

Jean-Jacques Rousseau,
Emile

No other philosopher's biography is perhaps as well-known as that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who made his own life the subject of a number of his writings, including his great autobiographical work, the *Confessions*. Born in Calvinist Geneva, Rousseau was raised by his father, a clockmaker, who cared for learning and had Rousseau read classical Greek and Roman literature. Rousseau eventually left Geneva in 1728, fleeing to adjoining Savoy. There at the age of sixteen he met Françoise-Louise de Warens, a woman who would become his benefactor and mistress, and under whose influence he would (temporarily) become a Catholic.

Rousseau's literary breakthrough came in 1750 with the publication of his winning entry in an essay competition organized by the Academy of Dijon on the theme, "Whether the progress of the sciences and of letters has tended to corrupt or to elevate morals?"

In his response, Rousseau challenged the Enlightenment with a spirited return to the Greeks and Romans: "What will become of virtue if riches are to be acquired at any cost? The politicians of the ancient world spoke constantly of morals and virtue; ours speak of nothing but commerce and money." This was a clarion call that would lead to Romanticism. In 1762 both *On the Social Contract* (his most famous work) and *Emile* (Rousseau called it one of his three principal works) were published. *Emile, or On Education*, part-treatise, part-novel, outlines a process of education that would prevent humans from being corrupted by society and instead nurture their natural virtues and goodness.

PROFESSION OF FAITH OF THE SAVOYARD VICAR

My child, do not expect either learned speeches or profound reasonings from me. I am not a great philosopher, and I care little to be one. But I sometimes have good sense, and I always love the truth. I do not want to argue with you or even attempt to convince you. It is enough for me to reveal to you what I think in the simplicity of my heart. Consult yours during my speech. This is all I ask of you. If I am mistaken, it is in good faith. That is enough for my error not to be imputed to crime. If you were to be similarly mistaken, there would be little evil in that. Reason is common to us, and we have the same interest in listening to it. If I think well, why would you not think as do I?

I was born poor and a peasant, destined by my station to cultivate the earth. But it was thought to be a finer thing for me to learn to earn my bread in the priest's trade, and the means were found to permit me to study. Certainly neither my parents nor I thought very much of seeking what was good, true, and useful, but rather we thought of what had to be known in order to be ordained. I learned what I was supposed to learn; I said what I was supposed to say. I committed myself as I was supposed to, and I was made a priest. But it was not long before I sensed that in obliging myself not to be a man I had promised more than I could keep.

We are told that conscience is the work of prejudices. Nevertheless I know by my experience that conscience persists in following the order of nature against all the laws of men. We may very well be forbidden this or that, but remorse always reproaches us feebly for what well-ordered nature permits us, and all the more so for what it prescribes to us. Oh, good young man, nature has as yet said nothing to your senses! May you live a long time in the happy state in which its voice is that of innocence. Remember that nature is offended even more when one anticipates it than when one combats it. One must begin by learning how to resist in order to know when one can give in without its being a crime.

From my youth on I have respected marriage as the first and the holiest institution of nature. Having taken away my right to submit myself to it, I resolved not to profane it; for in spite of my classes and studies, I had always led a uniform and simple life, and I had preserved all the clarity of the original understanding in my mind. The maxims of the world had not obscured it, and my poverty removed me from the temptations dictated by the sophisms of vice.

This resolve was precisely what destroyed me. My respect for the bed

of others left my faults exposed. The scandal had to be expiated. Arrested, interdicted, driven out, I was far more the victim of my scruples than of my incontinence; and I had occasion to understand, from the reproaches with which my disgrace was accompanied, that often one need only aggravate the fault to escape the punishment.

A few such experiences lead a reflective mind a long way. Seeing the ideas that I had of the just, the decent, and all the duties of man overturned by gloomy observations, I lost each day one of the opinions I had received. Since those opinions that remained were no longer sufficient to constitute together a self-sustaining body, I felt the obviousness of the principles gradually becoming dimmer in my mind. And finally reduced to no longer knowing what to think, I reached the same point where you are, with the difference that my incredulity, the late fruit of a riper age, had been more painfully formed and ought to have been more difficult to destroy.

I was in that frame of mind of uncertainty and doubt that Descartes demands for the quest for truth. This state is hardly made to last. It is disturbing and painful. It is only the self-interest of vice or laziness of soul which leaves us in it. My heart was not sufficiently corrupted to enjoy myself in it, and nothing preserves the habit of reflection better than being more content with oneself than with one's fortune.

I meditated therefore on the sad fate of mortals, floating on this sea of human opinions without rudder or compass and delivered to their stormy passions without any other guide than an inexperienced pilot who is ignorant of his route and knows neither where he is coming from nor where he is going. I said to myself, "I love the truth, I seek it and cannot recognize it. Let it be revealed to me, and I shall remain made to adore it?"

Although I have often experienced greater evils, I have never led a life so constantly disagreeable as during those times of perplexity and anxiety, when I ceaselessly wandered from doubt to doubt and brought back from my long meditations only uncertainty, obscurity, and contradictions about the cause of my being and the principle of my duties.

How can one systematically and in good faith be a skeptic? I cannot understand it. These skeptic philosophers either do not exist or are the unhappiest of men. Doubt about the things it is important for us to know is too violent a state for the human mind, which does not hold out in this state for long. It decides in spite of itself one way or the other and prefers to be deceived rather than to believe nothing.

What doubled my confusion was that I was born in a church which

decides everything and permits no doubt; therefore, the rejection of a single point made me reject all the rest, and the impossibility of accepting so many absurd decisions also detached me from those which were not absurd. By being told "Believe everything," I was prevented from believing anything, and I no longer knew where to stop.

I consulted the philosophers. I leafed through their books. I examined their various opinions. I found them all to be proud, assertive, dogmatic (even in their pretended skepticism), ignorant of nothing, proving nothing, mocking one another; and this last point, which was common to all, appeared to me the only one about which they are all right. Triumphant when they attack, they are without force in defending themselves. If you ponder their reasoning, they turn out to be good only at destructive criticism. If you count votes, each is reduced to his own. They agree only to dispute. Listening to them was not the means of getting out of my uncertainty.

