do or believe based on the first witnesses then taught others who had seen and known no more than themselves; these latter then taught others again what they were taught. As a result, you will say, knowledge of the truth and divine will was soon communicated to a great number of people who carried it to different places, from country to country, from kingdom to kingdom, until finally it was spread to all parts of the world. And so it passed through the centuries, through all the generations of men and (our Christ-cultists say) that is how God made his will sufficiently known to men so that whoever does not want to bow down before it cannot claim ignorance as an excuse because it has been sufficiently taught in all times and in all places.

But what an illusion to claim that all men should have been sufficiently taught and informed about the laws and will of God, on the pre-

text that certain people said that God revealed them to them or that they had heard that they were revealed in this way or they were revealed to holy prophets specially sent by God and they had performed a bunch of miracles to confirm the truth of everything they said! What an illusion, I say, to imagine such a thing! What could not they delude people into believing on such a vain pretext? If it were not so unacceptable, there would certainly be no impostor who could not easily delude people into believing everything they wanted on such a pretext, if people were willing to listen. It would be easy for each of them, especially for those who came from afar, to allege divine revelations and fabricate miracles to support all their lies. And if it were only a matter of recounting these so-called miracles and revelations for people to have to believe them, where would they be? Would they not then have to believe everyone telling stories of miracles, visions, and divine revelations? And so have to believe countless lies and impostures that were spouted every day as if they were the surest and most important truths?

What? On the pretext, for example, that there was once a man in Judea who was called the Son of God and performed miracles and prodigies, not only everyone who saw but also everyone who did not see and who were even in countries far away were forced to believe everything some strangers told them after years and years and even after centuries?

And now after traveling more than a thousand years over many thousands of leagues to many peoples, all men of the earth will still be forced to believe everything some strangers may tell them, on the lovely and attractive pretext of the religion and zeal of the salvation of their souls! And they will be mercilessly condemned to be forever unhappy and to burn eternally in dreadful flames if they do not blindly believe everything these strangers tell them? You are crazy, Christ-cultists, you are crazy to have such thoughts about a God!

And to show you your madness even more, let us suppose that some strangers from a foreign land came into this country, some scholars or Buddhists, for example, from China or Japan, two or three thousand leagues from here. If these good foreign priests seriously told you that they came so far only because of the zeal they have for the salvation of your souls and to teach you about the mysteries and ceremonies of their so-called holy religion, and for this they began to tell you about the marvels of their great lawmaker Confucius and wanted to persuade you to

leave your religion to embrace theirs, you would at first be astonished by such novelty; but if in the course of their teachings you notice that they want to persuade you to believe ridiculous and absurd mysteries, to make you observe vain and superstitious ceremonies and make you revere and worship images and idols of their false divinity, will you not laugh at their stupidity and say that these people are fools and madmen to come so far taking such pains to tell you of such stupidities? You will be right to say this because it really would be crazy to come so far just to make themselves and their so-called holy mysteries a laughingstock. And it would likewise be crazy for you to think you had to believe whatever they told you about the so-called wonders of their god and their so-called holy religion. And I think that you will not be so stupid as to believe you have to put any faith in them.

But, do you not also recognize that it is an error for you to believe that you have to put any faith in everything your priests tell you comes from God? It is an error for you to believe that all peoples of the earth have to believe what your priests say, on the pretext of making them sufficiently know the will of God. And if it is madness for the monks of China or the Muslim, Chinese, or Japanese priests to come into this country to persuade you that to be saved you have to believe in their great prophet Mohammed or their great, holy lawmaker Confucius and that you have to observe the precepts and ceremonies of their so-called holy religions, it is certainly no less madness for our priests and missionaries to go, as they do, taking so many pains and at the peril of their lives, into far distant countries to persuade men of things as ridiculous and absurd as what they say.

It is, as I said, a veritable illusion to claim that men should be sufficiently taught about the will of God from the moment that some people tell them that God revealed it to them or that they heard about it from others who taught them. It is a veritable illusion to imagine this, because to believe blindly in what some people say about the will of a god is not to know it. And, since men, whatever law of religion they follow, blindly believe whatever liars, swindlers, mockers, or ignorant men tell them, it is unquestionable and totally obvious that we cannot truthfully say that God made his will sufficiently known to men.

And if anyone, by birth, upbringing, chance encounter, or some motive of self-interest or by some other human consideration is more

attached to one sect or one religion than to another, it is not because he knows the will of God better, but because he blindly believes what he is told. Thus, men are normally Christians, Muslims, Jews, or pagans only from the fact that they are born or raised in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or paganism. And as far as our other Christians, "We are," as Montaigne said, "Calvinists, Lutherans, or Roman Catholics in the same way we are French, Spanish, German, or English, Flemish, or Perigordian; a different birth, education, or other circumstances of commitment, honor, or interests or some particular encounter would have put us in a different camp and instilled in us different sentiments and beliefs with the same promises of rewards and threats of punishment" (*Essays*, 2:12).

Moreover, not considering the number of people who deny or doubt the existence of God, there are a large number of wise and enlightened people, even among our god-cultists, who simply do not acknowledge or admit that whatever is most beautiful and most perfect in Nature in any way proves the existence of an infinitely perfect God. Natural reason proves that everything that is most beautiful, most perfect, and most wonderful in Nature can be made by the natural laws of movement alone and by the different configurations of the parts of matter variously arranged, united, and modified or combined in all kinds of beings that make what we call the world; and so far from wanting to diminish in any way the beauty, excellence, and wonderful order that we notice in all natural things of the world and that our god-cultists sometimes pretend to exalt in their grand and pompous speeches to prove the infinite omnipotence and wisdom of their God who made them, although it seems that in the past they insulted him by regarding all these same works as crude and trivial, saying *vanity of vanities, all is vanity* (Eccl. 1:2). For, certainly it is not doing honor to such a great worker to say that everything he made was only vanity. And there is no good worker who would not be offended if he saw his works scorned; he would be insulted to be spoken of with contempt. And yet, it is this insult that our Christ-cultists are always making without thinking about their God when they say, as they often do, that all is vanity and nothing but vanity. I say this only in passing to show that everything our Christ-cultists say is not always consistent with their own principles and sentiments.

## 77. UNDER THE CONDUCT AND DIRECTION OF AN ALL-POWERFUL, INFINITELY GOOD AND WISE GOD, NO CREATURE WOULD BE DEFECTIVE, MEAN, OR UNHAPPY

**S**o, I will return to my subject and say that far from wanting to diminish in any way the beauty, excellence, and wonderful order that we notice in all things of Nature, I would rather exalt them, if I could, and make them admired as much as they should be, seeing that I myself admire them maybe as much as any of our god-cultists can.

I admire them as far as they are the works of Nature, but not as the works of an all-powerful God. For, under this last consideration, I would immediately stop admiring them because as wonderful as they are in themselves, I would not find them perfect enough to have come from the hand of an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God, considering the flaws and imperfections and even the vices and deformities that are clearly found in most things, and the distressing accidents that they are subject to.

When our god-cultists exalt as they want and magnify as they please the beauty, excellence, order, and artifice that is found in all visible things of this world, I agree with them. But on the other hand, they also have to acknowledge and admit that they are very fragile and defective and that everything living is subject to many miseries and much suffering. Now, I say that everything that is most beautiful and admirable in Nature does not prove there is an all-powerful and infinitely perfect God any more than the least evil proves that there is not; and the obvious reason for this is, as I have already said, because everything that is most beautiful and admirable in Nature can be made by the laws and forces of Nature itself; and besides, it is not believable that there would be any vice or fault in any creature or that any living creature would suffer any harm if all things came, as our god-cultists say, from the all-powerful hand of an infinitely good and wise God. And so, death, sick-

ness, disability, lassitude, and, for even greater reason, vices, viciousness, and generally everything that is capable of making any creature vicious, defective, or unhappy, proves that there is no divinity capable of preventing all these evils.

And again, that flies, spiders, and worms suffer death and harm and that we crush them under our feet is enough to prove that they are not the works of a God because if they were his works, he would undoubtedly watch over them for their good and preservation and he would undoubtedly keep them from all harm. Do you think that an infinitely good and wise God would take pleasure in making and forming these vile little beasts to see them suffer and be crushed under feet? This would be unworthy of the omnipotence and infinite kindness of a God who could easily keep them from all evil and easily, if he wished, obtain for them all the good that would be suitable to their nature. We once saw a Roman emperor (it was Domitian) who, among other vices, gloried in amusing himself by showing off his dexterity in stabbing flies with an awl (*Moreri, Historical Dictionary*). They had good reason to reproach this emperor for spending his time at such a vain and ridiculous pleasure as this; and they were right to consider this a sign or omen of the viciousness and cruelty of his soul. Would you dare say or think that a similar pleasure would be suitable to the sovereign majesty, omnipotence, and kindness of a God? That he would want to make flies, spiders, and worms just to see them suffer and be crushed under feet? Not at all. This is entirely offensive to the sovereign and infinite perfection of a God who could easily make all his creatures happy and perfect, each according to its nature and species. We cannot believe that he would have wanted to create anything to make it unhappy and that there really could be anything that is badly made, defective, unhappy in its kind, if an all-powerful and infinitely good and wise God wanted to get mixed up in making them. And I can confirm this by that maxim of the Grand Pooh-Bah St. Augustine, who expressly said that under a just and all-powerful God no creature can be miserable and unhappy if it has not deserved it. It is the sentiment of the entire Roman Church, which says in one of its public prayers for the people that *no adversity will harm them if they are not ruled by iniquity*, in the mass of the first Friday of Lent.

I would add to this that under a just and all-powerful God, no crea-

ture would deserve or would ever have deserved to be unhappy because the same kindness, wisdom, and omnipotence that formed them whole and perfect, each according to its species, would have also seen to preserving them always in the same state of perfection and preventing them from ever deserving to be miserable and unhappy. So, if an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God ever created men, as our Christ-cultists say, in a state of perfection with respect to their body and soul, and if he created them in a state of innocence and sanctity to make them forever happy and content on earth or in heaven, he would never have deserted them from the favorable help of his divine providence or protection and he would never have allowed them to fall into any vice or sin, because he never would have wanted to abandon what he had created for such a good end and what he would have wanted to love so perfectly and favor with his grace and friendship so particularly. As they say in one of their public prayers (second Sunday after Pentecost), *his providence does not abandon what he has established in the firmness of his love.* Consequently, neither humans nor any creature would ever have been unhappy under the conduct and direction of an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God. (Cf. Hosea 2:18; Dan. 9:24; Is. 11:6, 9, 65:25, 43:20; Rev. 21:3-4.)

According to these witnesses, it is clear and visible that under the authority and providence and direction of an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God, there should be no evil in the world and no creature should be unhappy, vicious, or defective in any way because they all come from the all-powerful hand of a sovereignly perfect God who made them and would never have wanted to make them bad or defective. Also in their so-called Holy Scriptures it is said that God will make all things new and will put everything into a better state than it is (removing everything they now have that is mean or defective and even banishing death and pain and everything that may damage his creatures or do them harm). So, they acknowledge that everything should have been better made and better ordered or that they were not at first well enough made or perfect enough or well ordered enough—for if they were, there would certainly be no need for this lovely so-called reformation that the so-called holy prophets talk about and that our Christ-cultists brag about so vainly, because an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God would have put them at first in all the perfections and good order that they should have been in. For we cannot think that an infi-

nitely perfect being could at some time be wiser, more skillful, or more prudent than at another time, or that it could do things better a second time around. "We know," says the author of *Ecclesiastical Discussions* [Pierre de la Font] in the second Sunday after Pentecost, "that since God is full of holiness and infinite wisdom he could not fail to give to all his works the perfection that they required to be full and accomplished. A God does nothing halfway, there cannot be a void in his works, they necessarily have all the perfection and plenitude of holiness and merit that they can have."

And since we never saw, and still do not see today, any divinity making it his duty to accomplish such a lovely promise as this to make such a desirable, advantageous, and perfect reformation or restitution in the visible things of the world, although thousands of years have already passed since this lovely divine promise was made and should have been accomplished—this is clear proof that it did not come from any divinity, as our Christ-cultists claim, but only from some impostors who, to abuse men and maintain them in errors and false hopes, boldly and insolently made it their business to counterfeit the voice and promises of an all-powerful God; or from some insane lunatics and fanatics who mistook their imagination, dreams, and reveries for divine revelations. From this I draw the conclusion that there would certainly never have been any vice or flaw in the visible things of the world and living things would never have suffered any evil or pain, if they had been made and ordered by the all-powerful hand of a sovereignly perfect God.

So, since we clearly see that the visible things of this world are vicious and defective and that living things unfortunately have to die and suffer many evils, sicknesses, pains, and miseries and they have to suffer painful deaths, it is an obvious proof that they were not made by the all-powerful hand of a sovereignly perfect God. Therefore, I was right to say that everything that is most beautiful and admirable in the visible things of the world does not prove there is an all-powerful God any more than the slightest evil proves there is not. For in the end, we know that chance can sometimes make something good, beautiful, and perfect enough; but, we should not think that an all-powerful, infinitely perfect God would or could ever allow any evil or flaw in his works.

Our Christ-cultists try to defend against this argument by saying that it is not now in this world that God wants to accomplish the advan-

tageous promises that he made concerning the universal reformation of his creatures, but it will only be at the end of time and in heaven that he will happily accomplish all his divine promises for those who faithfully serve him in this life. But besides the fact that this response and interpretation of the so-called promises are obviously opposed to the true meaning of the "Scriptures" (which clearly and explicitly say that these promises should be accomplished in this very world and in a time that will not be long in coming, as is easy to see by reading the books that talk about it), I say that they are making fun of you or wanting you to make fun of yourselves when they postpone the accomplishment of God's promises for another life that is only imaginary and another time that will never come and another place where no one can ever go to learn about it and bring back news. It is an error and a ridiculous illusion to postpone the accomplishment of the expressed promises of a God in this way, if they really came from a God.

Who is the liar? Who is the scoffer? Who is the impostor? Who could not say the same things for himself? Who could not make the same promises? There is certainly no one who could not promise the same things; and this suffices to clearly show the vanity of such promises, the inanity of those who interpret them so vainly and the madness of those who put their hopes in them so vainly. All this clearly demonstrates that there is no divinity and everything they say is only a lie, illusion, and imposture.

Therefore, far from saying that the invisible existence of God makes itself clearly known by the visible things of this world, as our god-cultists claim, we should, on the contrary, say instead that these visible things clearly show that he does not exist, seeing that they would not be so defective, mean, or badly ordered as they are, if they were really the works of an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God.

This is confirmed again very clearly by the general flaw of providence that we clearly see in all things that depend on chance and fortune. For, it is clear that it is not a sovereignly perfect intelligence that conducts and governs them, since we see every day that they come and go everywhere without any semblance of reason, without order, without distinguishing between good and bad and without any judgment of merit or justice or natural equality.

If it were an intelligent and sovereignly perfect being that wanted to

make it its business to conduct and govern natural and human things, it would not leave things to chance as they are, but it would rule them with justice and wisdom. Therefore, since there does not seem to be any wisdom or justice or even any intelligence in these kinds of events and since they all happen only by chance, it is a certain and obvious proof that these kinds of things are not conducted by a sovereignly perfect intelligence.

But perhaps you will say that all these effects that are attributed to chance and that we believe come only by chance are really only the effects of divine providence, which conducts chance itself and makes fate fall where and how it likes. But it is without basis that you would say such a thing because as chance does not follow a rule and always goes its way blindly, without judgment of cause or subject and without making any distinction between time, place, or person, it has no need of direction from a supreme intelligence to blindly go hither and thither. And proof that there is no need of this so-called direction is that it would not stop from always going its way in the same manner, even though you would think that there was not any intelligence conducting it; I mean that it would always go its way blindly without any distinction of anything.

Furthermore, it would be insulting to a supreme intelligence to say that it wanted to conduct its works so badly like this, seeing that there is no prudence, wisdom, and justice in such conduct. So, we cannot say that the things that are done or that happen by chance are conducted by a sovereign intelligence, since we do not see that the things that are the most regulated or the most constant in their movements and effects are conducted by such a principle. No, we certainly do not see this, but we see, on the contrary, that they blindly follow their normal course without knowing where they are going or what they are doing.

It is like this that water naturally and consistently flows downhill; it blindly follows its course and wets whatever is in its way. It is like this that a flame always tends to rise upward; it blindly burns whatever it finds combustible. The sun and stars consistently and regularly follow their normal course; they blindly shine and brighten the world with their lights. All animals and plants naturally and regularly, according to the time and season, produce what is appropriate for them, each according to its species; and so with other natural things.

You will not say that this is done by knowledge and design on the

part of things, since inanimate things move without knowing that they move and they act without knowing that they act. Neither will you say that animals generate and produce their like by a principle of knowledge, since they do not know how the smallest part of their body is formed and yet they keep forming the whole of it without thinking about it.

Therefore, all these kinds of things move blindly and act blindly, although they are constant and regular in their movements and effects. At the same time that is why there are necessary causes that always produce the same effects regularly and as if necessarily: because they have a connection and a natural, sort of necessary bond with their effects and they have contingent causes that do not always produce the same effects regularly, because they do not have a natural and necessary bond with their effects as much as because these kinds of effects often depend on several causes or several circumstances that do not always come together at the same time or in the same place, but only sometimes by chance and luck. And since all these causes move and act blindly in everything they do, this makes them produce their effects everywhere without consideration of time or place and without having any regard for the good or bad that might happen.

To say that all these things are conducted in their movements and in the production of their effects by a supreme intelligence is a pure illusion and a pure fiction of the human mind and is not based on any true reason, since we clearly see that all this can be done naturally by the moving force of matter alone, which moves itself and acts blindly everywhere without knowing what it is doing or why it is doing it. It is like the fire that indifferently burns everything it finds combustible without knowing that it burns or what it burns; it hardens mud, softens wax, redens iron, and blackens chimneys without knowing what it does. What I am saying here about the moving force of matter, which moves and acts blindly everywhere, is clearly seen every day by everyone.

But what our god-cultists and Christ-cultists say about a supreme intelligence that conducts everything is not seen at all. So, they talk about something that they do not see and do not know and that no one has ever seen or known and that they cannot prove; this obviously shows that there is no supreme intelligence that governs the world and the things in it and, consequently, that there is no divinity that has made itself or its will sufficiently known to men.

And with respect to the conclusion I drew about the existence of such a being, about the imperfections, flaws, and vices that are in visible things of the world as well as the miseries and evils that all men and animals suffer in life, our god-cultists and Christ-cultists do not fail to say that if their infinitely perfect God does not always make his creatures in the perfection that befits them, if it seems that he abandons them to the instability and uncertainty of chance or to the laws of blind necessity, if he allows his living creatures to be afflicted with sicknesses and disabilities and even death, if he allows all kinds of vices and disorder among men and lets them perform all kinds of injustices and viciousness, if he allows truth and innocence to be so often oppressed and the just who serve him faithfully to be so often overwhelmed with all kinds of miseries and, on the contrary, he allows the wicked and impious who scorn his laws and orders and who blaspheme all the time to be prosperous, joyful, honored, and lavished with all kinds of goods and, in a word, if he allows anything bad or anything that does harm in any way possible—our superstitious and devout god-cultists do not fail to say that their God allows all these evils only in order to get some greater good and, consequently, we should not be surprised if he allows them because he can turn them to his greater glory and to the greater good for all his creatures.

## 78. REFUTATION OF THE SO-CALLED CONCLUSIVE ARGUMENTS OF THE CARTESIANS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF AN INFINITELY PERFECT GOD

**I**t is easy to refute their responses and show their inanity, weakness, vanity, and falsity. Let us begin with the knowledge we naturally have of the infinite. De Cambrai [Fenelon] and his partisans regard this knowledge as if it belonged to an order and nature superior to all other knowledge and as if it could come to us only from the infinitely perfect being itself, i.e., God. Yet they are astonished, as they say, that God himself can give knowledge of the infinite to finite and limited minds, as all human minds are. But this knowledge of the infinite is certainly no more supernatural and no more amazing than any other knowledge we have. It is by the same mind and by the same faculty of the mind that we know the finite and the infinite, the material and the immaterial; it is by the same mind and the same understanding that we think about ourselves, about God, and about everything.

In truth, I admire this faculty and this power we naturally have to think, see, feel, and know everything we do, everything presented to us, to our senses and our understanding. Nothing is easier and more natural to us than to think, see, feel, and understand. Nevertheless, I do not know how I form any thought, knowledge, or feeling and so the least of my thoughts and knowledge astonishes and surprises me, I admit. But I do not see at all that knowledge of the infinite is more supernatural, amazing, or difficult to imagine than knowledge of the finite, and it is even opposed to what each one of us can prove by ourselves every day. For, there is no one who does not know and easily think of extension; the extension, for example, of a foot or a fathom or, if you like, the extension of a league or two or three leagues. It is also easy for you to know and imagine an extension of one thousand or one hundred thousand leagues, and, finally, an extension that has no end and that, consequently, is infinite. For, as far as you might pretend to imagine an end

or a limit, nevertheless you will always imagine clearly and easily that there would always be a beyond of these ends and limits and, consequently, there would still be extension and even an extension that could have no end and that, consequently, would be infinite. This is very natural and easy to imagine.

## 79. WE NATURALLY KNOW THE INFINITE IN EXTENSION, IN DURATION OR TIME, AND IN NUMBER, AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE THAT EXTENSION, TIME, AND NUMBER NOT BE INFINITE

**T**hat is how we naturally and very easily imagine and know the infinite in extension. We certainly cannot deny that the mind naturally and very easily progresses from the finite to the infinite; so we know the one as naturally and as easily as the other; and so, knowledge of the one is no more supernatural or amazing than of the other.

As we naturally know the infinite in extension, so we also naturally know the infinite in numbers: it is easy to know or imagine a finite number of units. We will begin, for example, with 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. And we continue naturally to know or imagine bigger numbers like 100, 200, 1,000, 2,000, etc. And we continue again naturally to imagine an even bigger number; and finally go on to imagine a number we can no longer name and that we imagine as infinite. That is how we know the infinite in numbers, i.e., that number or whole and entire multitude of units that goes unto infinity.

We also naturally know the infinite in another way because we naturally know infinity of time or the infinite in duration; we naturally begin, for example, to know or imagine an hour of time, a day, a month, a year, etc. We continue easily to imagine a dozen, twenty, or a hundred years; from there up to a thousand and several thousands and millions of years; we cannot stop there because as large a number of years as we can imagine, after they have gone by we clearly imagine that there will still and always be time, even a time without end, because after whatever time we can imagine, there will always be time, after which will always be time, and it can never have an end.

We naturally know being exists; we cannot not know this. Natural reason clearly shows us that it has to have always existed and always will; and so, we clearly know that it never had a beginning and will never have

an end (and so we have to recognize that being was never created), which is clearly to know the infinite in duration. And here again is how we naturally know the infinite in duration or infinity of time; and so we naturally know the infinite in three ways or, if you like, that there are three kinds of infinity: in extension, in multitude or numbers, and in duration or time. We know this, I say, very naturally and very easily.

This knowledge is as if born in us; it follows our reason as if naturally. That is why it is easy to see the weakness, inanity, and vanity of all the arguments that de Cambrai makes about the mysterious and imaginary so-called supernaturality that he finds in the idea and knowledge that we naturally have of the infinite. He supposes in vain and without basis that the infinite of which he has an idea and knowledge has to be infinite in every sense, in every manner, and in every imaginable perfection and even more than imaginable. That is where he is mistaken; for, in forming the idea of an infinity like this that does not exist and cannot exist, he forms an idea of an infinity that is only imaginary and chimerical. That is also why we see him wander and get lost (as he himself remarks) in the vanity of his thoughts: "The idea that is formed of the infinite is astonishing and overwhelming" (*On the Existence of God*).

The greatest cause of his astonishment and admiration is to have an idea of the infinite and to be able to imagine it even though he has only a finite and limited mind, as if he had never and should have never imagined anything bigger than his brain! And as if he had never and should have never seen anything bigger than his eyes! Our mind would be very limited if it could imagine nothing bigger than our brain. And our view likewise would be very short and narrow if we could see nothing bigger than our eyes!

But no, fortunately it is not like this. We see every day, even with no problem, an almost infinite number of objects that are incomparably larger than our eyes and every day we imagine an almost infinite number of things that are incomparably vaster than our brain. So it is not the idea or knowledge of infinity as infinite that should astonish and amaze us so much since this idea or knowledge is as natural and easy for us as any other knowledge; but rather it is *thought itself that should astonish and amaze us*, since we do not understand and cannot even comprehend how we can form any thought or have any knowledge; so the least of our

thoughts or knowledge should amaze us as much as the most refined thought or most sublime knowledge that we could have.

But though we cannot understand how thought, knowledge, or sentiments are formed in us, at least it seems that we can imagine the reason why we cannot and even should not understand it. It is because it is through thought itself and knowledge and sentiments that we feel, know, and perceive everything else. So, we should not see, know, or feel through our thoughts or sentiments themselves what our thoughts and sentiments are; and we should not see, know, or feel the way in which they are formed in us. It is enough to know and be certain that we do think and have knowledge and sentiments. But it is not necessary to feel how they are formed in us.

I imagine that for our mind, i.e., the faculty and power we naturally have to think and feel, in a way it is like the faculty and power we naturally have to see with our eyes and hold things with our hands. So, just like we hold everything with our hands and yet no hand can hold itself, so also we understand; we understand and hold everything, so to speak, with our mind, although our mind cannot hold or understand itself. Just as we see everything with our eyes, although our eyes cannot see themselves, so also we see and perceive everything with our thoughts and sentiments, although we do not know the nature of our thoughts or sentiments.

But why cannot a hand that holds everything hold itself unless it is because it is itself the principle of all holding, if we can say this. And why cannot the eyes that see everything see themselves unless they themselves are the organ and principle of sight. Yes, certainly, it is for this reason that they cannot see themselves, unless they look in a mirror, because then they are as if outside themselves and can easily see themselves, but without this they could not at all see themselves because they are, as I said, the organ and principle of sight. We have to say the same thing for the mind and thought of man. It is with his mind and thought that he thinks, knows, and perceives everything; so, why does he not know himself and the nature of his mind, thought, and sentiments or sensations? It is only because his mind itself is the first principle of all thoughts, knowledge, and sentiments or sensations; and it is with his thoughts, sentiments, and sensations that he knows and perceives everything. No doubt, this is the true reason.