I comprehended that the insufficiency of the human mind is the first cause of this prodigious diversity of sentiments and that pride is the second. We do not have the measurements of this immense machine; we cannot calculate its relations; we know neither its first laws nor its final cause. We do not know ourselves; we know neither our nature nor our active principle. We hardly know if man is a simple or a compound being. Impenetrable mysteries surround us on all sides; they are above the region accessible to the senses. We believe we possess intelligence for piercing these mysteries, but all we have is imagination. Through this imaginary world each blazes a trail he believes to be good. None can know whether his leads to the goal. Nevertheless we want to penetrate everything, to know everything. The only thing we do not know is how to be ignorant of what we cannot know. We would rather decide at random and believe what is not than admit that none of us can see what is. We are a small part of a great whole whose limits escape us and whose Author delivers us to our mad disputes; but we are vain enough to want to decide what this whole is in itself and what we are in relation to it.

If the philosophers were in a position to discover the truth, who among them would take an interest in it? Each knows well that his system is no better founded than the others. But he maintains it because it is his. There is not a single one of them who, if he came to know the true and the false, would not prefer the lie he has found to the truth discovered by another. Where is the philosopher who would not gladly deceive mankind for his own glory? Where is the one who in the secrecy of his heart sets himself any other goal than that of distinguishing himself? Provided that he raises himself above the vulgar, provided

that he dims the brilliance of his competitors, what more does he ask? The essential thing is to think differently from others. Among believers he is an atheist; among atheists he would be a believer.

The first fruit I drew from these reflections was to learn to limit my researches to what was immediately related to my interest, to leave myself in a profound ignorance of all the rest, and to worry myself to the point of doubt only about things it was important for me to know.

I understood further that the philosophers, far from delivering me from my useless doubts, would only cause those which tormented me to multiply and would resolve none of them. Therefore, I took another guide, and I said to myself, "Let us consult the inner light; it will lead me astray less than they lead me astray; or at least my error will be my own, and I will deprave myself less in following my own illusions than in yielding to their lies."

Then, going over in my mind the various opinions which had one by one drawn me along since my birth, I saw that although none of them was evident enough to produce conviction immediately, they had various degrees of verisimilitude, and inner assent was given or refused to them in differing measure. On the basis of this first observation, I compared all these different ideas in the silence of the prejudices, and I found that the first and most common was also the simplest and most reasonable, and that the only thing that prevented it from gaining all the votes was that it had not been proposed last. Imagine all your ancient and modern philosophers having first exhausted their bizarre systems of forces, chances, fatality, necessity, atoms, an animate world, living matter, and materialism of every kind; and after them all the illustrious Clarke - enlightening the world, proclaiming at last the Being of beings and the Dispenser of things. With what universal admiration, with what unanimous applause would this new system have been received — this new system so great, so consoling, so sublime, so fit to lift up the soul and to give a foundation to virtue, and at the same time so striking, so luminous, so simple, and, it seems to me, presenting fewer incomprehensible things to the human mind than the absurdities it finds in any other system! I said to myself, "Insoluble objections are common to all systems because man's mind is too limited to resolve them. They do not therefore constitute a proof against any one in particular. But what a difference in direct proofs! Must not the only one which explains everything be preferred, if it contains no more difficulties than the others?"

Therefore, taking the love of the truth as my whole philosophy, and as my whole method an easy and simple rule that exempts me from the

vain subtlety of arguments, I pick up again on the basis of this rule the examination of the knowledge that interests me. I am resolved to accept as evident all knowledge to which in the sincerity of my heart I cannot refuse my consent; to accept as true all that which appears to me to have a necessary connection with this first knowledge; and to leave all the rest in uncertainty without rejecting it or accepting it and without tormenting myself to clarify it if it leads to nothing useful for practice.

But who am I? What right have I to judge things, and what determines my judgments? If they are swept along, forced by the impressions I receive, I tire myself out in vain with these researches; they will or will not be made on their own without my mixing in to direct them. Thus my glance must first be turned toward myself in order to know the instrument I wish to use and how far I can trust its use.

I exist, and I have senses by which I am affected. This is the first truth that strikes me and to which I am forced to acquiesce. Do I have a particular sentiment of my existence, or do I sense it only through my sensations? This is my first doubt, which it is for the present impossible for me to resolve; for as I am continually affected by sensations, whether immediately or by memory, how can I know whether the sentiment of the I is something outside these same sensations and whether it can be independent of them?

My sensations take place in me, since they make me sense my existence; but their cause is external to me, since they affect me without my having anything to do with it, and I have nothing to do with producing or annihilating them. Therefore, I clearly conceive that my sensation, which is in me, and its cause or its object, which is outside of me, are not the same thing.

Thus, not only do I exist, but there exist other beings — the objects of my sensations; and even if these objects were only ideas, it is still true that these ideas are not me.

Now, all that I sense outside of me and which acts on my senses, I call matter; and all the portions of matter which I conceive to be joined together in individual beings, I call bodies. Thus all the disputes of idealists and materialists signify nothing to me. Their distinctions concerning the appearance and reality of bodies are chimeras.

Already I am as sure of the universe's existence as of my own. Next, I reflect on the objects of my sensations; and, finding in myself the faculty of comparing them, I sense myself endowed with an active force which I did not before know I had.

To perceive is to sense; to compare is to judge. Judging and sensing are not the same thing. By sensation, objects are presented to me separated, isolated, such as they are in nature. By comparison I move them, I transport them, and, so to speak, I superimpose them on one another in order to pronounce on their difference or their likeness and generally on all their relations. According to me, the distinctive faculty of the active or intelligent being is to be able to give a sense to the word is. I seek in vain in the purely sensitive being for this intelligent force which superimposes and which then pronounces; I am not able to see it in its nature. This passive being will sense each object separately, or it will even sense the total object formed by the two; but, having no force to bend them back on one another, it will never compare them, it will not judge them.

To see two objects at once is not to see their relations or to judge their differences. To perceive several objects as separate from one another is not to number them. I can at the same instant have the idea of a large stick and of a small stick without comparing them and without judging that one is smaller than the other, just as I can see my entire hand at once without making the count of my fingers. These comparative ideas, larger and smaller, just like the numerical ideas of one, two, etc., certainly do not belong to the sensations, although my mind produces them only on the occasion of my sensations.

We are told that the sensitive being distinguishes the sensations from one another by the differences among these very sensations. This requires explication. When the sensations are different, the sensitive being distinguishes them by their differences. When they are similar, it distinguishes them because it senses them as separate from one another. Otherwise, how in a simultaneous sensation would the sensitive being distinguish two equal objects? It would necessarily have to confound these two objects and take them to be the same, especially in a system in which it is claimed that the sensations representing extension are not extended.

When the two sensations to be compared are perceived, their impression is made, each object is sensed, the two are sensed; but, for all that, their relation is not yet sensed. If the judgment of this relation were only a sensation and came to me solely from the object, my judgments would never deceive me, since it is never false that I sense what I sense.

Why is it, then, that I am deceived about the relation of these two sticks, especially if they are not parallel? Why do I say, for example, that the small stick is a third of the large one, whereas it is only a quarter? Why is the image, which is the sensation, not conformable

to its model, which is the object? It is because I am active when I judge, because the operation which compares is faulty, and because my understanding, which judges the relations, mixes its errors in with the truth of the sensations, which reveal only the objects.

Add to that a reflection I am sure will strike you when you have thought about it. It is that if we were purely passive in the use of our senses, there would be no communication among them. It would be impossible for us to know that the body we touch and the object we see are the same. Either we would never sense anything outside of us, or there would be five sensible substances for us whose identity we would have no means of perceiving.

Let this or that name be given to this force of my mind which brings together and compares my sensations; let it be called attention, meditation, reflection, or whatever one wishes. It is still true that it is in me and not in things, that it is I alone who produce it, although I produce it only on the occasion of the impression made on me by objects.

Without being master of sensing or not sensing, I am the master of giving more or less examination to what I sense.

Therefore, I am not simply a sensitive and passive being but an active and intelligent being; and whatever philosophy may say about it, I shall dare to pretend to the honor of thinking. I know only that truth is in things and not in the mind which judges them, and that the less of myself I put in the judgments I make, the more sure I am of approaching the truth. Thus my rule of yielding to sentiment more than to reason is confirmed by reason itself.

Having, so to speak, made certain of myself, I begin to look outside of myself, and I consider myself with a sort of shudder, cast out and lost in this vast universe, as if drowned in the immensity of beings, without knowing anything about what they are either in themselves or in relation to me. I study them, I observe them, and the first object which presents itself to me for comparison with them is myself.

Everything I perceive with the senses is matter; and I deduce all the essential properties of matter from the sensible qualities that make me perceive it and are inseparable from it. I see it now in motion and now at rest, from which I infer that neither rest nor motion is essential to it. But motion, since it is an action, is the effect of a cause of which rest is only the absence. Therefore, when nothing acts on matter, it does not move; and by the very fact that it is neutral to rest and to motion, its natural state is to be at rest.

I perceive in bodies two sorts of motion — communicated motion and spontaneous or voluntary motion. In the first the cause of motion is external to the body moved; and in the second it is within it. I do not conclude from this that the movement of a watch, for example, is spontaneous; for if nothing external to the spring acted on it, it would not strain to straighten itself out and would not pull the chain. For the same reason neither would I grant spontaneity to fluids or to fire itself, which causes their fluidity.

You will ask me if the motions of animals are spontaneous. I shall tell you that I know nothing about it, but analogy supports the affirmative. You will ask me again how I know that there are spontaneous motions. I shall tell you that I know it because I sense it. I want to move my arm, and I move it without this movement's having another immediate cause than my will. It would be vain to try to use reason to destroy this sentiment in me. It is stronger than any evidence. One might just as well try to prove to me that I do not exist.

If there were no spontaneity in the actions of men or in anything which takes place on earth, one would only be more at a loss to imagine the first cause of all motion. As for me, I sense myself to be so persuaded that the natural state of matter is to be at rest and that by itself it has no force for acting, that when I see a body in motion, I judge immediately either that it is an animate body or that this motion has been communicated to it. My mind rejects all acquiescence to the idea of unorganized matter moving itself or producing some action.

Meanwhile, this visible universe is matter, scattered and dead matter which as a whole has nothing in it of the union, the organization, or the sentiment common to the parts of an animate body, since it is certain that we do not sense ourselves as parts of a sentient whole. This same universe is in motion; and in its motion, which is regular, uniform, and subjected to constant laws, it contains nothing of that liberty appearing in the spontaneous motions of man and the animals. The world therefore is not a large animal that moves itself. Therefore there is some cause of its motions external to it, one which I do not perceive. But inner persuasion makes this cause so evident to my senses that I cannot see the sun rotate without imagining a force that pushes it; or if the earth turns, I believe I sense a hand that makes it turn.

If I have to accept general laws whose essential relations with matter I do not perceive, how does that help me? These laws, not being real beings or substances, must have some other foundation which is unknown to me. Experience and observation have enabled us to know

the laws of motion; these laws determine the effects without showing the causes. They do not suffice to explain the system of the world and the movement of the universe. Descartes formed heaven and earth with dice, but he was not able to give the first push to these dice or to put his centrifugal force in action without the aid of a rotary motion. Newton discovered the law of attraction, but attraction alone would soon reduce the universe to an immobile mass. To this law he had to add a projectile force in order to make the celestial bodies describe curves. Let Descartes tell us what physical law made his vortices turn. Let Newton show us the hand which launched the planets on the tangent of their orbits.