So the mind is like the inner eye of man and it is through this eye that

he sees and knows everything; but this eye does not have to see itself or know itself, seeing that it is the first principle of all sight and knowledge and sentiments. Just as we are not astonished that men do not see their own eyes even though they see everything else through their eyes, so it seems we should not be astonished that men do not clearly understand the nature of their mind and thought even though it is through their mind and thought and sentiments and sensations that they know and perceive everything else, seeing that it is the mind itself that is the first principle of all their thoughts, knowledge, and sentiments.

But since we also know that we often have or can have ideas of many things that do not exist, it is clear and evident that the ideas we can have of things that we can imagine or depict in our brains are not always proofs that these things are indeed as we imagine them. Only necessary ideas, i.e., ideas that we cannot wipe out of our minds, are really a convincing proof of the existence of such things. We cannot, for example, when we think about it, wipe out of our minds the idea we have of an infinite extension; this idea alone that we have and cannot wipe out of our minds is a convincing proof that it really is infinite like we imagine. For, we cannot imagine that there is no extension or that there are limits to this extension and that it is not infinite because if it was not really infinite, we could imagine some limits; and since we cannot imagine any limits without imagining at the same time a beyond, it is an obvious proof that there are no limits to extension and, consequently, it has no end and is infinite. Likewise when we think about the duration of time, the idea that we have of its duration cannot be wiped out of our minds, we cannot imagine there being no time just like we cannot imagine there being no extension; this idea alone is an obvious proof that time exists, and not only exists but necessarily has always existed and always will, and, consequently, it is infinite in duration. This is indeed as we imagine it.

From the knowledge that we naturally have of these two kinds of infinity, we naturally move on to the knowledge of another kind of infinity, that of number and multitude, which is as if necessarily enclosed in the totality of these two infinites I just spoke about. For, in the totality of extension, which is necessarily infinite, as I just proved, we necessarily find and clearly see an infinite number of individual portions of extension like, for example, an infinite number of feet, fathoms, or leagues because we clearly see that no finite number of leagues or any other par-

ticular space of extension could equal an infinite extension and, consequently, it would take no less than an infinite number of leagues to equal an infinite extension. The same goes for the totality of the infinite and successive duration of time wherein we necessarily find and clearly see not only an infinite number of days, but also of years and centuries because we clearly see that no finite number of years or centuries could equal the infinite duration of time and, consequently, there has to be an infinite number of years and centuries to equal the infinite duration of time.

It is no use saying here that in an infinite extension there would necessarily always be a greater number of feet than fathoms and of fathoms than leagues. Likewise, that in the infinite duration of time there would necessarily always be a greater number of days than years and of years than centuries and, consequently, according to this doctrine, there would be infinites greater than the infinite itself, i.e., in extension there would be an infinite number of feet greater than the infinite number of fathoms, and the infinite number of fathoms would be greater than the infinite number of leagues that would be in the same extension; and likewise in the successive duration of time an infinite number of days would be greater than the infinite number of years, etc. This is completely offensive to reason, you will say, given that nothing can be greater than the infinite.

I respond to this that in an infinite extension you will always really find more feet than fathoms and more fathoms than leagues. Likewise in time you will always find and really count more days than years and more years than centuries. But, as in the totality of extension there would necessarily be an infinite extension to go through and in the totality of the duration of time there would also be an infinite duration of time to go through, you would necessarily always find in extension as many leagues and fathoms as feet to count without end and since there would be no end for any of them they would be no more finite or infinite than each other. Likewise in the successive duration of time you would always find as many years and centuries as days and hours to count without end since there would be no end to counting any of them, so they would be no more finite or infinite than each other. Therefore, my arguments still remain with all their force.

Perhaps you will say with de Cambrai that "no extension and no

composition can be infinite, considering that every extension and composition is only a mass of many finite and limited units that all together cannot form an infinite, as far as nothing that is limited and finite can make the infinite" (*On the Existence of God*).

It seems to me that this whole argument can be reduced to two main points: to know whether a number or multitude such as is composed of units that are limited, finite, and independent of each other could or could not ever make an infinite whole; second, to know whether or not a number or a whole that is composed of an infinite multitude of units that are limited and independent of each other would cease to be infinite by the removal of some limited units. It seems to me that this is the greatest difficulty in this objection.

To this I respond that a number or infinite multitude of limited and independent units joined together would necessarily make a whole with infinite extension. Here is the proof. Each unit of this infinite multitude of limited units would already have its extension in itself, independent of the extension of every other unit. One unit would be joined to another that likewise had its extension independent of the other, and they would necessarily make a greater extension—the more units you add the greater it grows, and it would necessarily grow in proportion to the quantity of units you add. Now, according to this hypothesis, there would be an infinite multitude of limited units joined together into a whole. Therefore, it really and truly would have an infinite extension and, consequently, it is evident that infinity can be made of an infinite multitude of limited and finite units. What we imagine very clearly is that not only can infinity be made from an infinite multitude of limited and finite units, but it can also be made and has actually been made, in its totality of extension and numbers, from an infinity of infinites all composed of an infinite multitude of limited and finite units.

## 80. IN A SENSE THERE ARE SEVERAL INFINITES, BUT THERE IS AND CAN ONLY BE ONE ABSOLUTE INFINITE, WHICH IS THE ALL

**H**ere is clear proof of this. It is evident that there is in the totality of extension, whether we think of it or not, an infinity of lines or at least what makes an infinity of lines that are all infinite because they are all as extended as the totality of extension itself, which is infinite in all its dimensions. Now, it is evident that for each line to be infinite in length it must be composed of an infinite number or multitude of limited parts as, for example, atoms, which are all independent of each other. For, if these parts or atoms were not infinite in number or multitude, it is evident that they could not compose an infinite line. Therefore, since this line is necessarily infinite, it also has to be composed of an infinite number or multitude of limited parts. And so, in every line there is obviously an infinite number or multitude of atoms or limited parts independent of each other. Now, in the actual totality of extension there are obviously an infinite number of parallel lines that are all infinite and all composed of an infinite number or multitude of atoms or limited parts. Therefore, as I said, there are infinities of infinities in the totality of extension and numbers.

Do not be astonished that I say that there is an infinity of infinities in the totality of extension and numbers, since everyone who admits the divisibility of infinity has to recognize in each part of matter an infinity of parts without which it could not be divided into infinity. And if there is in each part of matter an infinite number of parts, as these philosophers claim, there must also be an infinity of infinities of the infinite number of parts in matter.

So, far from saying, like de Cambrai, that every composed thing can never be infinite, that everything that has limited and measurable parts cannot compose anything but what is finite, and that all collective or successive numbers can never be infinite, we must, on the contrary, fol-

lowing the clearest lights of reason, say that one single and simple unit that does not have parts can never make the infinite because it has no extension and, having no extension or having very little, it is evident that it could never make the infinite, which is necessarily and essentially infinitely extended. And if one single and simple unit that does not have extension or parts can never make the infinite, the infinite in extension or number must necessarily be composed of an infinite number or multitude of units or of limited parts joined together. All this reasoning is clear and evident. But since de Cambrai has formed the imaginary and chimerical idea of an all-powerful God, infinitely perfect in all kinds of perfections, he also has to form the idea of an imaginary and chimerical infinite because he could not find the imaginary perfections that he would like to attribute to his God in the idea of any real infinite.

As to what he then adds, that a removal from a composed whole of even a single unit would necessarily lessen and diminish it and, consequently, it was not infinite before the removal insofar as you could not ever make infinity from a finite composition by adding a single finite unit to it and, consequently again, no composition can be infinite.

To this I respond first that nothing can really and truly be added to that which is really infinite, and likewise nothing real can be removed because nothing can be destroyed. And so, since the supposition of a removal of a single unit from an infinite composition is an impossibility, the argument concludes nothing and only absurdities can follow.

But, as this removal of some limited units of an infinite composition can, at least, be made in thought and as we can imagine some of these units removed from others as if destroyed, I will say second that in the case of this supposition, as impossible as it may be, the composition would not stop being always infinite. In truth it would be lessened or diminished in the place where the unit or units were removed, but still it will necessarily always remain infinite. And I say that no particular removal of its parts, as large as it may be, would stop it from being infinite insofar as no removal of parts can deplete the infinite. And if the infinite cannot be depleted by any removal of its parts, it obviously follows that no removal can stop it from always being infinite. It is clear and evident that it is like this and it could not be otherwise in such a supposition. All this is conceived by clear and distinct ideas that clearly demonstrate the truth of things.

## 81. IT IS AN ERROR AND ILLUSION FOR DE CAMBRAI AND THE AUTHOR OF *THE SEARCH AFTER TRUTH* TO WANT TO CONFUSE, AS THEY DO, THE INFINITE BEING THAT EXISTS WITH A SO-CALLED INFINITELY PERFECT BEING THAT DOES NOT EXIST, AND IT IS AN ILLUSION FOR THEM TO CONCLUDE, AS THEY DO, THE EXISTENCE OF ONE FROM THE EXISTENCE OF THE OTHER

**B**ut, who is there who can conceive with clear and distinct ideas the imaginary and chimerical infinite that de Cambrai and all our god-cultists offer us to worship as an all-powerful God, infinitely perfect in all kinds of perfections, although he does not have any visible and perceptible perfection, and he does not even have any form or figure or even any part or extension? Certainly no one could form any real idea of such an infinite; you could not even imagine any beautiful perfection in such a being that has no form, figure, or extension. And our Christ-cultists themselves, as spiritual as they are, cannot form any real idea of such an infinite or even of such a being. From this I again conclude obviously against them this other truth, which is that the idea that they form of their infinitely perfect God does not at all prove his existence and it is surprising that intelligent people can claim to invincibly prove his existence by this. Let us examine it a little more closely.

Here is their reasoning and their argument, which they believe is conclusive: "It is necessary to attribute to a thing that which one clearly imagines to be included in the idea that represents it" (Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*). "It is the general principle of all the sciences. Now, the actual and necessary existence is clearly included in the idea of God, i.e., in the idea of an infinitely perfect being. Therefore, God or the infinitely perfect being exists" (Fenelon, *On the Existence of God*).

Our new Cartesian god-cultists imagine they are triumphant and believe they have conclusively proven the existence of their God. But it is unquestionable that it is only an illusion for them to imagine this, because it is clear and evident that this argument does not conclude the existence of a God or of an infinitely perfect being, inasmuch as it supposes that this being they imagine as infinitely perfect is really something real and not something imaginary. For, if it were not really considered something real, it would be ridiculous to conclude its existence only from the idea we have of it.

Now, it is not a matter here of only supposing that the so-called being they imagine as infinitely perfect is something real, but it is a matter of proving it, since it is this that we deny. And as their argument does not prove the so-called being they imagine as infinitely perfect is really something real, but it only supposes instead what it should have proven, it is clear that their argument is only a pure sophism that proves nothing. And the evident sign of this is that if it proved something, it would also be easy to prove by the same argument that an infinitely perfect man exists and an infinitely perfect horse, an infinitely perfect bird, and even an infinitely perfect fly because it is as easy to imagine an infinitely perfect man, horse, cock, or fly as to imagine any other infinitely perfect being. And it would be as easy to apply this argument to anything.

We have to attribute to a thing what we clearly imagine to be contained in the idea it represents. This is the general principle of all the sciences. Now, necessary existence is clearly contained in the idea of an infinitely perfect man or donkey or horse as well as in an infinitely perfect cock or fly. Therefore, an infinitely perfect man exists and an infinitely perfect donkey, horse, cock, and fly exist. All these conclusions are equally drawn from the same principle and by the same argument that our god-cultists claim to use to prove the existence of their infinitely perfect God.

Now, would it not be ridiculous to pretend to prove by this lovely argument the actual existence of an infinitely perfect man or ass or horse, or cock or an infinitely perfect fly? Yes, certainly, this so-called proof would be absolutely ridiculous, and our god-cultists themselves cannot fail to mock those who propose such a proof. How, then, do they claim to use the existence of their God for proof, seeing that this so-called

proof is no more ridiculous on the one side than on the other? And it is astonishing that intelligent men even propose such arguments.

According to Malebranche, the reason why this argument would not work for the existence of an infinitely perfect body as it does for the existence of an infinitely perfect God is because the idea of an infinitely perfect body is a fiction of the mind; as if the idea of another being that we imagine as infinitely perfect was not as much a fiction of the mind as the idea of an infinitely perfect body! Certainly, both are equally fictions of the mind and so the argument confirms no better the existence of either one.

And as he does not confirm the existence of an infinitely perfect body, so he certainly does not confirm the existence of any other infinitely perfect being. And despite this, he claims that the idea that is formed of another infinitely perfect being is not a fiction of the mind; it is up to him and his followers to prove by clear and evident reasons the reality of this so-called infinitely perfect being. To prove the existence of their God would be difficult and even impossible for them to do. And so, insomuch as they do not prove by better reasons and arguments the reality of this so-called infinitely perfect being, we will always be right to say that it is only imaginary and the idea they form of it is only a fiction of the mind, and, consequently, their so-called demonstrative proof concludes nothing about the existence of their God, no more than for the existence of a body we could imagine as infinitely perfect.

The author adds that “the idea of an infinitely perfect body is an idea composed and, consequently, can be false or contradictory, which it is, in fact, because we cannot clearly imagine infinitely perfect bodies.” But how is the idea they form of their infinitely perfect being simpler or less composed than the idea of an infinitely perfect body? It cannot be more simple or less composed in itself, I mean in its nature and being of idea because, even though we often enough say that there are thoughts that are more refined, subtler, or cruder than others, we do not pretend that they are actually more or less material or corporeal than others. All the operations of the mind and soul have the same nature and are as spiritual as each other and, consequently, as simple in themselves as each other. This is indisputable.

Therefore, it is evident that an idea cannot be called more simple or more composed than another unless it contains in itself the idea of many

other things than another idea contains. For example, you will say that the idea of a house is an idea composed because it contains in itself the idea of many other things that compose it, like the idea of the wood or stone of which it is composed, or the idea of a roof or walls that compose it, and the idea of doors, rooms, windows, cupboards, and chimneys therein, etc. And even the idea alone of a roof is an idea composed because it contains in itself the idea of tiles and slate, of boards and rafters and lofts, which support the whole cover. On the contrary, you will say that the idea of extension is simple and not composed because the idea of extension does not contain another idea besides that of extension itself.

Therefore, to know if the idea of a God or an infinitely perfect being is more simple or less composed than the idea of an infinitely perfect body, we have to see if the idea of a God or infinitely perfect being does not contain in itself the idea of as many perfections as the idea of an infinitely perfect body, because if it contains in itself the idea of as many perfections as the idea of an infinitely perfect body contains or can contain, then it is evident that these two ideas are as composed as each other and consequently as fictional as each other. Now, it is clear and evident that the idea of a God or an infinitely perfect being contains in itself the idea of all possible perfections because if it did not, it would not be the idea of an infinitely perfect being, but rather the idea of a being that lacks some perfections and, consequently, not infinitely perfect. Now, it is clear and evident also that the idea of an infinitely perfect body can contain in itself only all possible perfections. Therefore, the idea of a God or an infinitely perfect being is no more simple or less composed than the idea of an infinitely perfect body and, consequently, they are both only fictions of the mind that do not prove the existence of any infinitely perfect being.

"The idea of an infinitely perfect body is an idea composed and, consequently, can be false or contradictory, which it is, in fact." I agree with him that this idea is composed, is false, and there can be no infinitely perfect body. But we also have to agree that there is no other infinitely perfect being, seeing that the idea of an infinitely perfect being is only a fiction of the mind. "We cannot clearly imagine infinitely perfect bodies": I agree. But can we more clearly or easily imagine some other infinitely perfect being? Not at all; on the contrary, it is much easier to

imagine the perfections in a body that has extension and parts than in a being that has no body, form, or figure and even no extension or parts. We can easily imagine, for example, beauty and kindness in a body that has extension and well-proportioned parts; but how to imagine them in a being without form, figure, extension, or parts? It is certainly inconceivable. How can we imagine an infinite beauty and kindness in what we cannot even imagine any degree of conceivable beauty or kindness? We can easily imagine a mind, force, power, and wisdom in a person with a head, arms, legs, and who is robust; but how to imagine them (even infinite) in a being without arms, legs, head or brains, or anything that could produce force or wisdom? And finally, how could we imagine the infinite in a being without any extension or parts? Yet again it is self-negating and contradictory in its terms. It is absurd.

You will notice the tricks and blunders of this author. I have to speak like this because he also inadvertently or on purpose confuses being “in general” (without restrictions) with being “infinitely perfect” and the actual, necessary existence of being “in general” with that of an “infinitely perfect” being. He subtly concludes the actual, necessary existence of an “infinitely perfect” being from the actual, necessary existence of being “in general,” as if they were one and the same thing.

If he makes this captious argument and confuses the two on purpose, it is a dirty trick and inappropriate for an intelligent philosopher who reasons seriously.

And if it is inadvertent, it is a great blunder and a very considerable error because it is clear and evident—just pay a little attention—that there is a great difference between being in general and infinite and an infinitely perfect being. When we say “being in general” and without restrictions, as our author says, we mean only being that exists in whatever way it exists. But, when we say “infinitely perfect” being, we mean not only “a being that exists,” but also necessarily “a being that has all possible perfections” and has them to an infinite degree of perfection. For, if it did not have them all or did not have them to an infinite degree of perfection, then it would not be infinitely perfect since it would lack something.

## BEING IN GENERAL AND WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS IS EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS

So, it is unquestionable, clear, and evident that being in general and without restrictions and infinite is not the same thing as an infinitely perfect being; they do not mean the same thing. Being in general and without restriction or infinite being is nothing else but matter or extension itself, considering matter and extension as the same thing, as our Cartesians claim, which is not necessary to examine here.

It is unquestionable, clear, and evident that matter, or at least extension, exists and that it exists necessarily and even that it is infinite in its totality. For, when you think about it, it is not possible to imagine no extension or any end to extension because wherever you may claim to indicate or suppose some end or limit, you can clearly imagine again that there is necessarily a beyond of these limits and, consequently, there is extension, even an infinite extension because you can always clearly imagine that there will be a beyond of a supposed limit or end. Consequently, there will always be extension, even an infinite extension, as I said, that will always go on without end.

## MATERIAL BEING IS THE ONLY TRUE BEING

And so, we clearly see and imagine in the idea of matter or extension the actual and necessary existence of being in general, of being without restrictions and infinite. And there is reason to say that the simple and natural idea of this being includes everything that is and everything that can be because everything that is or can be is really only matter or extension variously modified.

There is reason to say that the idea of this being contains necessary existence and this being has its existence from itself because it is not possible that real being be without existence.

But, there is no reason to conclude from this the existence of an infinitely perfect being since there is no necessary bond between the clear and natural idea of matter or extension that is really and truly infinite and the chimerical idea of an infinitely perfect being that is found

nowhere, that exists nowhere, that does not exist and could not have in itself any real perfection, seeing that it would not have in itself any form or shape or extension.

They rightly say that “perfection” necessarily means some good and beautiful quality and some “perfect modification of being”; and that “infinite perfections” necessarily mean “infinite good and beautiful qualities” and infinite perfect “modifications of being.” And for a being to be infinitely perfect, it has to actually have in itself infinite kinds of very beautiful, very good, and very perfect modifications; this is clear and evident. Likewise, “modifications of being” necessarily means some “ways of being” and, consequently, “various and infinite kinds of perfections” means at the same time “various and infinite kinds of modifications,” i.e., various and infinite kinds of ways of being. Now, how can we imagine and how could there be various and infinite kinds of modifications, i.e., ways of being, infinitely beautiful, infinitely good, and infinitely perfect, in a being that does not have any form, shape, or even any parts or extension? This cannot be—it is obviously ridiculous and absurd. And so, it is clear and evident that the idea that our god-cultists form of an infinitely perfect being without any form, shape, parts, or extension is only a vain and chimerical idea and a fiction of their minds. Consequently, it is an illusion for them to claim to prove the existence of an infinitely perfect God by the chimerical idea that they form of an infinitely perfect being.

It is also an illusion for them to imagine that being in general and without restrictions, as they say, is the same thing as an infinitely perfect being because it is evident that matter or extension is not infinitely perfect being, even though it is being in general and without restrictions or limits. And so, it is an error for them to want to confirm as they do the existence of an infinitely perfect being from a being that is only infinite in extension. And at the same time this can be used to show the weakness and vanity of de Cambrai’s argument where he says,

I find that being would be in itself in the highest perfection. What has being in itself is eternal and unchanging because it always carries deep within itself the cause and necessity of its existence; in itself it is everything it can be and it can never be less than it is. To be like this is to exist in the highest degree of being and, consequently, in the highest degree of truth and perfection. (*On the Existence of God*)

According to this, he finds that being in itself would be in the highest perfection. He is obviously mistaken in this because it is evident that all matter and extension, which is in itself what it is, is not in the highest degree of perfection. Matter, for example, that makes a frog, a toad, a fly, or a worm is "in itself" as well as all other matter.

However, it is clear and evident that it is not really in the highest perfection, i.e., in the most perfect modification, because it can receive other modifications that may be more perfect, at least according to the way we judge things—for, it is thus that I understand things and not otherwise. As a result, if you maintain that all modifications of being are equally perfect in themselves and the modification of being, i.e., matter, is, for example, as perfect in mud as in the light of the sun, as perfect in a stinking, rotting carcass as in a beautiful living body full of vigor and health, I would not make the least effort to dispute this. For, as I know that matter is indifferent to all kinds of possible modifications, it can very well be that all possible modifications are equally suitable to it and, consequently, they would all be equally perfect in themselves and it would only be our judgments and opinions that would find more beauty or perfection in something. And if in this case our god-cultists claim that every diversely modified being is in the highest perfection of being, then they would make a God of every diversely modified being! Now that would be a lovely doctrine!

"What has being in itself is eternal and unchanging." It is true that it is eternal, but it is not always true that it is unchanging. Extension and matter (if they are two different things) both equally have being in themselves. It is true that extension is unchanging because it is always the same and in all kinds of places; but it is evident that matter is not unchanging since it actually moves and changes modifications, form, and figure all the time. And maybe that is why we can think that matter and extension are not precisely the same thing, as our Cartesians claim.

The reason why de Cambrai claims that being in itself would be unchanging as well as eternal is because, he says, it always carries deep within itself the cause and necessity of its existence. This reason proves that it would be eternal and could never be annihilated or cease to exist, but it does not at all prove that it is unchanging. For, though it be eternal and never annihilated, it does not follow that it would or should be unchanging, as is clearly seen in matter, which is in itself eternal, can

never be annihilated, and nevertheless is not unchanging, seeing that it actually moves and changes modifications and forms, as we see every day at every moment.

“Being is in itself everything it can be and it can never be more or less than it is.” This is true in one sense and not true in another.

What is in itself is in itself really and substantially everything it can be with respect to being; it cannot be more or less than what it is. Matter, for example, which is being in general, cannot be more or less matter than it is; likewise, extension, which again in its totality is being in general, cannot be in its totality more or less extension than it is. It is actually everything it can be. This is true in this sense.

But, it is not true that being in general is actually always everything it can be with respect to its form and modification, i.e., its way of being, because it cannot actually have every way of being since it can really change its way of being and be sometimes in one way and sometimes in another. This is evident in matter, which, although it cannot be more or less matter than it is in itself, nevertheless it cannot always actually have all the ways of being that it could have—and it is even impossible that it have them all together since there are many ways of being that are incompatible and necessarily destroy each other.

“Being in itself is to exist in the highest degree of being and, consequently, in the highest degree of truth and perfection.” This conclusion is obviously false. All matter is actually in itself in the highest degree of being, i.e., it cannot be more matter than it is or exist more truly than it does because it actually exists as much as it can and is matter as much as it can ever be. And yet, all matter is not in the highest degree of perfection, seeing that it is evident that all matter does not have all possible perfections and it cannot have them all together or even any of them in an infinite degree of perfection. Consequently, it is not true that what exists in itself and in the highest degree of being is therefore in the highest degree of perfection; and it is an illusion of de Cambrai and Malebranche to imagine as they do that the highest degree of being is the highest degree of perfection and that infinite being is the same as infinitely perfect being. It is, or was, an illusion for them to imagine this and it is obviously an error for them to conclude the existence of an infinitely perfect God from the existence of being that is in the highest degree of being and is only infinite in extension. However, all their argu-

ments are based only on this error and illusion and thus it is easy to see their weakness and vanity.

Let us go on to their stronger arguments—or at least what appears to be stronger, for, in fact, they do not seem to me to be any stronger than the others.

This argument is drawn from the grandeur, beauty, excellence, order, regularity, arrangement, and admirable bond that they find in all the things and works of Nature: "I cannot open my eyes without admiring the art that shines throughout Nature: the slightest glimpse is enough to perceive the hand that made it" (Fenelon, *On the Existence of God*). And the Grand Pooh-Bah St. Paul says that *the visible things of the world make visible to men what is invisible in God, to know his eternal power and divinity so that they have no excuse to not know him or not glorify him as he deserves* (Rom. 1:20).

Thus, all our god-cultists claim that there must have been a wholly divine spirit, i.e., an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise spirit, to make so many admirable productions that infinitely exceed all the genius and all the power of the greatest minds of the world. They claim that all of Nature shows the infinite art of its author and the whole universe bears in itself the seal and character of an infinitely powerful and industrious cause, since it is impossible, according to what they say, that chance alone or blind combinations and accidents of necessary causes, deprived of reason, could have produced so many beautiful and wondrous things.

This is confirmed by the examples I cited and when they take the admirable structure of a beautiful house, clock, picture, and the composition and printing of a beautiful and learned book and many other examples that they mention. And as we know perfectly well that a house, clock, picture, or book cannot at all be made by themselves and need skilled and ingenious workers to make them so well, and that it would be ridiculous and absurd to attribute their composition and construction to chance alone or to accidental combinations of blind causes, deprived of reason, so too, say our god-cultists, the admirable structure of the whole world clearly demonstrates the existence of a worker who made it, since it is also impossible that it made itself or that it was made only by accidental combinations of blind causes, deprived of reason.