The first causes of motion are not in matter. It receives motion and communicates it, but it does not produce it. The more I observe the action and the reaction of the forces of nature acting on one another, the more I find that one must always go back from effects to effects to some will as first cause; for to suppose an infinite regress of causes is to suppose no cause at all. In a word, every motion not produced by another can come only from a spontaneous, voluntary action. Inanimate bodies act only by motion, and there is no true action without will. This is my first principle. I believe therefore that a will moves the universe and animates nature. This is my first dogma, or my first article of faith.

How does a will produce a physical and corporeal action? I do not know, but I experience within myself that it does so. I want to act, and I act. I want to move my body, and my body moves. But that an inanimate body at rest should succeed in moving itself or in producing motion — that is incomprehensible and without example. The will is known to me by its acts, not by its nature. I know this will as a cause of motion; but to conceive of matter as productive of motion is clearly to conceive of an effect without a cause; it is to conceive of absolutely nothing.

It is no more possible for me to conceive of how my will moves my body than it is to conceive of how my sensations affect my soul. I do not even know why one of these mysteries has appeared more explicable than the other. As for me, whether it is when I am passive or when I am active, the means of uniting the two substances appears absolutely incomprehensible. It is quite strange to begin from this very incomprehensibility in order to confound the two substances, as if operations of such different natures were better explained in a single subject than in two.

It is true that the dogma I have just established is obscure, but still

it makes sense and contains nothing repugnant to reason or to observation. Can one say as much of materialism? Is it not clear that if motion were essential to matter, it would be inseparable from it and would always be in it in the same degree? Always the same in each portion of matter, it would be incommunicable, it could not increase or decrease, and one could not even conceive of matter at rest. When someone tells me that motion is not essential but necessary to matter, he is trying to lead me astray with words which would be easier to refute if they contained a bit more sense; for either the motion of matter comes to it from itself and is then essential to it, or if it comes to it from an external cause, it is necessary to matter only insofar as the cause of motion acts on it. We are back with the first difficulty.

General and abstract ideas are the source of men's greatest errors. The jargon of metaphysics has never led us to discover a single truth, and it has filled philosophy with absurdities of which one is ashamed as soon as one has stripped them of their big words. Tell me, my friend, whether someone who talks to you about a blind force spread throughout the whole of nature brings any veritable idea to your mind? People believe that they say something with those vague words universal force and necessary motion, and they say nothing at all. The idea of motion is nothing other than the idea of transport from one place to another. There is no motion without some direction, for an individual being could not move in all directions at once. In what direction, then, does matter necessarily move? Does all the matter in a body have a uniform motion, or does each atom have its own movement? According to the former idea, the whole universe ought to form a solid and indivisible mass. According to the latter, it ought to form only a scattered and incoherent fluid without it ever being possible for two atoms to join. What direction will this common movement of all matter take? Will it be in a straight line, up, down, right, or left? If each molecule of matter has its particular direction, what will be the causes of all these directions and all these differences? If each atom or molecule of matter only turns around its own center, nothing would ever leave its place, and there would not be any communicated motion. Moreover, this circular motion would have to be determined in some direction. To give matter abstract motion is to speak words signifying nothing; and to give it a determinate motion is to suppose a cause determining it. The more I multiply particular forces, the more I have new causes to explain without ever finding any common agent directing them. Far from being able to imagine any order in the fortuitous concurrence of elements, I am not even able to imagine their conflict, and the chaos of the universe is more inconceivable to me than is its harmony. I comprehend that the mechanism of the world may not be intelligible

to the human mind, but as soon as a man meddles with explaining it, he ought to say things men understand.

If moved matter shows me a will, matter moved according to certain laws shows me an intelligence. This is my second article of faith. To act, to compare, and to choose are operations of an active and thinking being. Therefore this being exists. "Where do you see him existing?" you are going to say to me. Not only in the heavens which turn, not only in the star which gives us light, not only in myself, but in the ewe which grazes, in the bird which flies, in the stone which falls, in the leaf carried by the wind.

I judge that there is an order in the world although I do not know its end; to judge that there is this order it suffices for me to compare the parts in themselves, to study their concurrences and their relations, to note their harmony. I do not know why the universe exists, but that does not prevent me from seeing how it is modified, or from perceiving the intimate correspondence by which the beings that compose it lend each other mutual assistance. I am like a man who saw a watch opened for the first time and, although he did not know the machine's use and had not seen the dial, was not prevented from admiring the work. "I do not know," he would say, "what the whole is good for, but I do see that each piece is made for the others; I admire the workman in the details of his work; and I am quite sure that all these wheels are moving in harmony only for a common end which it is impossible for me to perceive."

Let us compare the particular ends, the means, the ordered relations of every kind. Then let us listen to our inner sentiment. What healthy mind can turn aside its testimony; to which unprejudiced eyes does the sensible order not proclaim a supreme intelligence; and how many sophisms must be piled up before it is impossible to recognize the harmony of the beings and the admirable concurrences of each piece in the preservation of the others? They can talk to me all they want about combination and chance. Of what use is it to you to reduce me to silence if you cannot lead me to persuasion, and how will you take away from me the involuntary sentiment that always gives you the lie in spite of myself? If organized bodies were combined fortuitously in countless ways before taking on constant forms, if at the outset there were formed stomachs without mouths, feet without heads, hands without arms, imperfect organs of every kind which have perished for want of being able to preserve themselves, why do none of these unformed attempts strike our glance any longer, why did nature finally prescribe laws to itself to which it was not subjected at the outset? I should not, I agree, be surprised that a thing happens, if it is possible and the

difficulty of its occurrence is compensated for by the number of throws of the dice. Nevertheless, if someone were to come to me and say that print thrown around at random had produced the Aeneid all in order, I would not deign to take a step to verify the lie. "You forget," I shall be told, "the number of throws." But how many of those throws must I assume in order to make the combination credible? As for me, seeing only a single throw, I can give odds of infinity to one that what it produced is not the result of chance. Consider also that combination and chance will never result in anything but products of the same nature as the elements that are combined; that organization and life will not result from a throw of atoms; and that a chemist combining mixtures will not make them feel and think in his crucible.