Let us see, then, if it is really as god-cultists claim because if it is, we certainly have to concede to them, but if it is not, they have to recog-

nize their error and illusion. To determine the nature and origin of all these beautiful and admirable works or, if you want, beautiful and admirable productions that we see in Nature, we only have to know for sure their three principal causes:

1—Their substantial cause. I mean the fundamental cause of their being, i.e., what they are made of without any regard to their form or manner of being.

2—Their formal cause, i.e., what principally or precisely makes them specifically or specially be of such kind or manner as they are.

3—Their efficient cause, i.e., the active or acting cause that forms them, fashions them, places and arranges them as they are.

We need no more than this to see with certainty and clarity whether all these beautiful and admirable works of Nature necessarily come from the all-powerful hand of a God and a sovereignly perfect intelligence or if they can come only from some blind causes, deprived of reason.

So, let us examine this.

1—As to the substantial and fundamental cause of their being, everyone agrees, even our god-cultists, that it is matter that is their substantial cause and their substantial being because, as they are all material and corporeal, it has to be matter itself that is the foundation of their being and substance; in short, they are matter and matter itself, no one can doubt this. Now, matter can never have been created or formed from nothing for any reason whatsoever, as I very clearly proved above [chap. 70]. Being so, it is clear and evident that all these beautiful and admirable works of Nature, as far as their substance and substantial being are concerned, cannot have been created and formed from nothing; consequently, their existence and substantial being does not at all prove the necessity of the existence of a creator.

2—Their formal and specific cause is nothing but the internal and external configuration or modification of all the parts of matter that compose them, are joined together, unified, bound, and modified in infinite ways in all the different beings that we see or do not see. It is unquestionable, clear, and evident that there is only need for this diverse configuration, modification, and binding of the parts of matter to make and form all these works of Nature, so that even if there were an all-powerful and infinitely wise worker who formed them all deliberately, he certainly would not have formed them only by this diverse

configuration, binding, and modification of the parts of matter. Just as the most beautiful works of art and human industry are made only by means of the form, arrangement, and binding that the workers give to the materials they use, so also all the most beautiful, admirable, and perfect works of Nature are made only by the configuration, binding, and modification of the parts of matter. As a result, everything that is most beautiful, perfect, and admirable in Nature adds nothing to matter except a different configuration, combination, modification, and binding of its parts. As to the so-called substantial and accidental forms that some philosophers talk about and say are really particular beings that come up from or are somehow engendered in matter, they are only chimeras that are not even worth refuting; and our Cartesians are right to reject them completely, as they do. Being so, it is again evident that all the beauty and perfections that we see in the works of Nature, being really only modifications of matter, do not at all show or prove the necessity of the existence of a creator.

3—There remains only the third cause, which is the efficient cause. What does a being need in order to act? After much thought I find that it needs, and at the same time it suffices, to move or to have movement. For, we clearly understand that if a being is entirely at rest, it cannot possibly act or do anything: *idem manens idem semper facit idem*, according to the truthful maxim, “a thing that always remains in the same state can be or do only the same thing always.” Therefore, being, as far as it remains at perfect rest, is always at perfect rest, and, consequently, does nothing. But, from the moment when it starts moving, it starts acting and being in action; and the more or less it moves, the more or less it is in action. If it moves weakly and sluggishly, it acts weakly and sluggishly; if it moves with force and violence, it acts with force and violence; if it moves with knowledge and freedom, it acts with knowledge and freedom; if it moves blindly, it acts blindly, etc. In short, all action naturally and necessarily follows the nature of the movement of the being that moves. This is all clear and certain. Moreover, all these different movements can be modified in countless ways and all the beings that are in motion and that are the smallest parts of matter can mix up, combine, join, bind, cling, and unite together or collide, repulse, separate, move away, and scatter each other in countless ways. It is again clear and evident that all these different beings, i.e., parts of matter, as blind as they

are, by all their different movements, combinations, bindings, and modifications should naturally and necessarily produce countless kinds of different effects, some in one way, some in another, some beautiful, others ugly, some good, others bad, some small, medium, or large; some hard, others soft, some fluid and liquid, others dry and arid, some bright, others dark, some living and animate, others inanimate, etc.; countless kinds of works and effects of all shapes and sizes, all colors and qualities. And this is what we very clearly see in Nature.

It is also clear and evident that all these different effects or works that we see in Nature are made by the movement of matter and by the different assemblies, unions, and modifications of its parts. For, it is not possible that an infinity of beings or an infinity of parts that are in the totality of matter can always move in infinite ways without meeting and mixing with one another, without joining, binding, and clinging to one another in some way and, consequently, without making and producing all these different effects or works, beautiful or ugly, big or small, admirable or contemptible, that we see in Nature. As a result, although they have not all been such as they are now, they have necessarily been in some other way equivalent to how we see them now. And since all these same parts of matter that are joined and bound blindly together by their movement and accidental encounters cannot be detached and separated from one another by their natural movement and by the movement of other parts of matter that shake them up and weaken them all the time, it necessarily follows that all the works that are composed of these parts of matter cannot naturally be dissolved any more than all the parts of matter that compose them can be detached and separated from one another as they were before their union. This division or dissolution of the united parts in a work or composition is made more or less easily, or rather sooner or later, according to how they are more or less strongly united together or how they are more or less greatly weakened by what around them shakes them up, and this is what naturally causes illnesses, infirmities, old age, and, finally, death in living bodies and the decay and corruption in what has no life. And this again is what is done and obviously happens every day in the works of Nature so that you cannot deny anything of what I have just said with respect to this.

Being so, it is visible that all the works of Nature and even the most beautiful, perfect, and admirable, in their formation and dissolution,

depend only on the movement of matter and the union or division of its parts. And since this movement of matter can only come from matter itself, as I showed previously [chap. 71], and since this union and division of matter is only a natural result of its movement and of the regular or irregular movement of its parts, it follows that the formation itself of all these beautiful and admirable works of Nature does not at all demonstrate or prove the existence of an infinitely perfect God.

## 82. ALL NATURAL THINGS FORM AND FASHION THEMSELVES BY THE MOVEMENT AND COMBINATION OF THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF MATTER, WHICH ARE JOINED, UNITED, AND MODIFIED IN DIFFERENT WAYS IN ALL BODIES THAT THEY COMPOSE

**B**ut, our god-cultists will say, the movement of matter and of all its parts must at least be conducted, ruled, and directed by an all-powerful sovereign and supreme intelligence, since it is not at all possible that so many beautiful works, composed so regularly and industriously, are made and arranged by themselves as they are only by the blind movement and accidental combination of the parts of blind matter deprived of reason.

To this I respond: it is evident that there is always an infinite multitude of parts of matter that are moving in all directions by individual and irregular movements at the same time as they are carried by a general movement of the whole mass of a certain volume or a certain considerable extension of matter, which will be constrained to move in a circular line if it cannot continue in a straight line since everything that has extension is full of similar matter that cannot move away to another place to make room for the other. It is not possible that all this multitude of parts always moves in this way without being mixed up and running into one another, joining, binding, stopping, and attaching together in many kinds of ways and so starting to compose all these different works that we see in Nature, which could then be perfected and strengthened by the continuation of the same movements that started to produce them.

For, we have to notice that, since there are several kinds of movements in matter, there are some that are regular and always done in the same way and there are others that are irregular and occur without order; and we can say that there are both in all kinds of beings or com-

pounds in Nature. The irregular movements of the parts of matter produce the same effects without order or do not always produce them in the same way, but sometimes in one way and sometimes in another. And since these kinds of movements are irregular or can be irregular in countless ways, they are what make so many vices, flaws, defects, and imperfections in most of the works of Nature, and also very often monstrous and deformed things and others again that revolt against the ordinary course of Nature.

But, the regular movements of the parts of matter produce their effects regularly. And when the parts of matter have once made their way into certain places that conditioned them to be modified in such and such a way, they always tend to continue their movement in the same way through these places and to be modified in the same way. Thus, they regularly produce the same effects in these places and on these occasions without need of any other power to move them or any intelligence to conduct them in their movements; so much so that they cannot actually be diverted from their ordinary course or modified differently than usual, unless there were accidentally some obstacles in their way that would prevent them from continuing their way and from being modified as usual, because then they are forced to make a detour in their path or some other modification in their combination, which necessarily then causes some flaw, excess, deformity, or, at least, something extraordinary in the works that they compose.

Here are some natural examples of this:

Water, following the natural disposition or modification of its parts, is conditioned by itself to always flow downhill from where it is. If there is no slope anywhere, it remains as if immobile in its place, although all its parts are in continual movement with respect to one another, unless they are frozen. Yet if there is an incline to the right or left, i.e., on one side or another, it right away flows and spreads to the side of the incline without need of any intelligence to make it flow that way. And if it is water in a spring, a brook, or a river that normally flows, it, too, never stops flowing downhill. And by flowing through the same places, it naturally and blindly makes and forms a kind of course or canal, which it always follows regularly and continually from its source to its end, unless some obstacles accidentally come up in its bed or canal, like a pile of wood, rocks or soil that could fall in there or be carried there by some

extraordinary, devastating event and block the normal course. This would make it go a different way and even a more convenient and easier way where it would not fail to make and form again a new course or a new canal that it would regularly and continually follow as long as no such obstacles came in its way. And all this is done, as I said, without the need of any intelligence to lead it on its way.

In this way, naturally and blindly all heavy bodies fall directly downward and fire and smoke rise directly upward, as long as they are not impeded in their natural movement; and there is no need of intelligence or reason to conduct or direct their movements. Likewise, steam and fumes come out of the ground naturally and blindly from the heat of the sun; they naturally and blindly form fog that rises into the air or clouds of all kinds of irregular shapes. And the clouds naturally and blindly always follow the movement of the winds and fall back down again to earth in rain, hail, or snow. It is unquestionable and evident that all these kinds of things have no need of intelligence or reason to regularly follow their natural movements as they do.

It is clear and evident—just pay a little attention—that it is the same for the movement of all parts of matter that compose all the most beautiful and perfect works of Nature.

This is clearly seen every day in all the productions of Nature, especially in the production of plants, animals, and even in the natural production of the human body, which is considered the most perfect work of Nature. For, it is certain that all plants and animals, of whatever species they may be, and that human beings themselves normally produce their kind only because certain parts of matter make their way through certain ways in certain places and in certain encounters or by the arrangement of place, time, and some other circumstances and then are conditioned to be assembled, joined, and modified in such or such a manner. Every time similar parts of matter are in the same situations and circumstances of time and place, they are conditioned in the same way to always follow the same course and be modified in the same manner and, consequently, to always produce the same effects, unless some obstacles come in their way to prevent the parts of matter from following their normal course and make them take another, like a ball thrown down that continues its movement in a straight line unless it encounters an object to turn it away, but it turns right away to the right

or left when it encounters some obstacle or even comes right back if the obstacle it encounters makes it do this. It depends on some particularities that are not necessary to mention here.

Now, since some portions of matter accidentally took certain courses and made their way through the first generation of each species of plant and animal and in the circumstances they found themselves were conditioned to be assembled, joined, and modified in such or such a manner, it follows that every time the parts of matter are in similar encounters and circumstances they are likewise conditioned to follow the same routes, like water in a stream that follows its banks or canals; and following the same routes, they are conditioned to be assembled, joined, bound, and modified always in the same manner and, consequently, also to regularly produce the same effects in plants or animals of any species. And it is precisely this that makes all kinds of herbs and plants and animals and even men generate and produce normally and regularly their own species, unless they accidentally meet some obstacles in the way that prevent them from being modified as usual; or if their number or their movement is not too weak or insufficient to complete a whole and perfect modification; or, finally, if their number is not too great or their movement too fast, violent, or irregular because then their productions would remain imperfect and defective or would be monstrous and deformed.

Therefore, all the works and all the productions of Nature are really made by necessary and accidental causes, which are blind and completely deprived of reason. So, these works and productions do not at all demonstrate or prove the existence of a sovereign intelligence or, consequently, the existence of a God who made them as we see them.

### 83. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WORKS OF NATURE AND THE WORKS OF ART

**A**lthough this proof is clear and evident, it will nevertheless appear, perhaps, even more so by the response I am going to make to the examples of a beautiful house, a picture, a clock, and the composition and printing of a beautiful and learned book, that they cannot be made as they are without some skillful and ingenious workers putting their hands to them.

I admit that these things cannot really be made by themselves or by blind causes deprived of reason. I even admit that it would be ridiculous to say or even think this. But that it is the same with the works of Nature as with the works of human art and that the productions of Nature could only have been made by the omnipotence and sovereign intelligence of an infinitely perfect being—this I absolutely deny. And the clear and evident reason for this is that there is a very big difference between the works of Nature and the works of art and, consequently, between the productions of Nature and the productions of art.

The works of Nature are made with materials that form and fashion themselves by their own natural movement. They are made with materials that assemble, arrange, bind, and unite themselves with one another according to their different encounters and determinations and, consequently, they can make and form many works by their various assemblies, unions, and modifications.

But, the works of art are made with materials that have no movement in themselves and, consequently, cannot form or fashion themselves, cannot assemble, arrange, join, or attach themselves together and, consequently, cannot make any orderly or well-made work themselves, like a beautiful house, picture, clock, or the printing of a beautiful book. That is why it would be ridiculous to say or think that printed characters, ink and paper, which have no movement in themselves, could arrange and bind themselves so well together that they could make a book; this, I say, would be ridiculous to say or think.

Likewise it would be ridiculous to say or think that stones and wood,

which make up a house, could fabricate, assemble, arrange, and attach themselves together to build a house since all these materials have no movement in themselves. It is the same with a picture, a clock, and all other works of art; it would be ridiculous to say and think that they are made and formed by themselves, seeing that the materials from which they are made have no movement in themselves.

Therefore, since there is such a big difference between the works of Nature and the works of art, we should not be astonished that the former can form and fabricate themselves and the latter cannot, seeing that the materials that compose the former are "always" in motion and action by themselves, but the latter are "never" so, unless we set them in motion.

And we should not be astonished either to see that living bodies move and dead bodies do not. It would be surprising to see a dead body suddenly start in motion, join together, and assemble itself in one way or another. It would also be surprising to see stones and wood, which have no life or movement, roll themselves around and carve themselves, then start to jump up on top of each other. This would be surprising because these kinds of things do not have movement in themselves. But we are not surprised that living bodies move and that they approach and move back from each other. When they approach each other we are not surprised that they join together and remain together for a while and then separate from each other; we are not surprised because bodies in motion normally do this.

And so, about the smallest parts of matter, which are the true materials of which all the works of Nature are composed, since they all have in themselves the force to move, even in every direction, as I showed above, it is clear and evident that by the diversity of their movements they can be combined, allied, joined, united, and modified in countless ways, and it is even impossible for them not to do this in one way or another, considering the infinite multitude of such parts of matter that are in constant motion. We should not be surprised that there are, in fact, so many things joined, allied, united together and modified in so many different ways; and, consequently, we should not be surprised if they compose and produce by themselves so many different works in Nature since this production is only a natural result of their movement; and we should not be surprised either that all these works are placed and

arranged by themselves in their order and situation since the laws of movement, as blind as they are, make each thing arrange and place itself appropriately according to the disposition and constitution of its nature.

And far from being ridiculous to say that the works of Nature have been able to make and arrange themselves as they do by the force and natural laws of movement, it is, on the contrary, ridiculous for our god-cultists to deny this and make a comparison between the works of Nature and the works of art. It is ridiculous for them to want to reason from the one to the other and to draw consequences and conclusions from the one to the other, seeing that there is such a big difference and disparity between them. That is also why the most sensible of them cannot help recognizing the truth of the principles on which I reason.

## 84. THE CARTESIANS THEMSELVES ARE FORCED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE WORKS OF NATURE HAVE BEEN FORMED AND PUT IN THE STATE THEY ARE BY THE FORCE OF THE NATURAL LAWS OF MOVEMENT

**A**ccording to the doctrine of Malebranche, who is the most sensible of all the Cartesians and the most judicious of all the god-cultist philosophers, it is clear and evident that the formation of this whole universe and the production of all the works of Nature and even their order, arrangement, situation, and everything that is most beautiful and perfect in them, could have been made, as I said, by the forces of Nature alone, i.e., by the moving force alone of the parts themselves of matter, variously configured, combined, moved, and modified and bound or attached and united to one another. For, all these god-cultist and Christ-cultist philosophers do not see the necessity of any other cause than this or, consequently, of any intelligence to produce all the effects I just spoke about, since they expressly say that God formed all things all at once as they were formed and arranged in time, in the simplest ways, and he also preserves them by the same natural laws. And they expressly say that if God had not arranged them all at once as they are, they would have been arranged thus in time by the force of motion. And not only do they say that they would have been arranged in time by the force and laws of movement, but they also categorically say that if God had set them in a different order than they are, they would all have been reversed and set in the order that we see them now.

It is obvious, then, according to this doctrine of our most famous Cartesians, god-cultists, and Christ-cultists, that the production, order, and arrangement of the works of Nature, as admirable as they may be, do not at all prove the existence of a sovereignly perfect intelligence and, consequently, they do not prove the existence of an all-powerful God, insofar as he would have created matter and given it movement.

## 85. CONSEQUENTLY THEY ALSO HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MATTER HAS ITS MOVEMENT IN ITSELF, WHICH IS, NEVERTHELESS, AGAINST THEIR SENTIMENT

**N**ow, I have shown above that matter could not have been created and that it can only have its movement and existence from itself. So, we have to conclude that there is nothing in all of Nature that can demonstrate or prove the existence of an all-powerful and infinitely perfect God; and, consequently, we have to say that there really is not one and all the works of Nature were made and are still made every day only by the natural and blind laws of movement alone, which are found in the parts of matter.

But how could the author of *The Search after Truth* have said that if God had not arranged all things all at once as they are, the whole order of things would have been reversed, and if he had set them in a different order than they are, they would have been reversed and set in the order that they presently are in?

For, this author contradicts himself here and is clearly confused. Seeing that he claims that matter cannot have any movement in itself and any it has comes from God, the first author of movement, he could not say that any thing would arrange itself in time or reverse itself if God set it in a different order than it would be by the laws of movement. He could not even say that there would have been any laws of movement other than those God established or that the laws of movement would have had the force to put everything in the order where we now see it. For, it is clear and evident that things could not arrange themselves in any other order than what God put them in if they did not have some movement in themselves, even if this movement was no stronger than what God wanted to give.

Therefore, since this author acknowledges that all things would have been arranged in time in the order where they are and even if God had put them in a different order, they would have been reversed and put in

the order we now see them by the force of the laws of their movement, he also has to acknowledge that matter has in itself the force to move and that the natural laws of its movement are stronger than those it could have received from God, seeing that the natural laws of its movement would have had the force to reverse everything and put them in another order than what God had put them in.

Being so, it is obvious that this author, as sensible as he is, contradicts himself in this and clearly shows, against his own sentiment, that matter has its movement in itself; in this, without thinking about it, he is forced to acknowledge and admit the truth that he tries to attack elsewhere. It is certainly the force of truth itself that does this; so much so that we could say that the attacked truth happened to be glorified, to vanquish, and to *take its salvation from its enemies and from those who hated it* (Luke 1:71), i.e., from those who denied and attacked it.

This clearly shows, as I said, that all the works of Nature were first made and are made every day only by the natural and blind laws of the movement of the parts of matter of which they are composed; and, consequently, there is nothing in all of Nature that can show or prove the existence of an all-powerful and infinitely perfect God and it is in vain that our god-cultists say that the visible things of this world carry in themselves the seal and character of a wholly divine wisdom.

## 86. WEAKNESS AND VANITY OF THE REASONING OF OUR GOD-CULTISTS TO MAKE EXCUSES FOR THEIR GOD FOR THE IMPERFECTIONS, VICES, VICIOUSNESS, DEFECTS, AND DEFORMITIES FOUND IN THE WORKS OF NATURE

**A**nd what confirms this truth even more are the imperfections, defects, and deformities that are so often found in the works of Nature—particularly the vices and viciousness so often found in men and beasts; the multitude of infirmities, pains, and evils that so often afflict and torment them in life; and, finally, the sad and mournful or pining death that is inevitable. For, it is not at all believable that so excellent a worker as an all-powerful, infinitely good, wise, and perfect God would ever have wanted to leave any imperfection, defect, or deformity in his works. This would be too contrary to his beneficent nature.

Likewise, it is not at all believable that he would have wanted to allow any vice or viciousness in men or beasts or that he would have wanted to subject them to so many evils and infirmities that make them so miserable in life, because this would likewise be too contrary to his infinite bounty and sovereign wisdom, which could not contradict itself by allowing any vice or evil in its works.

So, since we clearly and so often see very considerable and very great imperfections, defects, and deformities in the works of Nature, and a great number of vices and viciousness in men and beasts, and since they are both subject to countless evils and infirmities that make them miserable and unhappy in life, it is again a clear and evident demonstration that they are not the works of an infinitely perfect being, but only the works of some blind and defective causes, like the different parts of matter of which they are composed, their different figures, movements, combinations, assemblies, bindings, and modifications.

As obvious as this is, our idolatrous god-cultists are so defensive of

and so infatuated not only with the existence but also with the bounty and so-called infinite wisdom of their God that notwithstanding this (so clever are they at lying and blinding themselves) they imagine and want to be absolutely persuaded that the imperfections, defects, and deformities in the works of Nature, as well as that the greatest vices and viciousness and evils in the world are particular effects of the bounty and wisdom of their God, who, according to them, is such that he preferred to get good from evil rather than to not permit any evil to exist. This is explicitly stated by their Grand Pooh-Bah St. Augustine: "God is so good and wise that he has judged it better to draw good out of evil rather than to not permit any evil to exist" (*Enchiridion*, 8, 27).

De Cambrai passes lightly over this problem and would rather we just not speak about it. It is no doubt because he knows very well that he has nothing to say about it, because if he did he would not fail to lay it out and fully develop it in his book *On the Existence of God*. Instead he just goes back to the ordinary language of simple and naïve minds that simply believe that the evils and afflictions of this life are favors from heaven and that God sends them to humiliate and chastise people mercifully for their vices and sins or to exercise and test their virtue, like testing gold in a furnace in order to make them so much more worthy of heavenly rewards; and, finally, God never allows any evil unless there comes some greater good. "Do not think," says the Grand Pooh-Bah St. Augustine, "that the wicked are of no use in the world and that God does nothing good for them because if he lets them live, it is either for them to correct themselves or to practice their patience for good" (*Explanation of Psalm LIV*).

Is not this a very subtle and decisive reason? Our iniquities themselves, say our pious and superstitious Christ-cultists, reveal the justice of God; our vices and viciousness make his kindness, patience, and mercy toward us so much more commendable; our lies make the truth of God shine brighter for his glory. If there were no tyrants, they say, Jesus Christ would not have so many glorious martyrs. If there were no demons to fight, there would be no victory or crowns to claim. If men had no evil to suffer in life, they would be too happy and content and would never want to leave it. If they had nothing to humiliate them, they would be too proud and haughty. If God never punished men in this world, they would not believe in divine providence and if he always

punished them, they would think there was nothing to fear or hope for in another life. But, by punishing some of the wicked as he does, he shows his divine providence and by not always punishing vices or rewarding virtues in this world, he makes men understand that there are rewards and punishments in another. Finally, our pious and superstitious god-cultists and Christ-cultists say that if virtue had no vice or viciousness to fight against, it would never triumph and thus have as much glory and merit as it does.

It is only by such and other similarly vain and frivolous reasons that our superstitious god-cultists and Christ-cultists are persuaded and want to persuade others that all the defects in the works of Nature and all the vices and viciousness in men and, generally, all the evils seen in the world are not contrary to God. Consequently, they say, we cannot and ought not to draw any conclusion against the truth of the existence of an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise creator God.

That is pretty much all our superstitious god-cultists can say to try to save and shelter the so-called bounty and infinite wisdom of their God who always did and still does allow all the time so many evils, flaws, vices, and viciousness in the world. The preachers who would only like to exercise their zeal and show off their eloquence with beautiful speeches and sermons can in this affair bring forth and emphasize these kinds of reasons and thus touch and please the hearts of the ignorant people who listen to them and see things only superficially without delving into them.

But that philosophers, theologians, and scholars, who talk and reason among themselves and who should delve into things and propose and support nothing unless based on good and solid reasons, have fun telling such tales and claiming to sufficiently answer by such vain and frivolous reasons the argument that presses and squeezes them so closely! They deserve to be scoffed at rather than seriously refuted.

Nevertheless, I have to show clearly the weakness, vanity, and inanity of their response.

1—If they only insisted on saying that it is to get some greater good that God allowed so many flaws and imperfections in the works of Nature and so many evils, vices, and viciousness in the world, this pretext would be very easy to allege and if it were really well founded, there would be nothing easier than to imagine this response. For, we easily

imagine, for example, that human wisdom and prudence allow some lesser evils to avoid some greater ones or to get some greater good. So, de Cambrai did not have to say as he did that the flaws, vices, and evils in this world are an incomprehensible hodgepodge of baseness and grandeur because it is not an incomprehensible mystery to allow some lesser evils to avoid the greater or get some greater good.

And in the very fact that he says the world is an incomprehensible hodgepodge of baseness and grandeur he does as much injury as honor to its creator, since he accuses him of having made baseness as well as grandeur, i.e., despicable things along with respectable things. And so, when he finds the greatest and most admirable works in Nature to be only an incomprehensible hodgepodge of baseness and grandeur, he does not at all prove the existence of an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God.

2—When our Christ-cultists say that God allows all vices, imperfections, viciousness, and evil in the world in order to get some greater good, they have to mean some greater corporeal and temporal good like the goods of this world, either of the body, soul, or mind, or else they mean some so-called greater goods of another life after this one. No doubt they often mean both, but mainly the spiritual goods of grace and the eternal goods of heaven, which are, according to them, the most important and respectable.