I was surprised, and almost scandalized, at reading Nieuventit . How could that man have wanted to compose a book detailing the wonders of nature that show the wisdom of its Author? His book could be as big as the world without his having exhausted his subject; and as soon as one wishes to enter into the details, the greatest wonder — the harmony and accord of the whole — is overlooked. The generation of living and organized bodies is by itself an abyss for the human mind. The insurmountable barrier that nature set between the various species, so that they would not be confounded, shows its intentions with the utmost clarity. It was not satisfied with establishing order. It took certain measures so that nothing could disturb that order.

There is not a being in the universe that cannot in some respect be regarded as the common center around which all the others are ordered, in such a way that they are all reciprocally ends and means relative to one another. The mind is confused and gets lost in this infinity of relations, not a single one of which is either confused or lost in the crowd. How many absurd suppositions are needed to deduce all this harmony from the blind mechanism of matter moved fortuitously! Those who deny the unity of intention manifested in the relations of all the parts of this great whole can try to cover their nonsense with abstractions, coordinations, general principles, and symbolic terms. Whatever they do, it is impossible for me to conceive of a system of beings so constantly ordered without conceiving of an intelligence which orders it. I do not have it within me to believe that passive and dead matter could have produced living and sensing beings, that a blind fatality could have produced intelligent beings, that what does not think could have produced thinking beings.

I believe therefore that the world is governed by a powerful and wise will. I see it or, rather, I sense it; and that is something important for me to know. But is this same world eternal or created? Is there

a single principle of things? Or, are there two or many of them, and what is their nature? I know nothing about all this, and what does it matter to me? As soon as this knowledge has something to do with my interests, I shall make an effort to acquire it. Until then I renounce idle questions which may agitate my amour-propre but are useless for my conduct and are beyond my reason.

Always remember that I am not teaching my sentiment; I am revealing it. Whether matter is eternal or created, whether there is or is not a passive principle, it is in any event certain that the whole is one and proclaims a single intelligence; for I see nothing which is not ordered according to the same system and does not contribute to the same end — namely, the preservation of the whole in its established order. This Being which wills and is powerful, this Being active in itself, this Being, whatever it may be, which moves the universe and orders all things, I call God. I join to this name the ideas of intelligence, power, and will which I have brought together, and that of goodness which is their necessary consequence. But I do not as a result know better the Being to which I have given them; it is hidden equally from my senses and from my understanding. The more I think about it, the more I am confused. I know very certainly that it exists, and that it exists by itself. I know that my existence is subordinated to its existence, and that all things known to me are in absolutely the same situation. I perceive God everywhere in His works. I sense Him in me; I see Him all around me. But as soon as I want to contemplate Him in Himself, as soon as I want to find out where He is, what He is, what His substance is, He escapes me, and my clouded mind no longer perceives anything.

Suffused with the sense of my inadequacy, I shall never reason about the nature of God without being forced to by the sentiment of His relations with me. These reasonings are always rash; a wise man ought to yield to them only with trembling and with certainty that he is not made to plumb their depths; for what is most insulting to the divinity is not thinking not at all about it but thinking badly about it.

After having discovered those attributes of the divinity by which I know its existence, I return to myself and I try to learn what rank I occupy in the order of things that the divinity governs and I can examine. I find myself by my species incontestably in the first rank; for by my will and by the instruments in my power for executing it, I have more force for acting on all the bodies surrounding me, for yielding to or eluding their actions as I please, than any of them has for acting on me against my will by physical impulsion alone; and by

my intelligence I am the only one that has a view of the whole. What being here on earth besides man is able to observe all the others, to measure, calculate, and foresee their movements and their effects, and to join, so to speak, the sentiment of common existence to that of its individual existence? What is there so ridiculous about thinking that everything is made for me, if I am the only one who is able to relate everything to himself?

It is true, then, that man is the king of the earth he inhabits; for not only does he tame all the animals, not only does his industry put the elements at his disposition, but he alone on earth knows how to do so, and he also appropriates to himself, by means of contemplation, the very stars he cannot approach. Show me another animal on earth who knows how to make use of fire and who knows how to wonder at the sun. What! I can observe and know the beings and their relations, I can sense what order, beauty, and virtue are, I can contemplate the universe and raise myself up to the hand which governs it, I can love the good and do it, and I would compare myself to the brutes? Abject soul, it is your gloomy philosophy which makes you similar to them. Or, rather, you want in vain to debase yourself. Your genius bears witness against your principles, your beneficent heart gives the lie to your doctrine, and the very abuse of your faculties proves their excellence in spite of you.

As for me — I who have no system to maintain, I, a simple and true man who is carried away by the fury of no party and does not aspire to the honor of being chief of a sect, I who am content with the place in which God has put me, I see nothing, except for Him, that is better than my species. And if I had to choose my place in the order of beings, what more could I choose than to be a man?

The effect of this reflection is less to make me proud than to touch me; for this state is not of my choice, and it was not due to the merit of a being who did not yet exist. Can I see myself thus distinguished without congratulating myself on filling this honorable post and without blessing the hand which placed me in it? From my first return to myself there is born in my heart a sentiment of gratitude and benediction for the Author of my species; and from this sentiment my first homage to the beneficent divinity. I adore the supreme power, and I am moved by its benefactions. I do not need to be taught this worship; it is dictated to me by nature itself. Is it not a natural consequence of self-love to honor what protects us and to love what wishes us well?

But when next I seek to know my individual place in my species, and I consider its various ranks and the men who fill them, what happens to

me? What a spectacle! Where is the order I had observed? The picture of nature had presented me with only harmony and proportion; that of mankind presents me with only confusion and disorder! Concert reigns among the elements, and men are in chaos! The animals are happy; their king alone is miserable! O wisdom, where are your laws? O providence, is it thus that you rule the world? Beneficent Being, what has become of your power? I see evil on earth.