As to the so-called greater spiritual goods, which they call "grace," or the so-called greater eternal goods of another life, it is a pure illusion to say or think that an infinitely good and wise God would want to allow so many defects and deformities in his works or so many vices and evils in the world for this. It is an illusion, I say, to imagine this, not only because there really are not any so-called spiritual goods of divine grace or any other life than this one, but also because even if there were (which would have to be proven and not just assumed), it would not at all be a reason or motive for an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God to leave so many imperfections, defects, and deformities in his works or so many evils and vices in the world, given that all these flaws and evils have in themselves nothing to do with these so-called spiritual goods of grace or eternal goods of another life. They are not necessary at all and can contribute nothing of themselves to the production or acquisition of these so-called goods; on the contrary, they would instead be obstacles

and hindrances to these kinds of goods, seeing that it is evident that those who have imperfections and flaws are less worthy of merit and esteem, of favor and respect than those who are perfect; and those who are vicious and mean are more worthy of punishment than of rewards.

And with respect to the just and good people and the innocent who patiently and constantly suffer the evils and afflictions of life, I confess that they are very praiseworthy in this and worthy of compassion and highly deserve to receive the reward of their virtue; but, to say that an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God would want to send them these evils and afflictions on the pretext of a greater good? On the pretext of trying their patience? And wanting to purify them? And perfecting them in virtue to make them so much more glorious and happy in heaven? This again, I say, is a trick, an illusion, because such a pretext of such so-called greater goods is only a fiction of the human mind, which is ingenious at fooling itself when it wants. And evident proof of this is that they cannot give any proof of what they say and it would be as easy for our god-cultists and Christ-cultists to allege this pretext for the false as for the true and it could as easily be alleged by swindlers, impostors, and scoffers as by honest people who spoke the truth or who thought they were speaking the truth.

Now, because of this it has no weight or consideration and cannot at all serve as proof or evidence of truth; and, consequently, it is an illusion for our god-cultists to think they have sufficiently answered a pressing argument by such a vain reason that is based only on their imagination and that is really only a vain fiction of their mind. In speaking this way about their God, they do what some people do when they see that they cannot finish what they want to do: they pretend to not want to do it; or when they cannot prevent what they want to prevent, they pretend to allow it and not want to prevent it; and to cover up their weakness and impotence they say that they really want it so, for whatever reason they may allege.

But our god-cultists, seeing full well that their so-called all-powerful God does not at all make it his duty to render all his works perfect and to prevent the evils and viciousness of men and that there is, in fact, cause to conclude that this so-called all-powerful God does not exist, so they become desperate enough to have to have recourse to such a vain and feeble reason as this to try to defend their opinion and at the same

time to cover up the weakness and impotence of their God, on the pretext that it is for a greater good, spiritual or corporeal, present or future, that he allows so many imperfections, flaws, deformities, evils, vices, crimes, and so much viciousness in the world. To cover up the error and falsity of what they preach and to better fool themselves, they do well to say that their God allows such things for a greater good because they cannot say it is only for a greater corporeal and present good in this life alone, since the error and falsity of saying this would be too obvious and crude, seeing that they themselves clearly see every day a great quantity of evils, vices, crimes, and viciousness from which no real good, corporeal or spiritual, comes. To say this would obviously be false.

So, there remains only to know if some greater corporeal or spiritual goods always come in another world. Now, who has been there to tell them about it? Who told them it was like this? What experience do they have of it? What proof do they have? Certainly none, except what they get from their faith, which is a blind belief in things they do not see and that no one has ever or will ever see.

Now, a statement, a response, an opinion that is based only on such a belief is based on nothing—it carries no weight; it deserves no consideration. Consequently, it is clearly an error and illusion for our god-cultists and Christ-cultists to say as they do that their God would not ever allow any evil if it was not to get some greater good, either in this world or another.

Furthermore, although there does indeed come some great good from an evil sometimes and it is true to say that it is prudent and wise for men to do or allow some lesser evil to avoid a greater evil or to get some greater good, it does not follow from this that we can say the same of an all-powerful God. It is an error and illusion to imagine this; and the evident reason is that men are not all-powerful to do everything they want, so it often happens that they cannot do certain good things that would be necessary or appropriate to do without doing or allowing or suffering some evil. Likewise, it happens often enough that they cannot prevent certain greater evils without doing or allowing or suffering some lesser ones.

In short, they often enough find it necessary to do what they would not want to do at another time or they find it impossible to do what they would really like to be able to do. In these cases, men have to give in to

the laws of necessity by conforming to the time and place and there is no doubt that it is better to do so. That is why, for example, parents often have to punish their children severely so as to correct them and make them wiser and more obedient. That is why magistrates often have to punish the guilty severely so as to give an example to others. That is why the wounded sometimes have to cut off an arm or leg so as to save their life, etc. And countless other similar cases in which men often have to do or allow or suffer what they would not otherwise suffer or allow if they could do everything they wanted as they wanted.

But, it is not the same for a God considered to be all-powerful. For, if he were indeed all-powerful, as they say, he could easily do all sorts of good things and prevent evil and he could never find himself, like weak and mortal men, in that distressing necessity of doing or allowing some evil in order to do some good or avoid some greater evil. As a result, he could freely and easily do all sorts of good things without being forced to do or allow any evil. Likewise, he could very easily prevent all kinds of vices and evils without delay and without diminishing any good: he could not but want this and all would be done as it pleased him to do.

Therefore, if he does not do all the good that would be appropriate to do for all his creatures and if he does not always prevent the evil that would be appropriate to prevent, he must not want to or cannot.

If it is because he does not want to, then he is not infinitely good, as they want to suppose, since he would not like to do all the good that he could and that would be appropriate to do. For, an infinitely good, wise, and perfect being would not ever lack good will and it would always necessarily love to do the good that would be appropriate to do. And if it is because he cannot always do good and prevent evil as would be appropriate, then he is not all-powerful, as they say, because nothing can be impossible for an all-powerful being.

It is no use for them to say here that men very often do not deserve all the good that God could and would want to do for them and, on the other hand, they often deserve the punishment of evil and affliction that he sends them in order to make them wiser and more virtuous. It is useless to say this because according to the very doctrine of our god-cultists and Christ-cultists, men can have no other perfections, virtues, or merits than what God gives them by his pure grace and mercy, nor can they do any good or avoid any evil or abstain from any vice or bad behavior

unless this same God gives them the grace and strength. As a result, everything good and well in men are, according to their doctrine, the pure gifts of God. And not only do all kinds of good, virtue, and merit come from God, but also all good thoughts, desires, affections, and all the good deeds that men do come from his pure grace: "You grant virtue and its rewards" (Preface to Mass at Lent).

From this it clearly follows, according to their own principles, that if God always gave them the grace and strength to avoid evil, they would never deserve his punishment, and if he always gave them all the virtues and merits appropriate to them, they would always deserve all kinds of graces and blessings.

And if, on the contrary, it happens that men do not do all the good that is appropriate to do and they do not always abstain from vice and evil as they should and thereby make themselves worthy of the punishments of God rather than his friendship and good grace, it is certainly the fault of God himself rather than men, seeing that they cannot do good unless God does it in them and they cannot avoid evil unless God gives them the strength. They could even reprimand him with the prophet Isaiah and say that he was the very cause of all their vices and aberrations: *Why, O Lord, have you made us go against your commandments? You have hardened our hearts so that we have no fear of you*, etc. (Is. 63:17).

And so it is ridiculous for our god-cultists to say that God does not do all the good he could for men on the pretext that they do not deserve it. And it is also ridiculous for them to say that he sends them evils and afflictions on the pretext that their vices make them worthy of his punishment and their virtues make them worthy of his benefits and rewards, seeing that they cannot have virtues or merits except as far as it pleases God to want to give them.

Now I will return to my argument and say that if God does not always give men the gifts of his grace to make them love and practice virtue in order to deserve the favor of his good graces, benefits, and rewards or to prevent and preserve them from evil in order that they not deserve his disgrace and punishments, it is either because he does not want to or cannot—either he is not infinitely good or he is not all-powerful.

And if he is not infinitely good or all-powerful, we certainly cannot say that he is really God or that he is an infinitely perfect being.

Hence it is easy to see that when our god-cultists say that men do not deserve all the good that God could do for them and, on the other hand, they do deserve all the evils and afflictions he sends, it is again only a vain pretext that they allege to try to cover up the weakness and impotence of their God and to always keep ignorant people in their ignorance and in their vain superstitions.

But what is unusual in such behavior of a God is that it would be a very strange bounty indeed and an astonishing wisdom to want to make men suffer so much pain and harm and to allow such great and detestable evils as well as so much great and abominable viciousness in the world on a principle of bounty and wisdom.

Would it be believable or even thinkable that a sovereign bounty and divine wisdom would want to strive for the truest and firmest good by ways so opposed to this very good and that it would want to establish the good by the destruction of this very good? Is it believable or thinkable that it would want to perfect and sanctify his creatures through flaws? Through vices and viciousness? That it would want to make them wise though folly? That it would want to make them vicious in order to make them virtuous? And, finally, that it would want to make them happy and eternally blessed by making them truly unhappy?

It is as if we were to say that a very skilled and ingenious craftsman, who had made many excellent works, wanted to let them spoil or wanted to tear them up on the pretext of making them more beautiful and more perfect, although he never saw this make them more beautiful or more perfect.

It is as if we were to say that a perfectly good and wise prince wanted to let his people or subjects be oppressed and pillaged on the pretext of making them richer and happier (although he never saw anyone become richer and happier) and making his kingdom more prosperous.

It is as if we were to say that a very wise and prudent doctor wanted to let or even make his sick patients be poisoned and let gangrene infect their wounds on the pretext of healing them and giving them better and stronger health, although he never saw anyone healed in this way.

It is as if we were to say that a wise philosopher wanted to make his students do foolish and extravagant things and even totally confuse their minds on the pretext of making them wiser, although it never happened.

Finally, it is as if we were to say that a perfectly good father of a

family wanted to let his children fall into all kinds of vices and viciousness and let them fight, tear each other apart, cut each other's throats, and destroy each other on the pretext of wanting to do more good for them and make them happier, although he always saw them miserable and unhappy.

In the same way we have very strong reasons to say that it is ridiculous for our god-cultists and Christ-cultists to say as they do that it is for a greater good that an infinitely good and wise God allows so much detestable viciousness in the world that clearly tends to ruin and destroy all goods rather than to establish anything good.

Again, how can they say that it is for the best that their God wants to allow so many evils and such viciousness seeing that they all agree with their moral maxim that says, "Evil must not be done for good to come"? If it is not suitable or appropriate to do any evil so that good can come, then why do they think that their God would want to allow so many evils to be done and so many crimes and sins to be committed in order that good might come? Is it because he is the sovereign master and Lord of all things so he is allowed to do everything he wants? Or because he is infinitely good and wise so it is more appropriate for his infinite bounty and wisdom to do evil and allow evil to be done in order to get some good, which would not be appropriate for any creature to do or allow for a similar purpose? It is, or rather it would be ridiculous only to think this.

We can say it is a ridiculous and absurd paradox to say that it is for the best that an infinitely good and wise God would want to allow so many evils and wickedness in the world. It would be a paradox that would be unheard of if our fanatical and superstitious Christ-cultists (especially the priests who are interested in and greedy for their profit) were not trying to cover up the weakness and impotence of their God with it and at the same time keep the people in the errors from which they get their profits and livelihood.

But as we cannot deny that it is sometimes useful and even appropriate to do some evil in order to get some good, we should know in particular on what occasions and in what circumstances this can be legitimately and prudently done. Now, it seems that there are only two kinds of circumstances in which this can be legitimately and prudently done and they must always accompany each other.

The first is when the good is more useful, advantageous, and necessary than the evil is harmful and detrimental. For, it is unquestionable that if the good were not more considerable than the evil, it would be neither prudent nor wise to do it and it would even be crazy to do it if the good were not much greater than the evil.

The second circumstance or requisite condition to be able to legitimately and prudently do some evil to get some good is when it is absolutely necessary to do the evil in order to get or do the good that we want to get. For, if we can have or do this good without necessarily doing any evil, it is unquestionable again that it would be very badly done by doing evil or allowing any evil to be done on the pretext of getting some good.

Now, although men often enough find themselves in the situation or even the necessity of doing or allowing some evil to get some greater good or to avoid some greater evil, nevertheless it is sure that an all-powerful God could not ever find himself in any situation where he would be forced to do or allow some evil because, being all-powerful as is supposed, he could always at all times and in all places, without any pain or difficulty, do all kinds of good without need of evil. That is why it is not at all believable or even thinkable that an infinitely good and wise, all-powerful being would ever want to do or allow any evil on the pretext of getting some good, because this would not be doing or allowing evil to get some good but only doing or allowing evil for the sake of evil itself, which cannot at all be appropriate for a God or an infinitely perfect being.

Just pay a little attention and you will see that despite this our pious Christ-cultists still want to maintain that their so-called bounty and wisdom allows some evil to get some good, even the greatest good, but why, then . . . ?

Why do they pray so much and so insistently to this so-called divine bounty and wisdom to keep them out of danger and evil and to deliver them as soon as they are stricken and afflicted with some harm?

Why in their danger and peril do they cry out so much for the help of God? Why invoke him so much in their afflictions?

Why are they so worried and impatient in the adversities and afflictions they meet? And not only in their personal afflictions and adversities but also in their public afflictions and calamities, like wars, plagues,

and famines? Why on these occasions do they make so many vows, so many processions, and so many public and private prayers? Are they afraid that their God will not get for them some really great good from these evils and afflictions?

Why all the pious and devotional invocations of God and his saints? Why all the pious and devotional processions and parades? Why all the prayers and vows, all the austere fasts and severe penitence, public and private? Why all the cries, groans, clamor, and mournful lamentations that they make in their adversities and afflictions?

If it is really for the best that their God wants to communicate to them by way of the evils and afflictions he sends them, should they really want to change his good intentions for them by their prayers? They should not dread so much the evils that ought to bring them more good than bad! And they should not feel afflicted or worried when these things happen to them, seeing that they are for the best.

A sick man, for example, who was about to die or who was tormented by long and violent pains, would not really dread a bleeding if he knew he would only suffer this to be completely healed. He would willingly run to the doctor to pray for him to do it.

Likewise, a poor beggar would not be troubled at all to be robbed of his awful clothes, or even his good ones, if he knew that he would soon get rich and precious clothes; on the contrary, he would rejoice in his troubles. Nor would he be troubled to see his wretched shack set on fire if he knew he was going to possess a beautiful house; on the contrary, he would rejoice in his troubles.

That is just what they should do in all these evils and afflictions that happen to them. Seeing that their God wants to do more good than bad for them, they have no reason to fear or complain when these things happen. On the contrary, they would have more reason to rejoice and praise their God as if they were receiving his benefits. (Cf. Matt. 5:1-3, 6, 10-12; Acts 5:41, 14:22; 2 Cor. 4:16-17.)

But as our god-cultists do not really have the same pious sentiments and it seems clear enough by their ordinary conduct that they have the opposite sentiments and now make much more of the goods of the present life than those so-called goods of the future, and they make much more of the corporeal and perceivable goods than those so-called spiritual goods of an imaginary grace—this is a visible and decisive mark

that they hardly dwell much on everything they say of the so-called omnipotence and so-called infinite bounty and wisdom of their God and they do not make much of these so-called greater goods that they could get from the evils and afflictions that he sends them or from the evils that he lets them do in their wickedness.

So, it is clearly an error and illusion for them to say that it is for the best that their God allows so many evils and so much wickedness in the world. And confirmation of this is that if it really were for the greatest good that he allowed them, he would not get so angry and upset, as our Christ-cultists say he does, with the wicked, vicious people who do evil. For, why would he get so angry and upset with them if he could and would use the greatest evils and viciousness that they could do to get the greatest goods? Certainly we do not see very well why he should be so angry, considering that they do what he wants, through his infinite bounty and wisdom, in order to get the greatest goods. Now according to our Christ-cultists' doctrine, however, there is nothing so displeasing to God as the sin, vice, and viciousness of men; there is nothing that arouses his anger, indignation, and fury as much as the detestable crimes that men commit through their viciousness. Their "Scriptures" are full of evidence that shows us his anger and indignation against sinners; and so, there is no reason or basis for our god-cultists to tell us that their God never allows any evil except to get some very great good.

But, let us look a little more closely at these so-called greatest goods that their God has the skill to be able to so happily and charitably get from the greatest evils. Let us listen to them and see if we cannot completely confound them.

It is certain, these gentlemen say, that God governs and conducts all things with a sovereign power and wisdom so that there is no one who can say that he does anything in vain, not even the worst and most vicious thing, because God, according to them, uses even the worst things to manifest his glory, power, and justice. For, just as it is especially during times of contagious disease that a skillful doctor shows his learning, skill, and ability by cleverly healing the sick, so also, say our god-cultists, does the grandeur and multitude of evils, vices, and viciousness of men make the bounty, mercy, and justice of God shine forth: *Our injustice brings out the justice of God. And our lies make the truth of God shine forth all the more for his glory* (Rom. 3:5, 7).

That is why, although he can prevent the malice of men, he does not want to, figuring it better to get good from the evil that he permits rather than not to permit any. It is through the malice of men, they say, that God tries the virtue of the good, because if there were no wicked to afflict and try the just, we would not know so well the beauty or merit of virtue; the just would not have, as they do, the merit to suffer with patience and not having the merit to suffer with patience, they would no longer have such glorious rewards to hope for in heaven. If there were no tyrants to persecute the faithful, there would be no such generous and glorious martyrs to die so generously for the faith of Jesus Christ. If there were no demons to tempt and solicit men to evil, there would be no invisible enemies to fight; and having no enemies to fight, there would be no victories to win and, consequently, no crowns or rewards to claim. If there were no evils or afflictions in life, men would be too proud and haughty; miseries serve to humiliate them. If there were no vices and viciousness, they would not know so well the beauty and merit of virtue; contraries never appear with so much brilliance as when they are opposed to each other. It is like this, they say, for the beauty and merit of all the virtues: they never appear with such brilliance as when they are opposed to the vices, which are their contrary. And it is in this way, say our skillful and ingenious Christ-cultists, that God can wondrously get good from the evil that he allows.

But, who does not see that this too is a pure illusion? What? Abandon the just to the insolence and fury of the vicious to try their virtues and their patience? Afflict men with sicknesses, plagues, wars, famines, and all the other evils of life to try the virtue and patience of the just? To humiliate the proud and haughty? And to make sinners repent? Deliver men to the attacks and temptations of demons who endlessly solicit them to all kinds of vices and viciousness, as our Christ-cultists think, in order to have visible and invisible enemies to attack inside and out to have the glory of vanquishing them? And finally, make men miserable and unhappy on earth on the pretext of wanting to bring and lead them to a greater perfection and make them worthy of the greatest rewards in heaven? Gentlemen Christ-cultists, do you say this is the very special wisdom of your God? Are these the very special effects of his bounty and mercy? Are these the goods, even the greatest goods that he can get from all the dreadful evils, all the abominable crimes, and all the detestable viciousness that he allows and lets happen?

Say rather that it is error and madness in you just to have such thoughts. Say rather that it is weakness, ignorance, and impotence in your God to allow so many detestable evils in order to get such vain and feeble goods. For, it would be to allow countless evils to get only a very little good; to allow very great evils to get only a very feeble good; to allow very real and actual evils to get only a false and imaginary good.

It is compelling men to fight against imaginary enemies to make them win imaginary victories. In a word, it is taking away from them their only real and solid goods and making them unhappy in life to revel vainly in the idea alone of a very great perfection that is only imaginary. For, in fact, what are all these so-called goods that they want God to get from evils? They are certainly only very feeble and petty goods and most often even only imaginary.

If God is pleased with the just, does he have to make them or let them be miserable and unhappy in life? Does he have to tyrannize them by the malice of the vicious? *Should he afflict them with sores or kill them suddenly, would he not laugh at the pains of the innocent?* says the good Job (9:23). If he wants to purify and make them more perfect in their virtue, does he have to let them or make them miserably languish and groan in their suffering?

If he wants men to be wise and virtuous, to be gentle, humble, charitable, beneficent, and obedient to his laws and commandments, does he have to strike them so roughly and afflict them with all kinds of evils and misery? Rather than kindly giving them the spirit of understanding, kindness, and wisdom? Finally, if he wants to make them eternally happy in heaven, does he have to make them miserable and unhappy on earth? What madness to even have such thoughts!

If an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God had goods to do for men, we have to believe that he would do them in a manner that was worthy of him; that he would do them without doing or allowing any evil. It is only the impotence or defect of kindness that cannot do good without mixing in some evil.

But let us see if these so-called spiritual goods always result from the evils, vices, and afflictions that happen so often in life. Do men always take such great advantage of them that they always become wiser and more virtuous? Are they always humble and patient in their suffering and adversity? Are even the most righteous always sanctified? And always

purified more and more as a result of being miserable and unhappy? Do they always bless the striking hand of God? Do the righteous themselves always persevere in virtue amid suffering, temptations, and the opportunities for sin? Ah! Very far from it!

The number of those who succumb to temptations, who are impatient in suffering and are lost in life's miseries and afflictions, according to our Christ-cultists, is far greater than the number of those who are sanctified and preserve their innocence. Maybe for one who will remain firm in his virtue and be patient in his suffering and afflictions there will be a thousand who are impatient, curse their fortune, and succumb under the weight of their miseries and afflictions. That is why the Christians, like their divine Christ, say *there are many called, but few chosen* (Matt. 22:14), i.e., there are few saved and many condemned.

And far from a good or greater good always following upon an evil, we more often see one evil attracts another, a lesser evil attracts a greater, and one single evil attracts many. *An abyss attracts and calls to another abyss* (Ps. 42:7). This is seen all the time by experience in countless encounters. So, it is obviously false to say, as our Christ-cultists do, that God permits evil to get from it some greater good.

Now, to show even more clearly the falsity of this doctrine, let us go to the heart of the matter and see what our Christ-cultists themselves say about its origin.

According to them, all the evils and miseries of life are the fault of the first man, who out of curiosity ate a fruit that God had forbidden him to eat. God no doubt wanted to allow this first evil and fault or sin, seeing that it really happened. For, if he did not want to allow it, being all-powerful as they say, he very well knew how to prevent it and could have, if he wanted to keep and preserve men always in the state of innocence and perfection as he had created them and thus make them forever happy and content. Not wanting this, he allowed this fault, this disobedience and sin of the first man. And so this disobedience was the first evil and the first sin of the world, at least for men. And God wanted and allowed it, according to the doctrine of our Christ-cultists, only to get some greater good.

Now, gentlemen Christ-cultists, what is this greater good that your God had the cleverness and kindness to get from man's first evil, fault, and sin? Show us so that we can see it and see the wondrousness of the

bounty, wisdom, and omnipotence of your God! If this so-called greater good is truly something real, it should be found either among men or with God, or at least among some creatures other than men.

If it is found among men, they should certainly be in a more perfect, holier, and happier state now than they were before the first fault and evil, seeing that God permitted it only to get a greater good. Therefore, if this so-called greater good is found among men, they should certainly be better and in a better state, i.e., happier and more perfect, than they were before. (Cf. Rom. 5:8–10, 15–20.)

However, this is not at all the case. In no way do we see that the condition of men has become in any way better, happier, or more perfect. On the contrary, we see everywhere in the world a torrent of vices and viciousness and a flood of evils, illnesses, infirmities, and calamities that make most men miserable and unhappy on earth. So, it is clearly false to say that God always took some greater good from the evil he permitted, and it is clearly an error and illusion for our Christ-cultists to say that he ever permitted any evil only to get some greater good from it.

Far from having reason to say that their God had really got some greater good from the first evil, fault, and sin of man, they would be better off saying that he had got all the greatest evils from the slightest fault, the least evil and the smallest sin of man (which certainly was only a very small and slight sin); he wanted to draw from it all the greatest, most detestable, and most deadly evils, seeing that they say that all the evils and miseries of this life and all the vices and viciousness of men and even all the cruelest and most dreadful eternal punishments of hell are only the unhappy results of the first fault and sin of man.

And as this fault, such as they imagine it, was nevertheless in itself only a very slight fault, which did not even deserve a lashing, God had the will and skill to get from it (this first little sin) all the most detestable and frightful evils imaginable.

Judge whether this can be said of an infinitely good, wise, and perfect God or being. Certainly this is too offensive, too absurd. So, it is unquestionable and evident that the so-called greater good that God could have got from this first evil is not at all found among men.

And based on their doctrine we could even say now that the wicked will someday be the closest to God; and even the devils and all the reprobates who suffer now such cruel and dreadful torments in their hells as

punishment for their vices and viciousness will someday be the happiest, seeing that God allowed their present viciousness and reprobation only to get a greater good, i.e., to reward them better and make them holier, more perfect, and happier in times to come.

I do not think anyone with common sense and even slightly enlightened could ever have such sentiments as these. Therefore, it is in vain and without basis that our Christ-cultists suppose that a God would ever allow any evil only to get some greater good.

But what shows even more the vanity of this supposition and the falsity of this so-called greater good that they want God to get from this so-called first flaw of men (in giving them a divine redeemer who would deliver them from sin and reconcile them with God, who would give to them a greater abundance of graces and put human nature back into a better state and condition than it was before) is that they do not see and even cannot see, give, or show any indication or even any real and effective appearance of this so-called redemption and restoration of men; or of the so-called reconciliation of men with God. They cannot see, give, or show any real indication of this so-called greater abundance of graces; or any indication in men of the so-called happy and wondrous reestablishment or reformation of human nature. I challenge all the god-cultists and all the Christ-cultists to give or show any real and perceivable appearance. But, on the contrary, we clearly see every day that human nature is still as full of weakness and infirmity as it has always been. We clearly see every day that men are still as full of vices and viciousness as they have always been. And we clearly see every day that they are as miserable and unhappy, i.e., overwhelmed with evils and miseries, as they have always been.

Where, gentlemen Christ-cultists, do you find that so-called redemption and restoration or reformation of human nature? Where do you find that so-called greatest abundance of graces? Where is that so-called admirable reestablishment of human nature? All this is only imaginary in you. You can give or show no proof, no indication, no real and perceivable appearance of everything you say! That is what ought to confound you, because you clearly show that everything you say is only a fiction of your minds and hollow imaginations. You have to be as stupid and crazy as you are to put any faith in it.

I see very well that you will not fail to say that we must not ask or search for any proof or real and perceivable indication of a redemption

that is purely spiritual such as the redemption of men made by Jesus Christ, the divine son of God! And likewise we must not ask or search for proofs or visible indications of a greater abundance of graces that are all purely spiritual such as the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Finally, we must not ask and search for proofs or visible indications of a wholly spiritual restoration and reformation like Jesus Christ, true God and true man, made for human nature; but in these kinds of things we must believe purely and simply what faith teaches us. I see this very well—and you will not be able to say anything else.