Would you believe, my good friend, that from these gloomy reflections and these apparent contradictions there were formed in my mind the sublime ideas of the soul which had not until then resulted from my researches? In meditating on the nature of man, I believed I discovered in it two distinct principles; one of which raised him to the study of eternal truths, to the love of justice and moral beauty, and to the regions of the intellectual world whose contemplation is the wise man's delight; while the other took him basely into himself, subjected him to the empire of the senses and to the passions which are their ministers, and by means of these hindered all that the sentiment of the former inspired in him. In sensing myself carried away and caught up in the combat of these two contrary motions, I said to myself, "No, man is not one. I want and I do not want; I sense myself enslaved and free at the same time. I see the good, I love it, and I do the bad. I am active when I listen to reason, passive when my passions carry me away; and my worst torment, when I succumb, is to sense that I could have resisted."

Young man, listen with confidence; I shall always be of good faith. If conscience is the work of the prejudices, I am doubtless wrong, and there is no demonstrable morality. But if to prefer oneself to everything is an inclination natural to man, and if nevertheless the first sentiment of justice is innate in the human heart, let him who regards man as a simple being overcome these contradictions, and I shall no longer acknowledge more than one substance.

You will note that by this word substance I understand in general being that is endowed with some primary quality, abstracting from all particular or secondary modifications. Therefore, if all the primary qualities known to us can be joined in the same being, one ought to admit only one substance; but if some are mutually exclusive, there are as many diverse substances as there are such possible exclusions. You will reflect on that; as for me, whatever Locke says about it, I need only know that matter is extended and divisible in order to be sure that it cannot think. And for all that any philosopher who comes to tell me that trees sense and rocks think may entangle me in his subtle arguments, I can see in him only a sophist speaking in bad faith who

prefers to attribute sentiment to rocks than to grant a soul to man.

Let us suppose a deaf man who denies the existence of sounds because they have never struck his ear. By means of a hidden stringed instrument, I make another stringed instrument that I have placed before his eyes sound in unison with it. The deaf man sees the string vibrate. I say to him, "It is sound which causes that." "Not at all," he answers. "The cause of the string's vibration is in it. It is a quality common to all bodies to vibrate thus." "Then show me," I respond, "this vibration in other bodies or, at least, its cause in this string." "I cannot," replies the deaf man, "but because I cannot conceive how this string vibrates, why must I go and explain that by your sounds, of which I do not have the slightest idea? That is to explain an obscure fact by a cause still more obscure. Either make your sounds accessible to my senses, or I say that they do not exist."

The more I reflect on thought and on the nature of the human mind, the more I find that the reasoning of materialists resembles that of this deaf man. They are indeed deaf to the inner voice crying out to them in a tone difficult not to recognize. A machine does not think; there is neither motion nor figure which produces reflection. Something in you seeks to break the bonds constraining it. Space is not your measure; the whole universe is not big enough for you. Your sentiments, your desires, your uneasiness, even your pride have another principle than this narrow body in which you sense yourself enchained.

No material being is active by itself, and I am. One may very well argue with me about this; but I sense it, and this sentiment that speaks to me is stronger than the reason combating it. I have a body on which other bodies act and which acts on them. This reciprocal action is not doubtful. But my will is independent of my senses; I consent or I resist; I succumb or I conquer; and I sense perfectly within myself when I do what I wanted to do or when all I am doing is giving way to my passions. I always have the power to will, I do not always have the force to execute. When I abandon myself to temptations, I act according to the impulsion of external objects. When I reproach myself for this weakness, I listen only to my will. I am enslaved because of my vices and free because of my remorse. The sentiment of my freedom is effaced in me only when I become depraved and finally prevent the voice of the soul from being raised against the law of the body.

I know will only by the sentiment of my own will, and understanding is no better known to me. When I am asked what the cause is which determines my will, I ask in turn what the cause is which determines my judgment; for it is clear that these two causes are only one; and if

one clearly understands that man is active in his judgments, and that his understanding is only the power of comparing and judging, one will see that his freedom is only a similar power or one derived from the former. One chooses the good as he has judged the true; if he judges wrong, he chooses badly. What, then, is the cause which determines his will? It is his judgment. And what is the cause which determines his judgment? It is his intelligent faculty, it is his power of judging; the determining cause is in himself. Beyond this I understand nothing more.

Doubtless, I am not free not to want my own good; I am not free to want what is bad for me. But it is in this precisely that my freedom consists — my being able to will only what is suitable to me, or what I deem to be such, without anything external to me determining me. Does it follow that I am not my own master, because I am not the master of being somebody else than me?

The principle of every action is in the will of a free being. One cannot go back beyond that. It is not the word freedom which means nothing; it is the word necessity. To suppose some act, some effect, which does not derive from an active principle is truly to suppose effects without cause; it is to fall into a vicious circle. Either there is no first impulse, or every first impulse has no prior cause; and there is no true will without freedom. Man is therefore free in his actions and as such is animated by an immaterial substance. This is my third article of faith. From these three you will easily deduce all the others without my continuing to count them out.

If man is active and free, he acts on his own. All that he does freely does not enter into the ordered system of providence and cannot be imputed to it. Providence does not will the evil a man does in abusing the freedom it gives him; but it does not prevent him from doing it, whether because this evil, coming from a being so weak, is nothing in its eyes, or because it could not prevent it without hindering his freedom and doing a greater evil by degrading his nature. It has made him free in order that by choice he do not evil but good. It has put him in a position to make this choice by using well the faculties with which it has endowed him. But it has limited his strength to such an extent that the abuse of the freedom it reserves for him cannot disturb the general order. The evil that man does falls back on him without changing anything in the system of the world, without preventing the human species from preserving itself in spite of itself. To complain about God's not preventing man from doing evil is to complain about His having given him an excellent nature, about His having put in man's actions the morality which ennobles them, about His having

given him the right to virtue. The supreme enjoyment is in satisfaction with oneself; it is in order to deserve this satisfaction that we are placed on earth and endowed with freedom, that we are tempted by the passions and restrained by conscience. What more could divine power itself do for us? Could it make our nature contradictory and give the reward for having done well to him who did not have the power to do evil? What! To prevent man from being wicked, was it necessary to limit him to instinct and make him a beast? No, God of my soul, I shall never reproach You for having made him in Your image, so that I can be free, good, and happy like You!