Therefore, gentlemen Christ-cultists, you acknowledge that all these so-called greatest goods, which your God took from the first evil or sin of man, are only spiritual and invisible goods that escape any bodily sense and even the natural lights of human reason. And you want us to believe this based on your word alone and what you tell us!

You should acknowledge instead that you have no reason to demand such belief, and that you have deceived us and deceived yourselves, and that all these so-called greater goods that you call "spiritual goods" are, in fact, only imaginary goods and illusions. For, since you can see and feel nothing, show nothing real and perceivable, it follows that they are only imaginary. And it is great madness to want to accept purely imaginary goods as true and real; it pertains purely to lunatics and fanatics to accept such illusions as real truths.

Being so, it is evident that the so-called greater good that God took from the first evil and sin of man is not at all found among men.

If you say that it is found with God, he would have to have become wiser, more perfect, or happier than he was before this fault and first evil. In this case, he should have been more relaxed rather than angry; he should have rewarded those who committed it rather than punishing them and banishing them from the terrestrial paradise where he had first put them.

Or if he did not become wiser, more perfect, or happier in himself, he must have taken great pleasure in seeing men fall into sin by their fault and he must now still take pleasure in seeing them as vicious, miserable, and unhappy as they are. Could this pleasure be the greater good he took from the first sin?

And yet, gentlemen Christ-cultists, this is what you dare not say, although it seems that your so-called God took pleasure in sneering at

the stupidity and foolishness of the so-called first man when he said these poignant words to him as if to mock him: *Now at last Adam has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, and lest he also eat the fruit of the tree of life and live forever, let us banish him from paradise and he will eat his bread by the sweat of his brow* (Gen. 3:22).

You will not say either that this greater good is found among other creatures since it would be ridiculous to say that the sky or the earth or other beings like angels, for example, became wiser, more perfect, or happier! Unless you say, like some do, that the devils delighted in it and this was the greater good that your God took from the so-called first fault of Adam. But I see that you would not dare say such a thing.

But perhaps you will say that he has allowed all these evils, vices, and viciousness that reign in the world for a greater manifestation of his glory, power, and justice as well as of his bounty and mercy. For, just like for a doctor to show his abilities particularly in times of contagious disease and for a judge to show his justice particularly in condemning the guilty and punishing the wicked, so also is it particularly in the tolerance of men's vices and viciousness that God shows his patience and clemency. It is particularly in the conversion of repentant sinners that he shows his bounty and mercy, and particularly in the punishment of unrepentant sinners that he brings out his power and justice, wanting to show in this respect *the riches of his grandeur and bounty to the vessels of his mercy, that is, to the just whom he prepared or predestined for glory and, on the other hand, wanting to show his anger and power to the vessels of his anger, that is, to the wicked whom he prepared for perdition* (Rom. 9:22-23).

And so, you will say, it is at least for the greatest manifestation of his glory, power, and justice that God has allowed all the evils, vices, and viciousness in the world. And that, you will say, is the greatest good he gets from them. Consequently, you will say again, he does not allow evil in vain because he can get this greater good from it.

But this answer should confound you no less than the previous ones because, even though it is glorious and praiseworthy for a skillful doctor to show his learning, skill, and ability in times of contagious disease by healing the sick and it is particularly during these times that he should show his capacities, and though it is glorious for a prince to show his power against enemies who come to ravage his estates, and it is glorious and praiseworthy for a judge to render justice to everyone and particu-

larly in the punishment of the guilty and wicked, nevertheless it does not follow from this that it is glorious and praiseworthy for an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God to afflict men with all kinds of evils and miseries in order to try their patience and take pity on them; or that it is glorious and praiseworthy for an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise God to let wicked men do all kinds of evils and viciousness to exercise his power against them and have the pleasure of punishing them and making them eternally unhappy in hell.

What would you say of a prince or a monarch who would like to make his estates ravaged by his neighbors on the pretext of wanting to show the force of his power? What would you say of a doctor who would like to make contagious diseases come upon the people on the pretext of wanting to show his learning and skill at healing? "Does anyone want to be sick in order to see his doctor at work? Should not the doctor be whipped who desires the plague in order to practice his art?" (Montaigne, *Essays*, 3:10).

What would you say of a judge who would like to make crimes committed in order to punish the guilty severely on the pretext of wanting to show the harshness of his justice? You will no doubt say of such a judge that he was not only unjust but even cruel and vicious, seeing that he took pleasure in making crimes committed and thus producing the guilty to have, then, the satisfaction of making them harshly punished. You would entirely condemn a prince who wanted to make his estates or his neighbors' estates ravaged on the pretext of wanting to show his power and force of arms. You would entirely condemn all the men and women who wanted to make the unhappy poor languish and groan on the pretext of later taking pity and compassion on them! And finally, you would entirely condemn doctors who wanted to make contagious diseases come upon men to show their learning and skill at healing, etc. You would condemn all these people and consider them all hateful and detestable.

How, then, can you say that your God, your infinitely good and wise God, does the same thing, i.e., allows all kinds of evils, vices, and viciousness for the greatest manifestation of his glory, power, and divine majesty? Seeing that nothing is so contrary and opposed to an infinite bounty and perfection as all these evils, vices, and viciousness in the world, what glory, what honor, or what pleasure could come to an infinitely good and wise God in seeing and allowing so many evils and vices

among men? What glory, honor, or pleasure would come to an infinitely good and wise God in eternally punishing the guilty, i.e., making so many thousands and millions of angels and men eternally burn in dreadful flames when they are unhappily condemned to hell? And this so often for a very little thing, like for a stupid, little pleasure for a few moments? For a simple glance? For a natural desire or only for a thought they call "morose" or "dishonest," and especially for such a slight fault as the so-called first man had committed in indiscreetly eating a forbidden fruit in the garden, a vain and frivolous thing that did not even deserve a lashing? What glory, I ask? What honor or pleasure could this bring to a God? It would be a cruel and detestable glory! A cruel and detestable honor and pleasure! A cruel and detestable justice to eternally punish so severely and pitilessly for such a slight fault!

You are mad, gentlemen Christ-cultists! You are mad to even have such a thought. Would it not be a far greater good and far more worthy of the glory, honor, and pleasure of an all-powerful, infinitely perfect God to make all his creatures completely happy and perfect? Yes, certainly, it would be.

So, you say, gentlemen Christ-cultists, that an infinitely perfect God would have wanted to permit and allow so many evils, vices, and wickedness for the greatest manifestation of his glory, power, justice, and mercy and that all these so-called divine virtues or perfections appeared much more gloriously, more advantageously, and more happily in evil or the punishment of evil than in good. Stop making fun of people and abusing them with these vain fears and empty hopes as well as with the false ideas that you give them of the grandeur, power, bounty, wisdom, and infinite justice of a God who does not exist, who has never existed, and who never will exist.

All these proofs that I have given so far are clear and evident. They are as conclusive as any can be. Thus, they clearly show the vanity and falsity of all the divinities and religions in the world; it is enough to confound all our superstitious god-cultists.

But, as I have not quite sufficiently or particularly refuted their error (and the error they vainly maintain all the people in) concerning the nature of the soul, which they say is a spiritual and immortal substance, I have to show here more fully the falsity of this opinion. Let this serve as the seventh proof of the vanity and falsity of all religions in the world.

## 87. EIGHTH PROOF: OF THE VANITY AND FALSITY OF RELIGIONS TAKEN FROM THE FALSITY OF MEN'S OPINION ABOUT THE SPIRITUALITY AND IMMORTALITY OF THEIR SOULS

**A**s to the so-called spirituality of the soul, if it were spiritual, as our Christ-cultists understand it, it would not have body, parts, matter, form, figure, or any extension; consequently, it would be nothing real or substantial because, as I said above, that which does not have body, matter, form, figure, or any extension is nothing real or substantial. Now, the soul is something real and substantial since it animates the body and gives it the force and motion that it has. For, we will not say that it is nothing or a nothingness that animates the body and gives it its force and motion. Therefore, the soul is something real and substantial and consequently it must necessarily be corporeal and material and have extension, since nothing can be real and substantial without body and extension. And the clear proof of this is that it is impossible to form any idea of a being or substance without body and form, figure, and extension.

Think over and over again, as much as you want, about what so-called being could exist that does not have body, matter, figure, color, or any extension, you will never form any clear and distinct idea of what it could be. And this should not astonish you, because how could you form a clear and distinct idea of a being stripped of the very nature of being and all the properties of being? It is as if you wanted to form a clear and distinct idea of a being that was not a being. It is worse than wanting to form a clear and distinct idea of a chimera, i.e., a monster with one hundred heads, for example, or one hundred arms, or whatever other chimera you want to imagine: you could form a clear and distinct idea of this. But you could not, even if you wanted to, form any clear and distinct idea of a being or substance that was not a being and that did not have the nature of a being or substance. This clearly is self-

contradictory and self-negating. Now, the nature of being and substance is to be body and extension, and, consequently, what is not body, matter, or extension is not at all a being nor does it exist.

Antiquity always thought and believed this; most ancient philosophers and theologians had no other belief than this (Philo the Jew, Justin Martyr, Theodoret, Origen, Lactantius, St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Bernard). This is also why they believed not only that souls were corporeal and material, but also that angels and God himself were not without bodies or corporeal form, so convinced were they that there was no substantial being without body, form, or extension. They did not even dare to make that beautiful and subtle distinction that our new Cartesian philosophers have imagined being between body and mind; they did not even dare to care whether a thought of the soul could be extended, whether a desire of the soul could be round or square, triangular, or some other shape, whether we could cut in half or quarters some knowledge or sentiment of the soul, etc. And because these new philosophers have clearly recognized that a thought of the soul is not an extended body, that a desire of the soul is not something round or square, triangular, or some other shape, and that we cannot cut or halve or quarter any knowledge or sentiment of the soul, they believe they have found an essential difference between the body and the mind, and they imagine that they are really and substantially two beings, two substances of different natures, one of which is to be extended in length, width, and depth, and the other only to think, will, and feel.

## 88. WEAKNESS AND VANITY OF THE ARGUMENTS THE GOD-CULTISTS MAKE TO PROVE THE SO-CALLED SPIRITUALITY AND IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

**H**ere is how they speak about it:

We only have two kinds of ideas, the idea of the mind and the idea of the body, and whatever we imagine we have to reason according to these two ideas. So, since the idea we have of all bodies tells us that they cannot move, we have to conclude that it is the minds that move them. . . . It is evident that all bodies, big and small, have no force to move. . . . But not only can the bodies do nothing at all, the noblest minds are likewise powerless. They can know nothing if God does not enlighten them. They can feel nothing if God does not affect them. They are only able to will because God shakes them up. . . . They do not move themselves toward the good in general, i.e., toward him. . . . It is God who moves them and they can only do what God makes them do. . . . etc. (Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, 6:3; cf. 4:2; 6:6 and 7; 1:17; 3:1; 2:5; and Fenelon, *On the Existence of God*, 1.2)

## 89. REFUTATION OF THEIR VAIN ARGUMENTS

**I**t is visible that the reason why the Cartesians do not want to recognize that matter is capable of thinking, willing, feeling, desiring and loving, or hating, etc., is because they imagine that if thought and knowledge, sentiment and will, love and hate, sadness and joy, and all the other kinds of passions of the soul were only modifications of matter, they would necessarily be things extended in length, width, and depth like matter itself, and they would necessarily be things round or square, as they say, and they could, like matter itself, be divided, split, or cut into many different parts.

Now, it is clear and evident that though matter is capable of thinking, willing, feeling, desiring, loving or hating, being joyful or sad, etc., it does not follow that these kinds of modifications of matter are things extended in length, width, and depth and, consequently, it does not follow that the thoughts, desires, and will or affections of the soul are things round or square or that they can be divided, split, or cut into different parts. It is even ridiculous to imagine that such a thing follows. Here is the clear proof.

It is clear and evident that movement, for example, is a mode or modification of matter, just as extension. Now, it is also evident that movement in itself is not a thing round or square because although it can go in a circle, square, oval, or triangle, we do not say that movement is round or oval or triangular or that it is a thing that can be measured in pints or liters or that it can be weighed on a balance, and it is not a thing that we can split or cut into pieces. So, all modifications of matter are not necessarily things round or square or things that can be divided or cut up.

Likewise, life and death, beauty and ugliness, health and sickness, strength and weakness of living bodies are certainly only modes or modifications of matter like extension. Now, it is unquestionable and evident that these are not things extended in length, width, and depth and they are not round or square; they are not things that we can divide or split

into pieces; they are not things we can measure in ells or fathoms or weigh on a balance, although they are, nevertheless, only modifications of matter.

Likewise, sounds, odors, tastes, and flavors are not things round and square and it would be ridiculous to say that they should be round and square on the pretext of being modifications of matter.

Likewise, vices and virtues are only modifications of matter because virtue in men is nothing other than a good, beautiful, honest, and praiseworthy way of living, acting, and behaving in life. On the contrary, vice in men is only a bad, ugly, and reproachable way of acting and behaving in life. All these good and bad ways of acting and behaving are visible in men, who are composed of matter, and, consequently, we can only say that virtue and vice are modifications of matter. However, it does not follow from this that virtue and vice are things round and square, that they can be divided, split, or cut into pieces like we would cut matter itself; it would be ridiculous to say or even imagine that such a thing follows from such a principle.

Therefore, equally and likewise, since our thoughts and knowledge, our desires and wills, our sensations and affections, our friendships and hatreds, our pleasures and pains, our joys and sadness, and, in a word, since all our sentiments and passions are only modifications of matter, it does not at all follow that they are or should be things round and square or able to be split and cut into pieces.

On the contrary, it would be ridiculous for our Cartesians to imagine that such a thing should follow. And so, it is a ridiculous argument that they make on this subject.

Let us look at this argument from a different angle.

The reason why our Cartesians do not want to acknowledge that matter is capable of thinking, feeling, desiring, willing, loving, hating, etc., is because they cannot persuade themselves that a thought, will, desire, love, hate, joy, sadness, or any other affection or passion of the soul can be a modification of matter; and they cannot be persuaded of this because they are not things with extension like matter and they are not round or square and cannot be divided or cut into pieces. But, this reason does not prevent these passions and affections of the soul from being able to be modifications of matter.

Therefore, this reason does not prove anything about the so-called

spirituality of the soul, as our Cartesians claim, and they are as ridiculous to claim to prove the spirituality of the soul in this way as they are when they claim to prove the existence of an infinitely perfect God.

For, just as the idea of a thing does not at all prove that the thing is as we imagine, so also what they call the spirituality of thoughts, desires, wills, affections, and passions of the soul, which are not things extended, round, square, etc., does not at all prove that they are not modifications of matter. And the evident reason for this is that all modifications of matter do not have to actually have all the properties of matter. It is even impossible for them to have them all.

Therefore, it is ridiculous for our Cartesians to claim that our thoughts, reasoning, knowledge, desires, wills and sentiments, pleasures and pains, loves and hates, joys and sadness, etc., are not modifications of matter on the pretext that all these modifications of our soul are not extended in length, width, and depth, that they are not round and square and that they cannot be divided and cut into pieces. It is ridiculous, I say, for them to claim this since it is not possible that all these modifications of matter actually have all its properties.

Here are some examples that confirm this argument.

Movement and wind are certainly only modifications and agitations of matter. However, it is unquestionable that they are not round or square or any specific shape; they cannot be measured in pints or liters or weighed on a balance. Therefore, all modifications of matter cannot have all the properties of matter itself nor can one modification of matter have all other modifications.

Likewise, it is certain, clear, and evident that what we call life or death, beauty or ugliness, strength or weakness, health or sickness are only modifications of the matter of which the body is composed. However, it is unquestionable that these kinds of things are not round or square and have no shape. They cannot be halved or quartered like matter; they cannot be measured in pints or liters or ells or fathoms or weighed in a balance. It would even be ridiculous to talk about a pound or two of sickness, fever, or pleurisy as well as two or three pounds of health, etc. Therefore, all these modifications of matter cannot actually have all the properties of matter and they cannot all be liable to all other modifications; it would be ridiculous to think so.

The same goes for the vices and virtues that we very clearly see in

men; and what we call noise, sound, light, odor, taste, heat, cold, and even fermentation are certainly only modes and modifications of matter.

(As another example, sleep is very certainly a modification of the matter of the body that sleeps. Do our Cartesians wonder if sleep is something round or square and if it can be split in half or thirds? What shape would result from this division? You would make fun of them and perhaps have as much reason to ask what color it was. And what color is thought? What color is desire, love, hate, joy, sadness, etc.? Madmen, what are they thinking? They do not see. . . . )

Concerning this so-called spirituality of the soul, so well proved according to them, they legitimately believe they have clearly proven its immortality. Here is how they reason: what is spiritual has no extension; what has no extension has no parts that can be divided and separated from each other; what cannot be divided and separated cannot be corrupted because it is only by division and separation of parts that bodies are and can be corrupted. What cannot be corrupted cannot perish or stop existing; what cannot perish or stop existing remains forever in the same state; consequently, since the soul is spiritual, according to this so-called proof, it has no extension; having no extension, it has no parts that can be divided and separated from each other and so it cannot be corrupted; unable to be corrupted it remains forever in the same state; consequently, they find that it is immortal. That is how they claim to prove the spirituality and immortality of their souls.

But, since all this reasoning is based only on a false supposition and a vain and ridiculous so-called proof of the spirituality of the soul, it is easy to see that this argument cannot conclude anything and is useless.

But, how can the Cartesians say that the soul is something spiritual and immortal, seeing that they recognize and have to recognize that it is capable of various changes and modifications and it is actually even prone to various changes, modifications, and even infirmities. For this reason they should say instead that it is not spiritual or immortal. For, what is capable of various changes, modifications, and even infirmities cannot be a spiritual or immortal thing, i.e., a spiritual or immortal being or substance.

1—It cannot be an immortal thing. Here is the clear reason. What is capable of various changes and modifications is capable of various alterations; what is capable of various alterations is capable of corruption;

what is capable of corruption is not incorruptible; what is not incorruptible is not immortal. That is clear and evident. Now, our Cartesians acknowledge that the soul is capable of various changes and modifications. They even acknowledge that it is actually prone to them because they say and agree that all our thoughts, knowledge, sensations, perceptions, desires, and will are modifications of the soul. And so, since our soul is, in their own view, prone to various changes and modifications, they have to acknowledge that it is prone to various alterations and principles of corruption and, consequently, it is not incorruptible and immortal as they claim. That is why their Grand Pooh-Bah St. Augustine (*Confessions*, 12:11) said that “a will that varies in its resolutions in any way whatsoever cannot be immortal in its duration.” Since the soul is prone to various changes and modifications, it cannot be immortal in its duration.

2—Since the soul, as our Cartesians admit, is prone to various changes and modifications, it cannot be spiritual in the sense they understand it because a thing that has no extension or any parts cannot change the way of being or even have any way of being. What cannot change the way of being or even have a way of being cannot be prone to various changes or modifications. Now, the soul, according to the Cartesians, has no extension or parts; therefore, it cannot change the way of being and cannot even have any way of being; therefore, it cannot be prone to any change or have various modifications like they say it has. Or if it can change the way of being and be prone to various changes and modifications, it must have extension and parts; and if it has extension and parts, it cannot be spiritual in the sense our Cartesians understand it.

They say they cannot imagine how matter shaped in such or such a way like round, square, oval, or triangular, etc., can have pain, pleasure, joy, sadness, heat, color, odor, sound, etc. They should say instead that they cannot imagine how this matter can produce the pain, pleasure, joy, sadness, etc. It is what makes a living body feel pain, pleasure, joy, sadness, etc., by its diverse modifications. They say they cannot imagine this. And for this reason alone they do not want these sentiments to be modifications of matter. But do they imagine instead, or better, that a being without extension or parts can see, know, think, and reason about all kinds of things? Do they imagine more easily that a being without extension or parts can see and contemplate the heaven and earth and

count one by one all the objects that it might see through the gross mass of bodies where it would be enclosed like in a dark dungeon? Do they imagine more easily that this being can have pleasure, joy, pain, and sadness? What could give pleasure and joy to a being of this nature? What could cause pain, fear, or sadness? Could joy itself or sadness find a place in such a being? Certainly our Cartesians say and accept things that are thousands and thousands of times more inconceivable than what they reject on the pretext of not being able to imagine them.

Although it is difficult to imagine how such or such modifications of matter make us have such or such thoughts or sensations, we still have to acknowledge that it is by such or such modifications of matter that we have them. Our Cartesians themselves cannot disagree with this. Yet, they need to run back to an imaginary being, who is nothing and whose nature, as far as anything real is concerned, is impossible to imagine and whose manner of acting and thinking and whose bond with the body is impossible to imagine; and it is impossible to imagine how such and such modifications of matter could stir up such and such thoughts and sensations without having any knowledge of these kinds of modifications of matter. And it is not difficult to explain this if we suppose, as I do, that the modifications alone of matter produce all our thoughts, knowledge, and sensations. But, if we suppose the contrary, we will find an insurmountable number of difficulties.

We should not be astonished, as I said above, if we do not clearly know how such modifications of matter make us have such sensations because these kinds of modifications are the first principle of life, knowledge, and sentiment in us and so they are in us by the natural constitution of our bodies to make us feel and know everything perceptible and knowable that is outside us, and not to feel or know themselves directly and immediately. They are like the natural constitution of our eyes that are in us not to be looked at or seen but to make us see everything outside us. That is also why, in fact, we see with our eyes all objects outside us but we cannot see our own eyes or any parts of which they are composed. The evident reason for this is that the principle of sight cannot be seen. For the same reason, the principle of sentiment cannot be felt and the principle of knowledge cannot be known. And we should not doubt that it is for this reason that we do not clearly know the nature of our mind, thoughts, sentiments, or sensations, although they are basically

only modifications of the matter of which we are composed. However, it is true that we can see our eyes when we look at ourselves in a mirror because the mirror shows us our face and our eyes as if they were something outside ourselves and apart from us. But as there is no mirror that can show us our souls or any of its modifications and we can see nothing of it either in other men, so we cannot immediately know them through themselves, though we immediately feel them through themselves.

And what confirms the truth of this last argument is the natural, certain, and assured sentiment we always have about ourselves because we know for certain that it is ourselves who think, will, desire, sometimes feel pleasure and sometimes pain, sometimes have joy and sometimes sadness. Moreover, we know and feel for certain that it is with our head that we think and especially with our brain that we think, will, know, and reason, etc. Like it is with our eyes that we see, with our ears that we hear, with our mouth that we speak and taste, with our hands that we touch, with our legs and feet that we walk, and with all the parts of our body that we feel pleasure and pain—we cannot doubt any of these things.

Now, do we see, feel, and know with certainty anything in us that is not matter? Remove our eyes! What will we see? Nothing. Remove our ears and what will we hear? Nothing. Remove our hands, what will we touch? Nothing, unless inappropriately with other parts of our body. Remove our head and brain, what will we think? What will we know? Nothing. Finally, remove our body and all our limbs, what will we feel? Where will our sentiments be, our pleasures and joys? Where will our grief be, our pains and displeasure? And where, finally, will we ourselves be? Certainly nowhere. And it is impossible, in this supposition, to imagine that we could still have any thought in this state, any knowledge or sentiment; it is even impossible to imagine that we could still be anything.

Therefore, it is unquestionable, certain, and decisive that, although our thoughts, knowledge, and sensations are not round or square, not divisible into length, width, and depth, nevertheless they are only modifications of matter. Consequently, our soul is in itself only what there is in us of subtler and more restless matter than the other cruder matter that makes up the limbs and visible parts of our body. And so, it is clear and evident—just pay a little attention and examine yourselves a little

without prejudice and preconceptions—that our soul is not spiritual or immortal, as our Cartesians understand it. And if we ask what becomes of this subtle, restless matter at the moment of death, we can say without hesitation that it dissolves and dissipates right away into the air like a gentle steam or exhaling, a little like the flame of a candle blown out suddenly or imperceptibly by itself, lacking combustible matter to maintain it. “We are built of two principal, essential pieces whose separation produces death and the destruction of our being” (*Montaigne, Essays*, 2:12). These two principal pieces are nothing else but the subtle and restless matter that gives us life and the crude or heavy matter that forms the parts of our body.

For, I reckon it is too ridiculous to say, as many ancient philosophers imagined, that the soul passes entire from one body to another at that time (*Metempsychosis of the Ancients*). They usually attribute the invention of this opinion to the famous Pythagoras, the philosopher from Samos, who said that he remembered very well that he was once a woman called Aspasia, a famous Milesian courtesan; then he became a young boy who was a servant of the wife of the tyrant of Samos. Afterward, he was reborn in Crates, the cynic philosopher; after this he was a king, then a doctor, then a satrap, then a horse, a blue jay, a frog, a rooster. Likewise, he remembers having been Aethalides, son of Mercury; then he was reincarnated in Euphorbus, in whom he said he was killed during the siege of Troy; from Euphorbus he became Hermotimus, from Hermotimus to Pyrrhus, and on his death he became Pythagoras after all these different metamorphoses. If it is true that this philosopher told and really believed such things, I dare say that he was, at least in this, more crazy than wise and hardly deserved the name of “philosopher.”

Here is another indication and a very sensible and convincing proof that our soul is material and mortal like our bodies: it is strengthened and weakened to the extent that our bodies are strengthened or weakened. This certainly would not happen if it was really a spiritual and immaterial being and substance different from the body. For, if it were such, its force and power would not at all depend on the disposition or constitution of the body. And since it does depend entirely and absolutely on it, it is a very sensible, convincing, and evident proof that it is not spiritual or immortal. This led a poet of our day to say:

*When the body winds down as the end draws near,  
Bent double under the weight of years,  
It feels the mind of yesteryear  
Enfeebled under the weight of years.  
That free spirit of former days,  
Which Nature formed from purer clay,  
In the winter years fades away  
Like the old, white hairs thinned by age.  
The rest of matter of a broken body  
Made from clay that is crude and shoddy  
Has nothing left undoubtedly  
But a mind and spirit cold and cloudy.*

—Claude Jordan

## 90. SENTIMENTS OF THE ANCIENTS ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

H<sub>ere</sub> is how the ancient poets spoke:

*We do not know the nature of the soul  
Whether it is born or slips in at birth,  
And whether it will die with us, snatched by death,  
Or haunt the shadows and vast swamps of Orcus,  
Or slip divinely into other herds. . . .*

—Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, 1.111–15

*If a kind of soul grows with the body of everyone  
And slips into the body at birth  
Why cannot we remember the past life  
Or recall the slightest trace of former actions?*

—Lucretius, 3.747, 671–73

*But if our mental powers changed  
So that all memory of things fell away  
It would not be so far, I think, from death.*

—Lucretius, 3.674–76, 175–76

*So, the soul must have a corporeal nature  
Since it suffers the blows and wounds of the body.*

—Lucretius, 3.174–75

*We feel it: it is with our bodies  
That the soul is born, grows up and grows old.  
We see the soul is healed  
Like a body that is sick and submits to medicine,  
An omen of its mortality.*

—Lucretius, 3.445–46, 510–13

*Delirium comes from a troubled soul  
 Dividing and separating itself  
 Under the effect of the poison that tears it apart.  
 The soul, through the limbs, is torn apart  
 By the force of harm, foamy like the salty sea.*

—Lucretius, 3.499–501, 492–93

*When the body is sick the soul often wanders off,  
 It scours the countryside, delirious and mad.  
 A heavy lethargy swoops down sometimes on men,  
 Eyes closed, head drooping, in an endless sleep.  
 The soul shares the body's exhaustion.*

—Lucretius, 3.463–66, 458

*O father, must we think there are souls that rise to the heavens  
 And return again to bodily bonds?  
 Whence comes to these sorry souls this mad desire for the light?*

—Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.719–21

*For, to join the mortal with the eternal  
 To think, conspire, and work together,  
 What folly! Nothing can be imagined more unlike,  
 Disparate and discrepant,  
 Than the mortal with immortal and eternal  
 Joined together to brace the storms.*

—Lucretius, 3.800–805

91. THE THOUGHTS, DESIRES, WILL, AND SENSATIONS OF GOOD OR EVIL ARE ONLY INTERNAL MODIFICATIONS OF THE PERSON OR ANIMAL THAT THINKS, KNOWS, OR FEELS GOOD OR EVIL; AND ALTHOUGH MEN AND BEASTS ARE COMPOSED ONLY OF MATTER, IT DOES NOT FOLLOW THAT THE THOUGHTS, DESIRES, OR SENSATIONS OF GOOD OR EVIL SHOULD BE ROUND OR SQUARE, AS THE CARTESIANS IMAGINE THEM, AND IN THIS THEY APPEAR RIDICULOUS, AS WELL AS FOR SUCH A VAIN REASON THEY CLAIM THAT BEASTS ARE DEPRIVED OF KNOWLEDGE AND SENTIMENT, WHICH OPINION IS VERY reprehensible and why

**T**he sensible Montaigne says: "It is certain that our thoughts, judgments, and the faculties of our soul suffer according to the movements and alterations of our bodies; and these alterations are continual." *The body, which is corrupted, weighs down upon the soul* (Wis. 9:15).

Is not our mind more awake, our memory quicker, our speech sharper when we are healthy than when we are sick? Do not joy and cheerfulness change the way our soul receives things in a completely different way than grief and melancholy? The air itself and calm skies bring some change, like in that verse of Cicero: The thoughts of men are like the fertile rays with which Jupiter the father floods the earth.

Fevers, potions, and serious accidents are not the only things that upset our judgment; the smallest things screw it up. There is no doubt

that if a continual fever can alter our soul, a lesser one can also affect it proportionately. If apoplexy dulls and totally switches off the sight of our intelligence, there is no doubt that depression or a cold blinds it. (Montaigne, *Essays*, 2:12)

This is so true that no one can doubt it. As I said, it is a very obvious, convincing, and evident proof that the soul is not spiritual and immortal as our Cartesians claim and the superstitious god-cultists would like to persuade us.

But let us look a little more closely at what they say about the nature of the soul. Malebranche (*The Search after Truth*) says that the essence of the soul consists only in thought, just as the essence of matter consists only in extension; we cannot (he says) imagine a mind that does not think. Thought all by itself (he says) is the essence of the mind. It is not the essence of the mind to will because willing supposes perception. Thought alone (he repeats) properly composes and constitutes the essence of the mind and (he adds) if we want to add some clear and distinct idea to the word "life," we can say that the life of the soul is knowledge of the truth and love of the good; or rather that its thought is its life and the life of the body consists in the circulation of the blood and the just temperament of the humors.

How can this writer say that the essence of the soul or mind consists only in thought? This cannot be because thought itself is only an action or temporary modification of the soul and mind. Now, since the action of the mind is only a modification of the soul or mind, it cannot be the essence of the soul or mind since it is the soul or mind that makes, forms, or conceives its own thoughts. Therefore, thought is not its essence. For, the effect or action of a cause cannot be the essence of the cause itself. And thought is the effect or action of the soul or mind; it is a vital action of the soul. Therefore, this vital action of the soul cannot be the essence itself of the soul. This is evident.

Moreover, if thought alone is the life and essence of the soul or mind, it is not true, then, to say that the soul is a substance or that it is immortal. For, it is clear and evident that thought, as I just said, is only a vital action of the soul and not a substance. It would be ridiculous to say that a thought is an immortal substance because it cannot subsist alone by itself and very often it lasts only a moment.

Did Malebranche imagine that all men's thoughts were substances and that they could subsist all alone outside their heads and brains? He would do well to show these swarms of thoughts leaving the heads of all people. We would see incomparably more of them than the swarms of flies in the air and if they were a little shady they would completely darken the air and hide the light of the sun. What madness to have such thoughts!

And again, if it is thought alone or if it is only knowledge of the truth and love of the good that makes the life of the soul and the essence of the soul and mind, then the soul and mind must be without life and without essence when they do not think and when they do not actually have any knowledge of the truth or love of the good. Consequently, they are nothing when they do not think and do not have any knowledge of the truth or love of the good because nothing living can be without that which gives it its life and essence. So, the soul and mind would be nothing at all; but this would be ridiculous to say.

But, our Cartesians say, it is impossible to imagine a mind that does not think. This is obviously false, even according to their own principles, because it seems to me that they will not say that when people are in a sweet, deep sleep they are without soul and mind during all that time and that their souls are then annihilated and reborn when they wake up. I do not think they will say this because they would be making too much fun of themselves. Now, people in a sweet, calm, deep sleep do not think about anything and have no thought or knowledge, even of what is most dear to them. Therefore, we can imagine not only a soul or mind that does not think, but even thousands upon thousands that do not think because we can imagine thousands upon thousands sleeping a sweet, deep sleep.

If our Cartesians maintain that there is no sleep so sweet, calm, or deep that can completely take away from us all the thoughts of the soul, every one of us can refute them by our own experience because we know that when we have slept a sweet, deep sleep we have thought of nothing, not even of ourselves. If they say that it is because we do not remember when we wake up, it is without basis that they say this: they remember no more than we do and if they do not remember, then they are speaking without knowing. So, they do not even deserve to be listened to.

But what do they think, for example, of the spiritual and immortal

soul of a baby when it begins to live and during all the time it is in its mother's belly? It can only think about what it already knows; but it knows nothing yet, so it cannot think anything yet. For, according to the philosophical maxim, *ignoti nulla cupido* (we do not want what we do not know). Nothing in our understanding has not passed before our senses.

"All knowledge comes to us through our senses. They are our masters. Learning begins and ends in them. The senses are the beginning and end of human knowledge. *Invenies primis ab sensibus esse creatam notitiam veri, neque sensus posse refelli* [you will find that the notion of truth comes to us first through the senses, and they cannot be refuted]. And whoever can force me to contradict my senses holds me by the throat and cannot make me recoil an inch" (Montaigne, *Essays*, 2:12).

Now, nothing has passed before the senses of this baby in its mother's belly. It has seen and heard nothing, tasted, touched, and felt nothing, so it has perceived nothing yet, i.e., it still does not have any thought or knowledge in its understanding. Consequently, it still thinks about nothing; and if it thinks about nothing and really has a spiritual and immortal soul, as our Cartesians claim, it is clear and evident that the essence of this soul does not consist in thought.

Moreover, if thought is the life of the soul and the circulation of blood and the just temperament of the humors are the life of the body, as our Cartesians say, then we each have two different kinds of lives in us, that of the soul and that of the body. This is obviously false because we feel clearly enough in ourselves that we have only one life and what we call "our soul" and "our body" together make only one life and one living being and not two lives and two living beings. And it is ridiculous for our Cartesians to want to distinguish in this way two kinds of lives and two different principles of life in one single and same person. And since they acknowledge that the circulation of blood and the just temperament of the humors make the life of the body and all its movements, it is ridiculous and superfluous for them to want to imagine and uselessly fabricate another principle of life of which we have no need, seeing that the single principle that they acknowledge of the life of the body is enough for us, as well as for all other animals, to do all the functions and duties of life. So, they should acknowledge that it is enough and if it is enough, it is clearly an error and illusion for our Cartesians to say that our soul is a spiritual and immortal substance.

And it is a grand illusion in them to believe they have invincibly proven this so-called spirituality and immortality by such feeble and ridiculous arguments as they use.

I will show this clearly again by this argument. If our soul were a spiritual and intelligent substance, i.e., knowing and capable of sentiment in itself, and if it really differed from matter and had a completely different nature, it would know and feel immediately and with certainty in itself that it was really a spiritual substance different from matter, like we know and feel immediately and with certainty in ourselves that we are corporeal substances. For, we certainly have no need of anything but ourselves to feel and know with certainty that we are such. It would certainly be the same with our soul if it really were a spiritual substance: it would know and feel with certainty that it was really a spiritual substance and it would very easily be able to distinguish itself from everything that was matter, like we can distinguish ourselves from everything that is not us.

Now, it is certain that the soul does not know or feel with certainty that it is a spiritual substance, because if it did, no one could doubt its spirituality, seeing that each of us would know and feel in ourselves that it was really such. But no one knows or feels this with certainty. Therefore, the soul is not a spiritual substance, as our Cartesians understand it.

Moreover, if the soul were really a spiritual substance, knowing, sentient, and completely different from matter, it would know itself before knowing matter, it would easily distinguish itself from matter and it would even be impossible not to distinguish itself from matter because being enclosed, as it would be, in all parts of matter it could not help feeling enclosed, just like we feel enclosed in our clothes when we are dressed and we feel wrapped up in sheets and covers when we are in bed; and if this soul were in the body, it would find itself enclosed like a man shut into a room or like a prisoner. Being so, it is clear and evident that the soul would distinguish itself and could not help distinguishing itself as easily from bodily matter as we distinguish ourselves from our clothes when we are dressed or from our sheets when we are in bed; or like we do from a room in which we are shut in; or, finally, like a prisoner from the walls of his prison.

Now, it is unquestionable (and everyone feels this in his own experience) that the soul cannot distinguish itself like this from the bodily matter where it is enclosed. The Cartesians cannot disagree because they themselves say (*The Search after Truth*) that

the soul is so blind that it is unaware of itself and does not see that its own sensations belong to it. It is so intimately united to the body and has become so carnal since the sin that it can hardly distinguish itself anymore from the body, so that it attributes to it not only its sensations, but also its force to imagine and sometimes even its power to reason.

“The spirit of man,” says de Cambrai,

that constantly sees all objects that surround it is deeply ignorant of itself. It is like groping around in an abyss of darkness; it knows not what it is or how it is attached to the body or how it has so much influence on the springs of the body that it knows not. It does not know its own thoughts and its own will. (*On the Existence of God*)

So, it is clear and evident that the soul is not a spiritual, intelligent, and sentient substance in itself and it is not a substance different from matter or of a different nature because, as I just said, if it really were, it could not help knowing and feeling that it was. It would know itself better than it knew matter and it is not even conceivable how it could know matter. Finally, supposing that it could know matter, it would certainly be able to distinguish itself from matter, just as prisoners can distinguish themselves from the walls of their prison. And so, since the soul cannot know itself and cannot distinguish itself from the matter in which it is enclosed, it is a clear, certain, and evident proof that it is not such as our Cartesians say it is.

Let us see what they say about the nature and condition of beasts. These gentlemen do not want to acknowledge that beasts have any knowledge or feeling of pain or pleasure or that they love or hate anything. And the only reason why they do not want to acknowledge that beasts have knowledge or sentiment is because they do not think that any modification of matter can make or form any knowledge or sentiment.

But do these gentlemen really imagine that no modification of matter could cause, form, or arouse any thought, knowledge, or feeling of pain or pleasure in a mind or spiritual substance? They themselves say that the various modifications and changes in the body arouse different thoughts and feelings in the soul. The least things, they say, can produce the greatest movements in the delicate fibers of the brain and naturally arouse violent sentiments in the soul.

But even if we were to suppose that the spirit was something real (which it is not), as our god-cultists claim, could the modifications of matter naturally produce or arouse thoughts and feelings in such a being, i.e., a being without any body, parts, extension, form, or shape? What relation, what bond can there be between modifications of matter and beings of such a nature? There can be none.

And so why then do they want to talk like this without knowing what they are saying rather than acknowledging that matter alone is capable of knowledge and feeling in men and beasts? Or rather is capable of giving, forming, causing, and producing knowledge and feelings in them? On the pretext that they do not see how it could be done! That is not a good reason. For, the idea that the movement alone of matter with its various modifications is enough to give knowledge and feeling to men and beasts has only one difficulty: to know or imagine how this can be done, which I discussed above. Although we do not know how it is done, nevertheless we are certain that it is directly by these movements and modifications that we think, feel, and perceive everything, and without them we will not be able to have any thought or feeling at all. Moreover, we feel in ourselves with great certainty that it is with our brain that we think and with our flesh that we feel, just like it is with our eyes that we see and with our hands that we touch. And so, we have to say that it is precisely in these kinds of internal movements and modifications of our flesh and brain that all our thoughts, knowledge, and feelings consist.

And what confirms this truth even more is that our knowledge and sensations follow the natural constitution of our bodies and they are more or less free as they proceed from a better or worse internal or external disposition or constitution of our body. And if it is precisely in these kinds of internal movements and modifications of the matter existing and acting in us that our knowledge and sensations consist, then it clearly follows that all animals are capable of knowledge and feeling like us, seeing that we obviously see that they are like us composed of flesh and bone, blood and veins, nerves and fibers like ours, that they have like us all the organs of life and sensation and even a brain, which is the organ of thought and knowledge, and that they clearly show by all their actions and mannerisms that they have knowledge and sentiment. It is unquestionable and indubitable that it is by the various movements

and modifications of matter that all our knowledge and sentiments are formed in us and there is even a natural and mutual bond and correspondence in us, like our Cartesians say, between these movements and modifications of matter and the knowledge and feelings or sensations that we have. It is clear, unquestionable, and indubitable that similar movements and modifications of matter can likewise happen in beasts, which are put together and have organs like us.

And if these kinds of movements and modifications of matter can be made, then they can also form similar knowledge and sensations. And there can be made in beasts a similar natural and mutual bond and correspondence between the various movements and modifications of their bodies and the knowledge and sensations they can have, seeing that such a bond and correspondence of movements and sensations, of modifications and knowledge is no more difficult for the one than for the other and can be found as easily in beasts as in men.

Our Cartesians wrongly confuse things here; it is what I already said they did with the so-called existence of their God. For, to prove that he exists, as they claim, they confuse the infinite in extension, number, and duration, which really exists, with a so-called infinitely perfect being, which does not exist. And from the evident existence of the former, they imagine they invincibly conclude the existence of the latter; in this I said they obviously fall into error and illusion. Here again they do the same thing with beasts when they would like to deprive them entirely of all knowledge and sentiment. For, to prove that they have no knowledge or sentiment at all, they confuse the measurable extension of matter and its external shape with the internal movements and modifications that it has in living bodies; and because they sufficiently prove that no measurable extension of matter nor its external shapes can produce any thought or sensation in men or beasts, they also imagine that they have proven that since beasts are nothing but matter they cannot have any knowledge or sentiment. But again they fall into error and illusion in this because it is not in any measurable extension or in any external shape of matter that the knowledge and sensations of men and beasts consist, but in the various internal movements, agitations, and modifications that matter has in men and beasts.

This makes a great difference, as is visible, between the two because we can very well say that since thought and sentiment are in living

bodies they are consequently in matter, which has extension and shape. But, it does not follow from this that thought or sensation should be extended in length, width, and depth or that they should be round or square, as our Cartesians say, because thought and sentiment, for example, are found equally in a small man as in a big man, so little does the measurable size of living bodies matter in this.

Now, it is certain that not all modifications of matter are round or square or other shapes; it would even be ridiculous for them to be so. The modification of air, for example, that produces the sensation of sound in us and the same air that produces the sensation of light and color are certainly modifications of matter. However, these kinds of modifications of matter have in themselves no proper or particular shape and it would be ridiculous to ask whether the action or agitation of air were round or square.

Likewise it is certain that the just temperament of humors that produce, as our Cartesians themselves say, the life, strength, and health of living bodies and, consequently, the bad temperament of humors that produce illnesses and infirmities of living bodies, are only modifications of matter. These kinds of modifications of matter are not, however, any shape in themselves and it would be ridiculous to ask if the good or bad temperament of humors that cause health or sickness (fevers, for example, or the plague) are things round or square and if they can be divided, split, or cut into pieces.

As a result, even when we attribute the same name to several things of different natures, we have to understand and explain it in different ways and meanings because it would be ridiculous to understand the same name in the same meaning for everything it might signify. We say, for example, that a pole is long or short. We say the same for a sickness. We have to understand the terms *long* and *short* in different meanings because it would be ridiculous to say that the length or shortness of a pole was the same as of a sickness. And why would this be ridiculous, unless it is because it would be ridiculous to attribute to things qualities and properties that are not at all fitting to their nature or way of being. For, it is obvious that the length of a pole is not at all fitting to the nature of a sickness and vice versa. And it is for this that we do not confuse the different meanings of terms and deceive ourselves.

But if in fantasy or error or ignorance you believed you had to con-

fuse them and understand them always in the same meaning on the pretext that you were using the same name and the same term to mean or designate different things, and so for this reason alone you imagined you had to attribute to certain things qualities and properties that were not at all fitting to them, you would certainly become ridiculous.

Now it is just this that happened to our Cartesians when they imagine and say that beasts are incapable of knowledge and sentiment on the pretext that knowledge and sentiment cannot be modifications of matter, as they imagine that all modifications of matter are necessarily things extended in themselves and are necessarily round or square, etc.

What? Because a thought, desire, or feeling of pleasure or pain cannot be divided or cut up like a square into two triangles, two parallelograms, or two trapezoids, our Cartesians do not want knowledge or sentiment to be modifications of matter? And for the same reason they do not want beasts to be capable of knowledge or sentiment? Who would not laugh at such stupidity! "Could you, my friends, contemplating this work, hold yourselves back from laughing?" (*Horace, Ars Poetica*, 5). When they say that the just temperaments of the humors produce the life and health of living bodies, do they claim that this just temperament is something round or square? That it can be divided and cut up? That some new shape will result from this division?

Fools! They reason about thoughts, desires, and the will, all sensations and passions of the soul and mind as if they were bodies and substances and absolute beings. And they do not see that they are not, but only modifications of matter. Thought, for example, is not an absolute being: it is only a modification or vital action of the being that thinks. Likewise desire, love, hate, joy, sadness, pleasure, pain, fear, hope, etc., are not substances or absolute beings: they are only modifications or vital actions of the being that feels them.

They say that some people have spirit, skill, learning, talent, and merit and that others do not. They do not claim to say some people have beings or individual substances that others do not have. It would be ridiculous to ask if the skill, learning, and talent of these people were round or square things and how we could divide or cut them into pieces and what shape would result. It would be ridiculous, I say, to ask this because the skill, learning, talent, or merits of people are not substances or absolute beings, but only modes or modifications of being and ways of acting,

thinking, speaking, and reasoning with more or less freedom and facility than others; and they are certainly not substances or absolute beings.

It is the same with thought and the mind, knowledge and will, judgment and sentiment as it is with skill, learning, talent, and personal merit: the mind, life, thought, and sentiment are not substances or absolute beings but only modifications of the being that lives and thinks. These modifications consist in the faculty or facility that some living beings have to think and reason; and this faculty or facility is greater, i.e., clearer and freer, in some more than others. And though it is greater in some and though there are sicknesses that are longer or shorter, it does not follow that we should think that the faculty or facility to think and reason is something round or square or that it is better shaped in some than in others, any more than for sicknesses. For, it would be ridiculous to want to attribute to things qualities and properties that are not fitting to their nature or to their particular way of being.

We have to say the same thing with respect to corporeal life, either of human beings or animals or plants. Their life is only a kind of modification and continual fermentation of their being, i.e., of the matter of which they are composed, and all the knowledge, thoughts, and sensations they can have are only various other new, particular, and passing modifications of this modification and continual fermentation that produces their life. The Cartesians cannot deny that this fermentation is a modification of matter; nor can they deny that it produces the life of the body, seeing that they explicitly say that "it is the just temperaments of the humors that produce the life and health of the body." However, they cannot say that this fermentation or just temperament of the humors is round or square or necessarily some other shape; nor can they say that it can be split or cut up. They are ridiculous if they think these kinds of things can be round or square, etc., on the pretext that they are modifications of matter. Therefore, it is clear and evident that all modifications of matter are not necessarily things round or square or any shape, as our Cartesians claim. Consequently, they are ridiculous to want to deprive beasts of knowledge and sentiment on the pretext that knowledge and sentiment cannot be modifications of matter because they are not round or square, etc.

Moreover, though they may agree with us that thought and sentiment are indeed only modifications of matter, it would not really be matter that was thinking, feeling, and living. It would really be the man

or animal composed of matter that was thinking, knowing, or feeling. In the same way that although health and sickness are only modifications of matter, nevertheless it is not really the matter that is well or ill. In the same way again, it is not really matter that sees or hears or is hungry or thirsty, but it is the person or animal composed of matter who sees, hears, or is hungry or thirsty. And although fire, for example, and wine are only matter modified in a certain way, nevertheless it is not really matter that burns the wood or straw and it is not really matter that makes you drunk, but it is the fire that burns and the wine that makes you drunk. For, according to the philosophical maxim, "The actions and names of things are really only attributed to the subjects," and not to matter or any particular parts of which it is composed: *Actiones et denominaciones sunt suppositorum.*

So, as ridiculous as it would be for our Cartesians to say that life, the just temperament of the humors, and the fermentation of bodies were not modifications of matter on the pretext that they are not round, square, or any other shape, so it is ridiculous for them to say that thought and sentiment are not modifications of matter in living bodies on the pretext that their thoughts and sentiments are not round, square, or any other shape. And as ridiculous as it would be to say that beasts are not alive on the pretext that their life is not round, square, or any other figure, so it is ridiculous to say that they have no knowledge or feeling on the pretext that their knowledge and feelings are not round, square, or any other shape. And so the Cartesians are obviously ridiculous when on such a vain pretext and such a vain and frivolous reason they say, "Beasts are not capable of knowledge or feeling and they eat without pleasure, cry out without pain, know nothing, desire nothing, and fear nothing." The opposite obviously appears in everything: we see that Nature has given them feet to walk and they walk, a mouth and teeth to eat and they eat, eyes to guide and they guide themselves. Did it give them eyes to guide themselves and see nothing? Did it give them ears to listen and understand nothing? A mouth to eat and taste nothing? Did it give them a brain with fibers and animal spirits to think nothing and know nothing? And finally, did it give them living flesh to feel nothing and have no pleasure or pain? What fantasy! What illusion! What madness to want to imagine and be persuaded of such a thing on such vain reasons and such a vain pretext as what they allege!

What, gentlemen Cartesians? Because beasts cannot speak Latin and French like us and express to you their thoughts in our language and explain their desires, their aches and pains, or their pleasures and joys, so you look upon them as pure machines deprived of knowledge and feelings? On this footing you will also easily make us believe that the Iroquois and Japanese or even the Spaniards and Germans are only pure, inanimate machines deprived of knowledge and sentiments, insofar as we do not understand anything of their languages and they do not speak like us!

What are you thinking, gentlemen Cartesians? Do you not see clearly enough that beasts have a natural language? That those of the same species understand each other? That they call out to each other? That they also answer each other? Do you not see clearly enough that they form societies among themselves, that they know and understand each other? That they love and caress each other and play together very often? And sometimes they hate, fight, and cannot stand each other, just like men? Do you not see clearly enough that they are very comfortable when you pet them, that they are happy and hearty when they are well and lack nothing, and that they have as good an appetite as men have when they are hungry and have something good to eat according to their nature and their species? And on the contrary, do you not clearly see that they are sad and lackadaisical, that they moan and sigh mournfully when they are sick or hurt? Do you not also see that they cry out when you hit them and they run away at full speed when they are threatened, chased, or treated roughly? All this is a kind of natural language by which they show us clearly enough that they have knowledge and feeling. This language is not questionable or ambiguous: it is clear and distinct and is less questionable than the ordinary language of men, which is often full of camouflage, duplicity, and fraud.

Do you see inanimate machines naturally give birth to each other? Do you see them gather together to have company like beasts do? Do you see them call and answer each other like beasts? Do you see them play with each other and caress each other or beat each other and hate each other? Does it seem to you that they know each other and their masters like beasts do? Do you see them come when their masters call or run away when they want to hit them? Finally, do you see them obey their masters and do what they are told as beasts do every day? You do not see pure, inanimate machines do these things.

You will never see it and yet you think that beasts do all this without knowledge and sentiment? You think that they engender each other without pleasure, drink and eat without pleasure or appetite, without hunger or thirst? That they caress their masters without love and without knowing them? That they do what they are ordered without understanding the voice and without knowing what they are doing? That they have no fear and they cry out without pain when they are hit? And you imagine all this and persuade yourselves of this for the sole reason that knowledge, sentiment, pleasure, joy, pain, sadness, desire, fear, appetite, etc., are not round or square or any other shape? And thus they cannot be modifications of matter or of a material being?