It is the abuse of our faculties which makes us unhappy and wicked. Our sorrows, our cares, and our sufferings come to us from ourselves. Moral evil is incontestably our own work, and physical evil would be nothing without our vices, which have made us sense it. Is it not for preserving ourselves that nature makes us sense our needs? Is not the pain of the body a sign that the machine is out of order and a warning to look after it? Death ... Do not the wicked poison their lives and ours? Who would want to live always? Death is the remedy for the evils you do to yourselves; nature did not want you to suffer forever. How few ills there are to which the man living in primitive simplicity is subject! He lives almost without diseases as well as passions and neither foresees nor senses death. When he senses it, his miseries make it desirable to him; from then on it is no longer an evil for him. If we were satisfied to be what we are, we would not have to lament our fate. But to seek an imaginary well-being, we give ourselves countless real ills. Whoever does not know how to endure a bit of suffering ought to expect to suffer much. When someone has ruined his constitution by a disorderly life, he wants to restore it with remedies. To the evil he senses, he adds the evil he fears. Foresight of death makes it horrible and accelerates it. The more he wants to flee it, the more he senses it, and he dies of terror throughout his whole life, while blaming nature for evils which he has made for himself by offending it.

Man, seek the author of evil no longer. It is yourself. No evil exists other than that which you do or suffer, and both come to you from yourself. General evil can exist only in disorder, and I see in the system of the world an unfailling order. Particular evil exists only in the sentiment of the suffering being, and man did not receive this sentiment from nature: he gave it to himself. Pain has little hold over someone who, having reflected little, possesses neither memory nor foresight. Take away our fatal progress, take away our errors and our vices, take away the work of man, and everything is good.

Where everything is good, nothing is unjust. Justice is inseparable

from goodness. Now, goodness is the necessary effect of a power without limit and of the self-love essential to every being aware of itself. The existence of Him who is omnipotent is, so to speak, coextensive with the existence of the beings. To produce and to preserve are the perpetual acts of power. He does not act on what is not. God is not the God of the dead. He could not be destructive and wicked without hurting Himself. He who can do everything can want only what is good. Therefore, the supremely good Being, because He is supremely powerful, ought also to be supremely just. Otherwise He would contradict Himself; for the love of order which produces order is called goodness; and the love of order which preserves order is called justice.

God, it is said, owes His creatures nothing. I believe He owes them all He promises them in giving them being. Now, to give them the idea of a good and to make them feel the need of it is to promise it to them. The more I return within myself, and the more I consult myself, the more I see these words written in my soul: Be just and you will be happy. That simply is not so, however, considering the present state of things: the wicked man prospers, and the just man remains oppressed. Also, see what indignation is kindled in us when this expectation is frustrated! Conscience is aroused and complains about its Author. It cries out to Him in moaning, "Thou hast deceived me!"

"I have deceived you, rash man! And who told you so? Is your soul annihilated? Have you ceased to exist? O Brutus! O my son! Do not soil your noble life by ending it. Do not leave your hope and your glory with your body on the field of Philippi. Why do you say, 'Virtue is nothing,' when you are going to enjoy the reward for yours? You are going to die, you think. No, you are going to live, and it is then that I shall keep all the promises I have made you."

From the complaints of impatient mortals, one would say that God owes them the recompense before they have deserved it, and that He is obliged to pay their virtue in advance. O, let us be good in the first place, and then we shall be happy. Let us not demand the prize before the victory nor the wage before the work. It is not at the starting block, said Plutarch, that the victors in our sacred games are crowned; it is after they have gone around the track .

If the soul is immaterial, it can survive the body; and if it survives the body, providence is justified. If I had no proof of the immateriality of the soul other than the triumph of the wicked and the oppression of the just in this world, that alone would prevent me from doubting it. So shocking a dissonance in the universal harmony would make me seek to resolve it. I would say to myself, "Everything does not end with

life for us; everything returns to order at death." There would in truth be the quandary of wondering where man is when everything which can be sensed about him is destroyed. But this question is no longer a difficulty for me as soon as I have acknowledged two substances. It is very simple to see that, since during my corporeal life I perceive nothing except by my senses, what is not subject to them escapes me. When the union of body and soul is broken, I conceive that the former can be dissolved while the latter can be preserved. Why would the destruction of the one entail the destruction of the other? On the contrary, since they are of such different natures, they were in a violent condition during their union; and when this union ceases, they both return to their natural condition. The active and living substance regains all the strength that it used in moving the passive and dead substance. Alas! I sense it only too much by my vices: man lives only halfway during his life, and the life of the soul begins only with the death of the body.

But what is this life, and is the soul immortal by its nature? My limited understanding conceives nothing without limits. All that is called infinite escapes me. What can I deny and affirm, what argument can I make about that which I cannot conceive? I believe that the soul survives the body long enough for the maintenance of order. Who knows whether that is long enough for it to last forever? However, whereas I can conceive how the body wears out and is destroyed by the division of its parts, I cannot conceive of a similar destruction of the thinking being; and, not imagining how it can die, I presume that it does not die. Since this presumption consoles me and contains nothing unreasonable, why would I be afraid of yielding to it?