You are crazy, gentlemen Cartesians! Allow me to call you this even though you may sometimes be very sensible. In this you are crazy and you deserve to be laughed at rather than seriously refuted.

All modifications of matter or material being do not have to have, as you think, all the properties of matter or material being. And so, although one of these properties is that it be extended in length, width, and depth, that it can be round or square or divided into parts, it does not follow that all modifications of matter or material being have to be extended in length, width, and depth or always be round or square and divisible into parts, as you falsely imagine.

The proofs I have given up to this point are clear and evident. However, the Archbishop of Cambrai would like to persuade us

that it is clear and evident [these are his words] that matter cannot think or feel and the people, even children, cannot be persuaded otherwise. The people and children are far from believing that matter is capable of thinking or feeling in any way, so that they could not help laughing if you told them that a stone, a piece of wood, a table, or their dolls felt pain or pleasure and joy or sadness.

And from this he concludes that it is clear and evident that matter cannot think or feel, because even the people and children cannot doubt it. Now that is a lovely argument for a person of such rank, merit, and erudition! People and even children could really have reason to laugh and make fun of those who to amuse themselves would like to make them believe that stones, tables, boards, furniture, or dolls had knowl-

edge and sentiment because they know, indeed, that these sorts of things cannot know or feel anything.

But their laughter would not come (as de Cambrai would like to make them understand) from the fact that these kinds of things are only matter or made from matter, but because they would see that these things are not "animate" and have no life like animals and, consequently, that they cannot think or feel.

To use the expression of de Cambrai, we can very certainly say that the people and even children are far from believing that beasts are without souls, without life, without knowledge and sentiment, so that they could not help laughing at those who wanted to persuade them otherwise and say, as our Cartesians do, that they eat without pleasure, cry out without pain, know nothing, see nothing, love, desire, and fear nothing. That would certainly make the people and children laugh, so far are they from believing that beasts are without life, knowledge, and sentiment.

Tell the peasants that their beasts do not have life or feelings, that their cows and horses and their flocks of sheep are just blind machines insensitive to good or bad and that they walk only by springs like machines or puppets, without seeing or knowing where they go. Certainly they will make fun of you.

Tell these same peasants or their fellows that their dogs do not have life or feelings, that they do not know their masters, that they follow them without seeing, play with them without loving, and chase rabbits or deer and catch them on the run without seeing or feeling them.

Tell them that they drink and eat without pleasure and even without appetite and without being hungry or thirsty. Tell them also that they cry out without pain when they are hit and they flee from wolves without any fear. You will see how they will make fun of you!

And why will they make fun of you? Because they are very far from believing and being persuaded that living beasts are without souls, without life, without knowledge and feelings, and they could not help considering everyone ridiculous who seriously tells them that they are really without life, knowledge, and feelings. And their judgment is so well founded on reason and on experience that it could also, if need be, be founded on the authority of the so-called Holy Scriptures of our Christ-cultists, who explicitly show that God gave or had given living souls to beasts in their first creation (Gen. 1:20, 21, 24, 29, 30). And

so, not only good judgment and everyday experience, but also the religion of our Christ-cultists testifies clearly enough to have no doubt about this.

That is why I am right to say that they are ridiculous when they say that beasts are only inanimate machines that eat without pleasure and cry out without pain. This opinion is completely reprehensible not only because it is false and ridiculous in itself, but also principally because it should be hateful and detestable in itself, given that it clearly tends to stifle in the heart of men all feelings of gentleness and kindness that they may have for beasts and it is even capable of inspiring harsh and cruel feelings in them.

For, as to the feelings of gentleness, kindness, and compassion that men could have for many of these beasts that we often see so badly mistreated and harmed, it would be crazy to sympathize with them or be sensitive to their pains, cries, and groans and to have compassion for them, if they had, as our Cartesians say, no soul and life, no knowledge and feelings, because it would be crazy to have compassion for things that were not animate and did not feel good or bad, which is why we do not bother to have pity or compassion for a dead body we see cut into pieces or rotting on the ground.

We do not bother to have pity or compassion for sheets that we twist around mallets at the launderer or wood that we see split and thrown in the fire to burn; we do not bother to have pity or compassion for these kinds of things because they are "inanimate" and do not feel good or bad.

It would be the same with beasts if the opinion of the Cartesians were right. We would not have to have any pity or compassion for them when we saw them suffering any kind of harm.

And that is how this false opinion clearly tends to stifle in the heart of man all feelings of gentleness, kindness, and compassion that they may have for beasts, which seems to me a very bad effect, very hateful and detrimental to the poor beasts.

But what is worse is that this opinion is even capable of encouraging the natural viciousness in men and inspiring feelings of cruelty and harshness in their hearts.

For, on the pretext that brutal men imagine that beasts have no knowledge or feelings, they can take pleasure in torturing them, making them cry out and moan and groan in order to enjoy hearing their

piteous cries, moans, and groans and at the same time seeing the violent movements, contortions, and frightening grimaces that these poor beasts are forced to make. Among other things, these mischievous, brutal madmen make them cruelly suffer harsh and violent tortures in their entertainments and even in public celebrations; they tie up nipping cats to the end of some pole they set up and at the bottom of which they light the fires of joy where they burn them alive to have the pleasure of seeing the violent movements and hearing the frightening cries that these poor unfortunate beasts are forced to make because of the harshness and violence of the tortures. This is certainly a brutal, cruel, and detestable pleasure, a madness and detestable joy.

If there were a court set up to punish such cruelty and render justice to these poor beasts, I would denounce to it this perverse and detestable doctrine of our Cartesians, which is so detrimental to them, and I would willingly seek conviction that it be entirely banished from the minds and beliefs of men and that the Cartesians who maintain it be sentenced to make honorable amends and to condemn their doctrine themselves.

But let us return to the so-called spirituality and immortality of our souls. Everything I have just said clearly shows that it is not spiritual or immortal in the sense that our Christ-cultists understand it, but that our soul is really material and mortal like that of beasts.

That is why it is also mentioned in their so-called Holy Scriptures that the soul of all living flesh is in the blood. And for this reason it was expressly forbidden in the so-called divine law of Moses to eat the blood, only because the soul of all living flesh is in the blood (cf. Lev. 17:14). And it was punishable by death.

And it is said in the same "Books of the Law," *Man just like beasts and beasts just like man were made with living souls. . . . Man became living and animate* (Gen. 2:7). (Cf. Gen. 1:24, 7:15; Job 33:4.)

And it is said of man in particular, not only of his body but of the whole of him, that *he will earn his bread by the sweat of his brow until he returns to the earth from which he was made, since he is only dust and will return to dust* (Gen. 3:19).

King David spoke of the vanity and fragility of men, even the rulers and most powerful princes of the earth, saying, *Do not trust in their power because their spirit will depart and return to the earth and then all their thoughts and plans will vanish* (Ps. 146:3-4).

## 92. NEITHER MOSES NOR THE ANCIENT PROPHETS BELIEVED IN THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

If, then, the soul of men, as well as beasts, consists only in blood and if his spirit is only earth and dust, as the testimony I just cited indicates, it is again a clear and evident proof that our soul is not spiritual or immortal as our Cartesians claim.

And what confirms this is that in all the so-called Holy Scriptures that they call the “Old Testament” and that pass for wholly divine law among our Christ-cultists, we do not see any mention made of this so-called spirituality and immortality of the soul or any mention of those so-called grand and magnificent eternal rewards of heaven any more than those so-called great and terrible punishments after this present life. As many so-called great and holy prophets as appeared during all the time of that ancient so-called divine law, nothing was said or known about this. Moses himself, that grand Moses, that great lawmaker of the Jewish people, who spoke, if you want to believe it, so often and so familiarly with God, knew nothing and said nothing about it in his law. He mentioned only the present life and he offered to his people only temporal rewards in this life and he threatened them also only with temporal punishments in this life (Deut. 28). That is why these people, even the most enlightened and most able among them, thought only of this present life and did not think there were goods to hope for or evils to fear other than what could be in this world. And far from imagining that their souls were immortal, they were, on the contrary, persuaded that they were mortal and ended with the life of the body. (Cf. Job 14:7–12.)

*Do you think that a dead man can live again? (Job 14:14). Once a man has died, he will not rise again; until the heavens are consumed and destroyed, he will not awake and be aroused from his sleep (Job 14:12).* Job said that *life is only a wind* and is *like a cloud that dissipates in the air.* And about the goods that he attributes to the vicious and impious and of which people are envious, he says that *they spend their life in pleasures,*

in joy and abundance of all temporal goods and *then all at once they go down into hell*, i.e., in a moment they go from life to death without languishing in sickness, without tasting the afflictions of life, and as if without even having time to feel anything bad (Job 21:13).

Now, it is unquestionable that if the soul were immortal and if there were, as our Christ-cultists say, eternal punishments for the wicked to fear in hell after death, it would not be, as Job says, good for them to descend into hell, i.e., into the grave or tomb and to die without having time to feel long and violent pains. This is evident proof that he did not think their souls were immortal or that there was anything bad to suffer after death.

The prophet David felt the same. This clearly appears in many places in his Psalms: *Lord, he said as if speaking to his God, there is no one who remembers you when they are dead or who can praise you when they are dead or in the grave* (Ps. 6:5). (Cf. Ps. 88:11–13; 115:16–17; Baruch 2:17; Is. 38:18–19; Eccl. 2:15, 3:19–22; Ecclesiasticus 41:5–9.)

Therefore, seeing that according to all these great and so-called holy characters of the “Old Testament” there is no more knowledge after death, no way of knowing or praising God after death, that men are like beasts and they both have the same end, that heaven is only for the Lord God and earth is for men, that the dead can no longer praise God and only the living can know and praise him during their life, that it is of little use to search so carefully for wisdom since the wise and the foolish have one and the same end, that it is better to have and hold what you love than to desire what you do not know, that there is no more reward to wait for after death, and, finally, that the best that men can do is to enjoy the pleasures and contentment of this life peaceably and joyfully in this world, which is his share—it is evident and decisive proof that they did not think that the soul was immortal, but on the contrary, they believed that it was mortal.

Indeed, they really believed this. It was the common belief of the entire Jewish people, who were the only so-called chosen people of God—they knew no other life but this one and they did not claim that there were rewards or punishments after death. How could they hope for rewards or fear punishments after death when their law, which they thought divine, said nothing about it? It is not believable that an infinitely good and wise God would have wanted to hide such great and

important truths as these from people whom he wanted to love, worship, and serve him faithfully and whom he wanted to favor so particularly with his graces and blessings. The clear knowledge and certain appearance that he would have given them of the immortality of their souls, of an eternally blessed life for the good and an eternally unhappy life for the wicked, would have been a more powerful motive to urge them to love him and fear him and serve him faithfully than to only have offered them temporal rewards and punishments.

It is said that an ancient orator (Hegesias) was so lively in speaking about the immortality of the soul that it was necessary to forbid him from speaking anymore on the subject. All the more so as many of his listeners, persuaded by his speeches, voluntarily killed themselves in order to enjoy this so-called blessed immortality with which he amused and abused his listeners. (It is no good today preaching to our Christ-cultists the ineffable grandeur of the goods, joys, and eternal rewards that they can hope for in heaven—not one of them wants to go to see what is there, a certain sign that they themselves hardly put any faith in what they are told or what they themselves say.)

Therefore, if an all-powerful God had given to his people a clear and complete knowledge of the immortality of their souls and a strong guarantee that they would receive the eternal rewards and punishments they deserved in another life, it would have been a much more powerful motive for them to bring themselves to love with all their heart and faithfully observe his divine law and commandments and be afraid of offending him. But since he did not give them this knowledge and he did not give them any hope or fear of another life, it is a certain and decisive proof that this so-called immortality of the soul does not exist and the so-called eternal rewards and punishments of another life do not exist. Consequently, everything our Christ-cultists say about it is only vanity, lies, errors, illusions, impostures, and fictions of the human mind based only on the maxims of some politicians who said, “People need to be ignorant of many truths and believe in many falsehoods.”

## 93. PLINY, THE FAMOUS NATURALIST, DID NOT BELIEVE THE SENTIMENTS ON THE SUBJECT

**P**liny, the famous naturalist and a very sensible man, laughed at this so-called spirituality and immortality of the soul. Here is what he said:

People say different things about the soul after a man dies. Sometimes they think that men return to the same being that they were before they were born and there is no feeling of body and soul after death any more than before they were born. But the vanity and folly of man leads him to think that he will be something after death so that he flatters himself amidst death itself and promises himself another life. Some attribute immortality to the soul, others say that it is transfigured, and there are those who think that shades can feel. That is why they revere them by establishing and making a God out of whoever could not remain man. As if the life-giving breath of man was different from that of beasts or there were not things in this universe that lived much longer than man, to which, however, no one has ever attributed immortality. But show me what a soul is made of. Where is its thought, its sight, its hearing? What does it do? What is it busy at? Or, if it has none of this, what is the use of having a soul? Verily. But where does it go? O how crowded the world must be with all these souls; they must be as thick as shadows. See, all these things are only daydreams of little children and inventions of men who never want to fade away. What a great folly to protect the body in the hope of resurrection, as Democritus promised, who has not yet been resurrected himself. But what folly to think that through death we could enter into a second life! What rest could any man have after being born if he has feeling of his soul above or his shade in hell? Certainly, the lure of words and the gullible folly of men destroy all the gentleness of the principle good of nature, which is death, making a double death for whoever cares about a future life. For, if it is a great good to exist, what satisfaction could we have in thinking that we only existed? O it is much easier and more certain for everyone to believe in himself and be assured from the experience of what we were before we were born. (*Natural History*, 7.55)

That is how this writer speaks about the vain and crazy opinion that some men have about the immortality of their souls.

Cicero said the opinion about the immortality of the soul was first introduced by Pherecydes of Syros in the time of King Tullus (others attribute it to Thales, others to others). It is the part of human science that is treated with the most reservation and doubt. The firmest dogmatists are forced to take cover in the shadows of the Academy. No one knows what Aristotle taught about the subject (or even all the Ancients in general who handle it with an unsteady belief) and he left it to his successors to battle it out about his opinion on the matter. It is marvelous how those who are stubborn in this opinion about the immortality of our souls come up short and are powerless to establish it by their human powers. . . . They are the dreams of a man who teaches nothing, but is hopeful: *somnia sunt non docentis, sed optantis* [Cicero, *Academica*, 2:38]. (Montaigne, *Essays*, 2:12)

Seneca said, “It is a very pleasant thing they promise us but do not prove: *rem gratissimam promittentium magis quam probantum*” (*Letters to Lucilius*, 102).

It would take too long and perhaps be useless to report here all the individual opinions of the ancient philosophers on the subject. It is enough to say that our soul is not spiritual or immortal as our Cartesians claim. And though it is difficult to know its nature and operations very distinctly, we nevertheless very certainly feel, internally and externally, that we are only matter and our most spiritual thoughts are only in the matter of our brain and are made with dependence on the natural constitution of our brain. Consequently, what we call “our soul” can be nothing else but a portion of the finest, subtlest, and most restless matter of our body, which is mixed up and modified in a certain way with another, cruder matter with which it composes an organic body and by its constant restlessness gives it life, movement, and sentiment.

All these propositions evidently follow on one another. Consequently, it is clear and evident that the soul is not spiritual or immortal but is material and mortal like the body. And if it is material and mortal like the body, then there is no reward to hope for or punishment to fear after this life. And if there is no reward to hope for or punishment to fear after this life, then there are hundreds of millions of just and innocent

people who will never have rewards for their virtues and good deeds. There are also hundreds of millions of vicious and abominable villains who will never be punished for their detestable crimes and viciousness because there are hundreds of millions of vicious people who die every day without receiving punishment for their crimes and hundreds of millions of just and innocent people who die without receiving rewards for their virtues and good deeds.

And if this is so, then there is no sovereign bounty to reward the just and innocent and no sovereign justice to punish the vicious as they deserve. And if there is no sovereign bounty, justice, wisdom, and power, then there is no infinitely perfect being. Consequently, there is no God, which I have proven.

## 94. THE INEVITABLE NECESSITY OF EVIL IS ANOTHER KIND OF PROOF THAT THERE IS NO BEING THAT CAN PREVENT EVIL

I have conclusively proven this truth above by an argument taken from the almost infinite multitude of evils and miseries that we see every day in the world. These evils, miseries, and vices clearly show that there is no all-powerful, infinitely good and wise being to make and order things well and prevent evil.

Now this same truth must be proven clearly again by an argument taken from the very necessity of evil that, according to the present constitution of Nature, will necessarily follow from good itself and from the suppression of all vices and viciousness.

For, it is certain that, with the present constitution of Nature (which always clearly tends to new productions and not only to new productions of grasses and plants of all kinds of species, but also to new generations of men and animals of all kinds of species) that if there were no evil in the world, i.e., if there were, for example, no death or sickness among men and animals or if only men and other animals did not harm, destroy, and tear each other apart as they do, they would all multiply so much that they would smother each other and the earth would not be able to contain them or produce enough to feed and maintain them so that they would be forced to eat each other or languish and die of hunger for lack of food and even for lack of space to put everything. This would be a very great evil.

Consequently, it is an inevitable necessity, following the present constitution of Nature, that there be evil of one kind or another. As a result, when evil did not come, as it does now, from the vice, malice, or viciousness of men and beasts, it would necessarily and inevitably come from the excessive multitude of men and animals of all species that there would be on earth, who could not survive or have enough to eat without tearing each other apart and eating each other. This clearly

shows us that the world is necessarily a mix of good and evil and there has to be good and evil, seeing that the natural order of generations and productions that are successively made in Nature cannot subsist or continue without this untoward mix of good and evil and without a great number of productions coming to an end every day to make way for new ones, which cannot happen without good for the one and evil for the other, i.e., without birth and growth for the one and destruction for the other.

Now, it is not believable and not even possible that an all-powerful, infinitely good and wise being, in creating the world, would ever have wanted to make a confused mix of good and evil or "an incomprehensible mix of grandeur and baseness," as de Cambrai says. An all-powerful, infinitely good and wise being could not contradict itself or go against its nature of infinite bounty and wisdom. Consequently, it could not want to do evil when it could always do good without a mix of any evil. And so, since the world is, as we see, necessarily a confused mix of good and evil, it evidently follows that it was not made by an infinitely perfect being and, consequently, there is no God. This argument is again conclusive and clear as the midday sun.

## 95. THE AGREEMENT OF ALL THE PROOFS PUT FORWARD ON THE SUBJECT, WHICH FOLLOW, SUPPORT, AND CONFIRM EACH OTHER, IS A PROOF THAT THEY ARE REALLY SOLID AND DECISIVE

**B**ut here again is a kind of proof that confirms all the former ones. It is that of all the conclusive and evident proofs I have put forward above and of all the arguments I have made up to this point on the subject, there is not one proof, not one proposition, not one argument that destroys, opposes, or contradicts another.

On the contrary, all the propositions I have established or brought forth and all the proofs I have put forward, which are all clear and evident, follow, support, and confirm one another. Likewise, all the arguments that I have made on the subject follow, support, and confirm one another. It is like a series and sequence of propositions, proofs, and conclusive reasons that follow, support, and clearly confirm one another, a certain and infallible sign that they all rely on the firm and solid foundation of truth itself, and because an error on the subject could not be confirmed by a total agreement of so many strong and powerful reasons and there is perhaps no truth that can be proven by so much clear and obvious evidence of truth as what has been shown.

It is not the same with the doctrine of our superstitious god-cultists concerning the so-called existence of their God. They cannot give any clear and decisive proof. What they say about his nature, attributes, perfections, and operations is full of palpable contrariety and contradictions. What our Christ-cultists say is no less ridiculous and absurd because they attribute incompatible things to him and often what they claim to prove by one reason they destroy by another opposing reason.

The trinity of persons, for example, that they attribute to the nature of their God destroys the unity that they also attribute to him. And the unity in turn destroys the trinity. The generation or production of two of these persons destroys their so-called eternity and their so-called eter-

nity destroys their so-called generation and production. The indivisible simplicity of a divine nature that has no parts or extension destroys the immensity that they attribute to him. And this immensity is obviously averse to a nature that has no extension. The immobility and immutability of their God destroys the quality in him of first cause and first mover. And this so-called quality of first cause or mover destroys in him this so-called immobility and immutability because what is absolutely and essentially unmoving and unchanging in itself cannot change or move outside itself or inside itself. The so-called infinite bounty and mercy they attribute to him destroys the harshness of his so-called infinite justice, and the harshness destroys his gentleness. What they say of the so-called need they have at all times of individual help from the grace of their God to act well and do good destroys what they say about the liberty and free will of man; and vice versa.

The infinite wisdom, omnipotence, and general providence that they attribute to him in governing the world and even in governing every individual thing necessarily implies a perfectly good ordering of all things, which would clearly make us see, acknowledge, and admire the bounty, wisdom, and omnipotence as well as the wonderful providence of the infinitely perfect being who governed everything so well, so wisely, and so pleasantly. But clearly and obviously seeing the opposite, seeing the evils and dreadful miseries, the vices, disorder, and abominable viciousness that is pretty much everywhere in the world, entirely destroys the belief in this so-called wisdom, omnipotence, bounty, and providence of an infinitely perfect being.

Moreover, the reasons our Christ-cultists use to establish and explain their doctrine are so feeble in themselves and so full of contrarieties and contradictions that they destroy themselves and do not deserve any faith, which is again a clear proof of the falsity of their principles and doctrine, and, consequently, a clear and evident proof of the truth of the opposite and opposing doctrine.

## 96. CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE WORK

All these arguments are as conclusive as they can be: it is enough just to pay a little attention to see the evidence. And so it is clearly demonstrated, by all these arguments that I have put forth above, that all the religions of the world are, as I said at the beginning of this writing, only human inventions, and that everything they teach us or make us believe are only errors, illusions, lies, and impostures invented by scoffers, swindlers, and hypocrites to deceive men, or by shrewd and crafty politicians to hold men in check and do whatever they want to the ignorant people (who blindly and foolishly believe everything they are told comes from God) and claim that it is useful and expedient to make men believe in the same thing, on the pretext, as they say, that it is "necessary that the common man not know very many truths and that he believe in many falsehoods."

And since all these kinds of errors, illusions, and impostures are the source and cause of countless evils, abuses, and viciousness in the world, and that even the tyranny, which makes so many people groan on the earth, also tries hard to hide itself under this attractive but false and detestable pretext of religion, I am very right to say that this whole hodgepodge of religions and political laws, such as there are at present, were in fact only mysteries of iniquity.

No, my dear friends, they are really nothing but mysteries of iniquity, and even detestable mysteries of iniquity seeing that it is in this way that your priests make you and hold you always miserably captive under the hateful and insupportable yoke of their vain and crazy superstitions, on the pretext of wanting to lead you happily to God and make you observe their holy laws and commands. And it is also in this way that the princes and rulers of the land pillage, trample, ruin, oppress, and tyrannize you, on the pretext of governing you and wanting to maintain or obtain the public good.

I would like to be able to make my voice heard from one end of the kingdom to the other, or rather from one extremity of the earth to the other. I would cry out with all my force: O men, you are crazy! You are

crazy to let yourselves be led in this way and to believe so blindly in so many stupidities. I would make it heard that they are in error and those who govern them abuse and impose on them. I would reveal to them the detestable mystery of iniquity that makes them so miserable and unhappy everywhere, and that will surely become in the centuries to come the shame and disgrace of our day.

I would reproach them for their madness and stupidity in believing and putting such blind faith in so many errors, illusions, and ridiculous and crude deceptions. I would reproach them for their cowardice in letting such detestable tyrants live for so long and in not shaking off the hateful yoke of their tyrannical governments and tyrannical domination.

An ancient writer once said that there was nothing so rare as an old tyrant; and the reason for this was that men did not yet have the weakness or cowardice to let tyrants reign or live a long time. They had the spirit and courage to get rid of them when they abused their authority. But now it is no longer a rare thing to see tyrants reign and live a long time. Men have little by little become used to slavery. And now they are so used to it that they barely think anymore about getting their old freedom back; it seems to them that slavery is a natural condition. That is also why the pride of these detestable tyrants steadily increases and every day they weigh down more and more the insupportable yoke of their tyrannical domination. *The pride of those who hate you rises every day* (Ps. 74:23). You will say that their iniquity and viciousness comes from the abundance of their fat and the excess of their prosperity: *Their iniquity is as if born from their abundance and their fat* (Ps. 73:7). They have come just to enjoy their vices and their viciousness: *They are abandoned to all the passions of the heart*. And that is also why the people are so miserable and unhappy under the yoke of their tyrannical domination. Where are the generous murderers of tyrants we saw in centuries past? Where are Brutus and Cassius? Where are the generous murderers of a Caligula and so many other similar monsters? Where the Publicola? Where are the generous defenders of the public liberty who chase the kings and tyrants from their country and give permission to every individual to kill the tyrants? Where are Cinna and so many others who wrote bitterly and railed loudly against the tyranny of kings? Where are the emperors, the worthy emperors? The Trajan and the good-natured Antonines, the first of whom, giving his sword to the first officer of his

empire, told him to kill him with this sword if he became a tyrant, and the other said that he would rather save the life of one of his subjects than kill a thousand of his enemies. Where are they, I say, these good princes and worthy emperors? We no longer see their like! We no longer even see the generous murderers of tyrants! But in their absence, where are the Jacques Clément and the Ravaillac of our France? Would that they still lived in our century and in all centuries to bludgeon or stab all the detestable monsters and enemies of the human race, and thus deliver all the peoples of the earth from tyrannical domination! Would that they still lived, these worthy and generous defenders of public liberty! Would that they still lived today to chase all the kings from the land and to oppress all the oppressors and to give freedom back to the people! Would that they still lived, the brave writers and the brave orators who reproached the tyrants, who railed against their tyranny and who wrote bitterly against their vices, injustices, and evil governments! Would that they still lived today to openly reproach all the tyrants who oppress us, to rail loudly against all their vices, injustices, and evil governments! Would that they still lived today to make these people hateful and contemptible to the whole world through their public writings! And in the end to arouse the people to shake off the insupportable yoke of their tyrannical domination in common consent and agreement?

But no, these great men no longer live. We no longer see these noble and generous souls who expose themselves to death for the safety of their homeland and who would rather have the glory of dying generously than the shame and displeasure of living cowardly. And it must be said, to the shame of our century and our last centuries, that in the world now we see only cowards and wretched slaves of the grandeur and excessive power of tyrants. We no longer see now, among those who are of a higher rank and character than others, anyone but cowardly flatterers; we no longer see anyone but cowardly yes-men of their unjust designs and cowardly and cruel enforcers of their evil wills and unjust orders.

Such are, in France, all those who are the rulers of the kingdom, all the governors of the towns, the administrators of the provinces, all the judges, officials, and even those of all the biggest and most important towns of the kingdom who no longer have any part in the government of the state and who no longer serve now but to judge the cases of indi-

viduals and to subscribe blindly to all the orders of the kings, and who do not dare contradict them, as unjust and hateful as they may be. Such are also, as I said, all the administrators of the provinces and all the governors of the towns and castles who serve only to enforce the same orders everywhere. Such are the commanders of armies, all the officers and soldiers who serve only to maintain the authority of the tyrant and strictly enforce his orders on the poor people, and who even set fire to their own country and completely ravage it either on a whim or on some vain pretext that the tyrant commanded them to do it, and who, on the other hand, are so crazy and so blind as to make it glorious to devote themselves entirely to their service, like miserable slaves who in times of war have to expose themselves to death every day and almost every hour for them, at the cheap price of four or five sous, which he might give to them every day. Without even speaking of the countless other riff-raff: office clerks, controllers, tax-collector rats, archers, guards, sergeants, court clerks, and bailiffs, all of whom, like starving wolves, seek only to devour their prey and love only to pillage and tyrannize the poor people in the name and authority of their kings, strictly enforcing upon them all the most unjust orders—sometimes by seizing their goods, sometimes by enforcement, and sometimes by confiscating their goods; and, what is even more hateful, often by imprisoning people and by all sorts of violence and mistreatment; and, finally, by the whip and the galley, and sometimes also, which is detestable, by the punishment of a shameful death.

That, my dear friends, is how those who govern you establish with force and power a detestable mystery of iniquity over you and your fellow men. It is with the help of all these errors and abuses of which I spoke that they establish so powerfully the mystery of iniquity everywhere. Religion and politics are united in cooperation to hold you always captive under their tyrannical laws.

You will be miserable and unhappy, you and all your descendants, so long as you allow the domination of the princes and kings of the earth. You will be miserable and unhappy so long as you follow the errors of religion and subject yourselves to their crazy superstitions.

Therefore, entirely reject all these vain and superstitious practices of religions! Banish from your minds this crazy and blind belief in its false mysteries, put no faith in it, mock everything your self-interested priests

tell you! Most of them do not believe a word of it. Would you want to believe more than they themselves believe?

Set your minds and hearts completely at ease in this matter, and banish all these vain and superstitious offices of priests and sacrificers, and reduce them all to living and working usefully like you, or at least to being busy in something good and useful.

But that is not enough.

Work to unite all of you, as many as you are, you and your fellow men, to completely shake off the yoke of the tyrannical domination of your kings and princes. Overthrow the thrones of injustice and impiety everywhere! Break all the crowned heads! Confound everywhere the pride and haughtiness of all the proud and haughty tyrants! No longer allow them to rule over you ever again in any way!

It is up to the wisest to conduct and govern the others. It is up to them to establish good laws and give orders that always tend to the advancement and preservation of the public good, at least according to the demands of time, place, and other circumstances: *Woe*, says one of their so-called holy prophets, *woe unto those who make unjust laws!* (Is. 10:1).

But, woe also unto those who cowardly submit themselves to unjust laws! Woe unto the people who are cowardly made the slaves of tyrants and who are blindly made the slaves of the errors and superstitions of religion!

Only the natural lights of reason are capable of leading men to the perfection of knowledge and human wisdom, as well as to the perfection of the arts. And they are capable of carrying them not only to the practice of all the moral virtues, but also to the practice of all the most beautiful and the most generous actions of life. Just look at what once the great people of Antiquity (like the Catos, Agesilaus, Epaminondas, the Fabia, Phocion, the Scipios, Regulus, and many other very great and worthy individuals) did, who excelled in all sorts of virtues and of whom an author said that they went much farther in virtue than the most pious or the most zealous ever went, “magnanimous heroes born in better times” (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6:649).

In fact, it is not the bigotry of religions that perfects men in the sciences and arts. That is not what makes men discover the secrets of Nature or inspires the grand designs of men. But it is the mind—it is

wisdom, it is the honesty and grandeur of the soul that makes great men and makes them undertake great things. And so, men do not need the bigotries or superstitions of religion to be perfected in the sciences or in good manners.

Likewise, they do not need the prodigious extravagance or the pompous, conceited, and haughty grandeur of the princes and kings of the earth to be well governed and always maintained in a happy and flourishing state. Good magistrates are capable of governing others well; they are capable of establishing good laws and of making good rules for keeping order. *Wisdom*, says Job, *is found in the old ones and prudence is got only after much time* (Job 12:12). If it is so, as there is good reason to believe, then it is in the old sages that we should look for this wisdom and prudence that are so necessary to govern well; and so, it is the old, full of prudence and wisdom, who must wisely govern others, and not the crazy, scatterbrained young or the reckless, proud, and haughty youth or the vicious and wicked men, any more than children to whom a lucky birth gives power.

It is the madness and viciousness of men that produces so many princes and tyrants on the earth. It is one of the wise men of holy Antiquity who said, *It is because of the sins of the people that many princes quickly succeed one another* (Prov. 28:2). And elsewhere it is said by another wise man that *evil takes hold of a state whose king is only a child and whose princes are voluptuous and slaves to their evil passions*, i.e., evil takes hold of a state that lets itself be governed by a child and by voluptuous princes who are slaves to their evil passions: *Woe unto you, Land, whose king is a child and whose princes feast in the morning!* (Eccl. 10:16). And as there are hardly any princes who are other than voluptuous and hardly any who are not slaves of their passions, it is truly a woe for the people to be under their governments.

Convince yourselves, then, dear people, that the errors and superstitions of your religion and the tyranny of your kings and of all those who govern you under their authority are the deadly and detestable cause of all your woes, pains, worries, and miseries.

You will be happy if you are delivered from the two detestable and insupportable yokes of superstition and tyranny, and if you are governed only by good and wise magistrates. Therefore, if you have the heart and desire to be delivered from your woes, completely shake off

the yoke of those who govern and oppress you! Shake off in common consent and agreement the yoke of tyranny and superstition! Reject in common consent all your priests, all your monks, and all your tyrants in order to set up among yourselves good, wise, and prudent magistrates to peacefully govern you, to loyally bring justice to each one of you, and to carefully watch over the preservation of the public good and the public peace, and to whom you, for your part, should give swift and loyal obedience.

Your salvation is in your hands. Your deliverance will depend only on if you can understand everything well. You have all the means and all the forces necessary to set yourselves free and make slaves of your tyrants. For, as powerful and formidable as they may be, your tyrants have no power over you without you yourselves.

All their grandeur, wealth, force, and power come from you. It is your children, your parents, your allies, friends, and relatives who serve them as much in war as in all the jobs where they put them: they could not do anything without them and without you. They use your own forces against you and reduce you, as many as you are, to slavery. And they would also use them to ruin and destroy you all, one after another, if anybody in their cities or provinces dared to undertake to resist them and shake off their yoke. But, it would not be like this if all people, provinces, and cities well understood and if they conspired together to deliver themselves from the common slavery in which they are. All the tyrants would then soon be overwhelmed and crushed.

Unite, then, people, if you are wise! All of you unite, if you have a heart to deliver yourselves from all your common miseries! Wake up and encourage each other to such a noble, generous, important, and glorious undertaking as this!

At first begin by communicating your thoughts and desires secretly. Spread everywhere, as cleverly as possible, writings like this one, for example, which show to everyone the vanity of the errors and superstitions of religion and make hateful everywhere the tyrannical government of the princes and kings of the earth.

Help each other in such a just and necessary cause as this that concerns the common interest of all people. What will ruin you in these kinds of encounters and occasions concerning the fight for public freedom is that you will destroy each other and fight against each other

for the choice of tyrants or for the support of their cause and authority, instead of all joining together to destroy and annihilate them.

So, you could not do any better in such a situation than to follow in common consent the example of those who were once nobly delivered from tyranny: the brave Dutch, for example, who nobly shook off the insupportable yoke of the tyranny of the Spaniards under the Duke of Alba, or the Swiss who nobly shook off the tyranny of the cruel government of the Dukes of Austria. You have no less reason now to do the same with respect to your princes and kings and all those who govern and tyrannize you in their name and authority, since their tyranny is beyond excess.

It is said in one of the so-called holy and divine books that *God will overthrow the proud and haughty princes from their thrones and he will set in their place peaceful and lenient men*. It is also said that *he will dry up the roots of proud nations and in their place plant humble ones* (Ecclesiasticus 10:17–18).

Who are these proud and haughty princes about whom these so-called holy and divine books speak? They are your sovereigns, dukes, princes, kings, monarchs, potentates, etc. Make the fulfillment of these so-called divine words appear today. Overthrow, as they say, all the haughty tyrants and their thrones, and set in their place good, gentle, wise, and prudent magistrates to govern you with mildness and maintain you happily in peace.

What are these proud nations whose roots it is said God will dry up? It is none other than the proud and haughty nobility who is among you, who tramples and oppresses you. It is none other than the proud officers of your princes and kings, all their proud attendants and governors of cities and provinces, all those proud tax-collector rats and office clerks, and finally all the haughty prelates, bishops, abbots, monks, fat beneficiaries, and all those other gentlemen and ladies or young ladies who do nothing else in the world except entertain themselves and have all kinds of good times while you other people have to be busy day and night in all kinds of hard work and throughout your life bear the weight of the day and the heat to produce by the sweat of your brow all the necessary and useful things in life. These here, my dear friends, are the true haughty nations whose roots you really have to dry up like plants that can no longer take the sap from the earth that feeds them. The plentiful

sap that feeds all these proud and haughty nations is the great wealth and fat revenues that they take every day from the hard work of your hands.

For, it is only from you, it is only through your industry and your hard work that the abundance of all their goods and riches of the land come. This is the plentiful sap, which they take from your hands, that maintains, feeds, fattens, and makes them as strong, powerful, proud, and haughty as they are.

But do you want to completely dry up all the roots of these proud and haughty nations? Deprive them only of that plentiful sap that they take out of your hands from your pains and work. Keep for yourselves all the riches and goods that you produce so abundantly by the sweat of your brows. Keep them for yourselves and your fellow men. Give nothing to those proud and haughty nations; give nothing to those haughty, rich sluggards; give nothing to all those useless monks and clergymen; give nothing to those proud and haughty nobles and tyrants or their servants. Summon all your children, parents, allies, and friends to leave them and completely abandon their service and do nothing for them. Excommunicate them from your society! Consider them everywhere as you would consider the excommunicated among you, and in this way you will soon see them dry up like grass and plants whose roots no longer suck the sap of the earth.

You do not need these people. You will manage without them easily, but they will not be able to manage without you at all. So if you are wise, O people of the earth (for I willingly speak to all the people of the earth since no one speaks for them and tells them what they need to hear), and I say willingly: all of you who have no learning, learn at least to know your own good, your true good! *And all you who are fools learn at last to become wise* (Ps. 94:8). And if you are wise, forget all the hatred, envy, and animosity among yourselves, turn all your hatred and indignation against your common enemy, against all those detestable tyrants and those proud and haughty races of men who oppress you, who make you so miserable and who steal and snatch from your hands all the best fruits of your hard work. Unite, then, in the same sentiments to deliver yourselves from this hateful and insupportable yoke of their tyrannical rule, as well as from the vain and superstitious practices of their false religions.

And so, no other religion among you but that of true wisdom and honest ways, no other but that of honor and propriety, of frankness and

generosity of heart, no other but to completely abolish the tyranny and superstitious cult of the gods and their idols, no other but to maintain justice and equality everywhere, to completely banish the errors and impostures and to make truth, justice, and peace reign everywhere, no other but to all be busy in some honest and useful exercise and to live orderly in common, to maintain public liberty at all times, and, finally, to love each other and keep peace and good union among you inviolable.

You will be happy if you follow the rules, maxims, and precepts of this only wise and true religion. But I dare say, although I am no prophet, that you and your descendants will always be miserable and unhappy as long as you follow any other religion than this. You and your descendants will always be miserable and unhappy as long as you suffer the domination of tyrants and the errors, abuses, and vain superstitions of the cult of the gods and their idols. You and your descendants will always be miserable and unhappy as long as there is no just subordination among you and as long as there is such a great and enormous disproportion of states and conditions; as long as you do not possess and enjoy in common the goods of the earth; as long as the good and bad and the pains of life are so badly shared among you, since it is not at all just that some bear all the pains of labor and all the discomforts of life while others enjoy alone without pain or labor all the goods and comforts of life. Finally, you and your descendants will always be miserable and unhappy as long as you do not all conspire together as one to deliver yourselves from the common slavery that you have been so miserably reduced to under the tyrannical domination of the princes and kings of the earth and under the hateful yoke of the vain, crazy, and superstitious practices of false religions, which can only serve to make you fear and worship false and imaginary divinities that can do no good or evil to you, as I clearly proved above.

I readily call upon all people of intelligence and common sense and honesty to withhold their judgment on the subject and to get rid of some of the prejudices they may have because of their birth, upbringing, or particular habits. I call upon them to pay particular attention to what I have said. And finally, I call upon them to seriously examine my thoughts and sentiments and the proofs I have given in order to notice and find all the strengths and weaknesses.

For, I am strongly convinced that if they follow the natural lights of

their reason, they will easily convince themselves of all the truths I have put forward and they will be surprised at all the vain, ridiculous, and gross errors and all the pernicious and detestable abuses that have been introduced and established so strongly and universally among men and maintained for such a long time, given that there are so many intelligent and enlightened men who should have opposed the establishment, progress, and preservation of so many detestable abuses and errors. It seems, in this respect, that men have been struck by a spirit of blindness not to see the errors and madness that they are in.

The subject is important; it concerns everyone: it concerns the public good, peace, and tranquility; it concerns the deliverance of almost all the people of the earth from the hard and miserable servitude of the tyrannical domination of the rulers of the earth, as well as their deliverance from the vile and odious servitude of all the idolatrous superstitions of false religions.

If people of intelligence, common sense, and honesty find that I am right to reproach and condemn the vices, errors, abuses, and injustices as I have, if they find that I have spoken the truth and my proofs and arguments are really conclusive, as I claim, it is up to them to support the party of truth, especially when it concerns the common cause and the common good of all people; it is up to them to reproach and condemn the vices, errors, abuses, and injustices as I have. For, it would be disgraceful for honest, intelligent people to always want to encourage so many detestable errors, abuses, and injustices by their silence.

If only they dare as much as I have to openly reproach and condemn them as long as they live, to make this testimony of justice to the truth that they know and at least once before they die to do something good for their country, their parents, relatives, allies, friends, and descendants: to tell the truth and contribute to their deliverance.

But on the contrary, if they find that I have not spoken the truth and that it is a crime for me to have thought and written as I have here, and if animosity or passion makes them resent me and treat me insultingly as impious and as a blasphemer . . . after my death—as the princes and priests will undoubtedly do, and particularly all the ignorant people, the bigots, the superstitious devotees, the hypocrites, and, generally, all those who are interested in keeping their benefices and who share in the profit that comes so lavishly from the tyrannical government of the

rulers and the superstitious cult of the gods and their idols—it is up to them to show the falsity of what I have said, to refute my arguments and proofs, to show their falsity or weakness; and, finally, it is up to them to establish and prove the so-called truth of their faith and religion and also the so-called justice of their political government by reasons as clear, strong, convincing, and conclusive as those with which I have fought them. And this is what I challenge them to do (for, natural reason cannot conclusively prove things that are contrary, contradictory, and impossible).

And so, inasmuch as they do not do it, they will remain convinced of the errors and abuses of their doctrine and morality and, consequently, confounded in the vanity of their errors, illusions, lies, and impostures as well as in the injustice of their tyrannical government: *Let everyone who commits iniquity in vain be covered in confusion* (Ps. 25:3). *Let everyone who worships sculptures and glories in their idols be confounded* (Ps. 97:7). Likewise, *let everyone who spreads calumnies be confounded and frustrated in their designs* (Ps. 71:13). *They will be covered in confusion who say to their smelting images, "You are our gods"* (Is. 42:17). And it must be said to them like that other prophet said, *Be confused and ashamed of your madness and iniquity* (Ezek. 36:32).

But since, according to the proverb, it is not always good to tell all truths, the so-called political sages of the day will not fail to find fault with my trying to uncover such great and important truths. They will say that it is better to keep them buried forever in profound ignorance than to bring them so clearly to light, being sure, they will say, that it is encouraging and pleasing to the wicked to free them from fear of the gods and from fear of the eternal punishments of hell that could keep them in check and prevent them from completely abandoning themselves to vice and doing evil. As a result, they will say, many who are delivered from this fear will take the opportunity to become more vicious and completely let loose their unbridled lust and their evil desires, committing all sorts of vicious acts more boldly, on the pretext of having no punishments to fear after this life. And that is one of the reasons, they will say, why the political sages have the maxim that it is necessary for the people to be ignorant of many truths and to believe in many falsehoods.

I have two things to say to this.

First, it is not to flatter or encourage the vicious or to please them

that I have spoken the truth here. Far from it, I would like to be able to confound them all, as many as they are. And it was especially to confound all the impostors, swindlers, and hypocrites that I set out to uncover their errors, illusions, and impostures; and it was to confound the tyrants, the evil rich, and all the rulers of the earth that I set out to uncover the abuses, robberies, and injustices of their evil tyrannical governments. Moreover, as this so-called fear of the gods and the so-called eternal punishments of hell hardly frighten the vicious who do the most evil and hardly prevent all the vicious from following their evil inclinations and evil wills at all times, there is not any great danger in delivering them from this fear. They could hardly become more vicious than they are and they would not dare to be as vicious as they are if we took care to make them seriously afraid of the punishments of secular justice. For, it is certain that this fear would make much more of an impression on their minds than that vain fear of the gods or of their so-called eternal punishments.

In the second place, I say that it is not the truth or the knowledge of natural truths that carry men away to evil or make the people mean and vicious, but it is certainly rather ignorance and lack of good education. It is rather the lack of good laws and good government that makes them mean and vicious, because it is sure that if they were better educated in the sciences and good manners and were not tyrannized as they are, they would certainly not be as mean and vicious as they are. And the reason for this is that the bad laws themselves and the bad government of people give birth, so to speak, to some of the mean and vicious men: they give birth to them in luxury, splendor, pride, and in the vanity of the grandeur and wealth of the earth in which they then want to be maintained forever as viciously as they have been born and raised. And it forces the others, so to speak, to become mean and vicious because it gives birth to them in poverty and misery, which they then try to escape in any way, good or bad, that they can since they cannot always escape in just and legitimate ways.

So it is not the science or knowledge of natural truths that carries men away to evil, as they claim. On the contrary, it turns them away. For, "Every sinner is ignorant," we say; "Every sin is ignorant." But it is rather, as I said, the bad laws, abuses, bad customs, and bad government of men that carry them away to evil because it is the bad laws and bad government that gives birth to mean and vicious men or that forces

them to become so in trying to free themselves from pain and misery. If only we attached honor and glory, the goods and comforts of life, and even the authority of the government to virtue, wisdom, kindness, justice, honesty, etc., rather than to birth and the goods of fortune. Likewise, if only we attached shame, infamy, scorn, pain, misery, and even the greatest punishment, if necessary, to vice, injustice, deception, lies, intemperance, brutality, and all other kinds of bad ways, rather than to lack of birth and the goods of fortune—and you will see everyone carried away to do good and goaded to be wise, honest, and virtuous. But, as long as the honor, glory, the comforts and ease of life are attached to certain births and certain conditions of life rather than to virtue and personal merit, men will always be mean and vicious and, consequently, also always unhappy.

If everyone who knew as well as me or rather who knew even much better than me the vanity of human things, the errors and impostures of religions, the abuses and injustices of the government of men would say at least at the end of their days what they thought: if they would reproach, condemn, and curse them at least before they die as much as they deserve to be reproached, condemned, and cursed, you would soon see the world change face. You would soon mock all the errors and all the vain and superstitious practices of religions and you would soon see all that haughty grandeur and proud fierceness of tyrants fall. You would soon see them completely confounded.

But what makes these kinds of vices, errors, and abuses maintained so powerfully and so universally in the world is that no one opposes them, no one contradicts them, reproaches and condemns them openly once they have been established and authorized.

All the people groan under the tyrannical yoke of errors and superstitions, of the abuses and injustices of the government, and no one dares to cry out against so many detestable robberies and injustices that are committed so universally in the world.

The wise men hide. They do not dare to say openly what they think and it is thanks to this cowardliness and timid silence that all the errors, superstitions, and abuses that I spoke of are maintained and multiplied every day in the world.

97. THE AUTHOR CALLS AN ABUSE ALL  
THE INJURIES, MISTREATMENTS, AND  
UNJUST PROCEDURES THAT THEY CAN DO  
TO HIM AFTER HIS DEATH, AND APPEALS  
ONLY TO THE COURT OF HUMAN REASON  
BEFORE ALL THE WISE ENLIGHTENED  
PEOPLE, REJECTING AS JUDGES IN THIS  
AFFAIR ALL THE IGNORANT BIGOTS, ALL  
THE PARTISANS AND INSTIGATORS OF  
ERRORS AND SUPERSTITIONS, ALSO ALL THE  
FLATTERERS AND FAVORITES OF TYRANTS  
AND ALL THEIR PAWNS

**F**urthermore, I tell you, my dear friends, that in everything I have said or written here, I claim only to have followed the natural lights of reason; I have had no other intention or design but to try to uncover and to plainly and sincerely tell THE TRUTH.

There is not an honest or honorable man who should not make it his duty to say it when he knows it. I have said as I think, and I have said it only to open your eyes, as far as I can, to all the detestable errors and superstitions of religion, which are used only to keep you foolishly restrained, to vainly trouble your minds, and to prevent you from peacefully enjoying the goods of life and to make you the vile and unhappy slaves of those who rule.

But I know that this writing (which I have planned to register with the clerks of your parishes before my death to be communicated to you afterward), when it appears, will not fail to stir up and arouse against me the anger and indignation of the priests and tyrants who, for vengeance, will not fail to persecute me and treat me indignantly and insultingly after my death.

If this happens, I say already now that I protest against all the

insulting procedures that they could unjustly bring against me after my death concerning this writing.

I tell you now that I call this an abuse and I appeal only to the court of good judgment (whoever refuses to submit to this court distances himself from reason itself and at the same time deserves condemnation), justice, and natural equality before all the wise and enlightened people who are honest and surrender all passions, biases, and prejudices that may be opposed to justice and truth.

I reject as judges in my cause all ignorant people, all bigots, flatterers, hypocrites, and generally all those who in some way have an interest in maintaining or preserving the vain and foolish superstitions of the religious cult, the idols and false divinities, or who in some way take an interest in maintaining and preserving the power and tyrannical government of the wealthy and the rulers of the earth.

I can say that I have never committed any crime or any vicious or evil action. I presently challenge all men to be able to find any grounds on which to reproach me; so that if I am insultingly or indignantly treated, persecuted, or slandered after my death, this will not be for any other crime than to have simply told the truth as I have here in order to lead you and your fellow men to open your eyes and be able, if you want to really understand yourselves, to drag yourselves away and be delivered from all these detestable errors, superstitions, and abuses in which you are so miserably plunged.

It is the force of truth that makes me say this, and it is the hatred of injustice, lies, deception, tyranny, and all the other iniquities that make me speak in this way because I really hate and detest all injustice and iniquity. *I hated every unjust path* (Ps. 119:128). *I hated every path of iniquity* (Ps. 119:104).

And I utterly hate all those who love or take pleasure in doing evil. *I hated all unjust men* (Ps. 119:113). *I hated them with a perfect hatred and they became my enemies* (Ps. 139:22). *I hated iniquity and held it in abomination* (Ps. 119:163).

This would be a matter for men of intelligence and authority, a matter for wise pens and eloquent men to treat the subject worthily and to support the part of justice and truth as is necessary. They would do it incomparably better than me.

The zeal for justice and truth, as well as the zeal for the public good

and the common deliverance of all people who are groaning, should urge them on; and they should not stop reproaching, condemning, pursuing, and fighting against all the detestable errors, abuses, superstitions, and tyrannies that I talked about, until they have entirely confounded and annihilated them, like he who said: *I pursued my enemies and caught them; I did not return until they were entirely defeated* (Ps. 18:38).



After this, let people think, judge, say, and do whatever they want in the world; I do not really care.

Let men adapt themselves and be governed as they want, let them be wise or crazy, let them be good or vicious, let them say or even do with me whatever they want after my death: I really do not care in the least.

I already take almost no part in what is done in the world. The dead, whom I am about to join, no longer worry about anything, they no longer take part in anything, and they no longer care about anything.

So, I will finish this with nothing.

I am hardly more than nothing and soon I will be nothing.

## NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

**R**epetition is part and parcel of Meslier's argumentation. Nevertheless, for the sake of readability I have minimized or omitted a number of repetitious words and phrases, even some redundant and insignificant passages, without, I hope, detracting from his particular "sermon" style.

Also for the sake of readability as well as economy I have omitted some of the numerous citations that he uses throughout his work, especially biblical citations. References are given for omissions. Also note that the citations have been translated from Meslier's own text even where they differ from the original. His marginal comments are in small caps. Biblical citations are in italics.

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These are the final recorded words of Jean Meslier, a French parish priest born in the mid-seventeenth century who would spend his last days churning out thousands of bombastic handwritten pages by candlelight. Now translated and published here for the first time in English, *Testament* is an unprecedented work of pure rebellion. Meslier skewers with dagger-pointed humor and feverishly advances his case against the inanity of belief in God, gods, scripture, an afterlife, and all the segments of society that adhere to these beliefs: the reptilian clergy who are more concerned with power than good acts; the do-nothing monks and priests who feed from the public trough; the monarchs who believe themselves embodiments of the divine; and the disenfranchised public who bear the yolk, not to mention the cost, yet remain in their miserable state.

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ISBN 978-1-59102-749-2