I sense my soul. I know it by sentiment and by thought. Without knowing what its essence is, I know that it exists. I cannot reason about ideas I do not have. What I know surely is that the identity of the I is prolonged only by memory, and that in order to be actually the same I must remember having been. Now, after my death I could not recall what I was during my life unless I also recalled what I felt, and consequently what I did; and I do not doubt that this memory will one day cause the felicity of the good and the torment of the wicked. Here on earth countless ardent passions absorb the inner sentiment and lead remorse astray. The humiliation and the disgrace attracted by the practice of the virtues prevent all their charms from being felt. But when, after being delivered from the illusions given us by the body and the senses, we will enjoy the contemplation of the Supreme Being and the eternal truths of which He is the source; when the beauty of the order will strike all the powers of our soul; when we are solely

occupied with comparing what we have done with what we ought to have done — then the voice of conscience will regain its strength and its empire. It is then that the pure delight born of satisfaction with oneself and the bitter regret at having debased oneself will distinguish by inexhaustible sentiments the fate that each has prepared for himself. Do not ask me, my good friend, whether there will be other sources of happiness and suffering. I do not know; and those I imagine are enough to console me for this life and to make me hope for another. I do not say that the good will be recompensed, for what good can an excellent being attain other than to exist according to its nature? But I do say that they will be happy, because their Author, the Author of all justice, having created them as sensitive beings did not create them to suffer; and since they did not abuse their freedom on earth, they did not fail to attain their destiny due to their own fault. Nevertheless they suffered in this life; therefore they will be compensated in another. This sentiment is founded less on the merit of man than on the notion of goodness which seems to me inseparable from the divine essence. I am only supposing that the laws of order are observed and that God is constant to Himself.

Do not ask me whether the torments of the wicked will be eternal. I do not know that either and do not have the vain curiosity to clarify useless questions. What difference does it make to me what will become of the wicked? I take little interest in their fate. However, I have difficulty in believing that they are condemned to endless torments. If supreme justice does take vengeance, it does so beginning in this life. O nations, you and your errors are its ministers. Supreme justice employs the evils that you do to yourselves to punish the crimes which brought on those evils. It is in your insatiable hearts, eaten away by envy, avarice, and ambition, that the avenging passions punish your heinous crimes in the bosom of your false prosperity. What need is there to look for hell in the other life? It begins in this one in the hearts of the wicked.

Where our perishable needs end, where our senseless desires cease, our passions and our crimes ought also to cease. To what perversity would pure spirits be susceptible? Needing nothing, why would they be wicked? If they are deprived of our coarse senses, and all their happiness is in the contemplation of the beings, they would be able to will only the good; and can anyone who ceases to be wicked be miserable forever? This is what I am inclined to believe without making an effort to come to a decision about it. O clement and good Being, whatever Your decrees are, I worship them! If You punish the wicked, I annihilate my weak reason before Your justice. But if the remorse

of these unfortunates is to be extinguished in time, if their ills are to end, and if the same place awaits us all equally one day, I praise You for it. Is not the wicked man my brother? How many times have I been tempted to be like him? If, when he is delivered from his misery, he also loses the malignity accompanying it, let him be happy as I am. Far from arousing my jealousy, his happiness will only add to mine.

In this way, contemplating God in His works and studying Him by those of His attributes which it matters for me to know, I have succeeded in extending and increasing by degrees the initially imperfect and limited idea I had of this immense Being. But if this idea has become nobler and greater, it is also less proportionate to human reason. As my mind approaches the eternal light, its brilliance dazzles and confuses me, and I am forced to abandon all the terrestrial notions which helped me to imagine it. God is no longer corporeal and sensible. The supreme intelligence which rules the world is no longer the world itself. I lift and fatigue my mind in vain to conceive His essence. When I think that it is what gives life and activity to the living and active substance that rules animate bodies, when I hear it said that my soul is spiritual and that God is a spirit, I am indignant about this debasement of the divine essence. As if God and my soul were of the same nature! As if God were not the only absolute being, the only one that is truly active, sensing, thinking, willing by itself, and from which we get thought, sentiment, activity, will, freedom, and being. We are free only because He wants us to be, and His inexplicable substance is to our souls what our souls are to our bodies. I know nothing about whether He created matter, bodies, minds, and the world. The idea of creation confuses me and is out of my reach. I believe it insofar as I can conceive it. But I do know that He formed the universe and all that exists, that He made everything, ordered everything. God is doubtless eternal; but can my mind embrace the idea of eternity? Why fob myself off with words unrelated to an idea? What I do conceive is that He exists before things, that He will exist as long as they subsist, and that He would exist even after that, if all were to end one day. That a being which I cannot conceive of gives existence to other beings is only obscure and incomprehensible; but that being and nothingness turn themselves into one another on their own is a palpable contradiction, a clear absurdity.

God is intelligent, but in what way? Man is intelligent when he reasons, and the supreme intelligence does not need to reason. For it there are neither premises nor conclusions; there are not even propositions. It is purely intuitive; it sees equally everything which is and everything which can be. For it all truths are only a single idea, as all

places are a single point, and all times a single moment. Human power acts by means; divine power acts by itself. God can because He wills. His will causes His power. God is good; nothing is more manifest. But goodness in man is the love of his fellows, and the goodness of God is the love of order; for it is by order that He maintains what exists and links each part with the whole. God is just, I am convinced of it; it is a consequence of His goodness. The injustice of men is their work and not His. Moral disorder, which gives witness against providence in the eyes of the philosophers, only serves to demonstrate it in mine. But mans justice is to give each what belongs to him, and God's justice is to ask from each for an accounting of what He gave him.

If I have just discovered successively these attributes of which I have no absolute idea, I have done so by compulsory inferences, by the good use of my reason. But I affirm them without understanding them, and at bottom that is to affirm nothing. I may very well tell myself, "God is thus; I sense it, I prove it to myself." I cannot conceive any the better how God can be thus.

Finally, the more effort I make to contemplate His infinite essence, the less I can conceive it. But it is; that is enough for me. The less I can conceive it, the more I worship it. I humble myself and say to Him, "Being of beings, I am because You are; it is to lift myself up to my source to meditate on You ceaselessly. The worthiest use of my reason is for it to annihilate itself before You. It is my rapture of mind, it is the charm of my weakness to feel myself overwhelmed by Your greatness."

After having thus deduced the principal truths that it mattered for me to know from the impression of sensible objects and from the inner sentiment that leads me to judge of causes according to my natural lights, I still must investigate what manner of conduct I ought to draw from these truths and what rules I ought to prescribe for myself in order to fulfill my destiny on earth according to the intention of Him who put me there. In continuing to follow my method, I do not draw these rules from the principles of a high philosophy, but find them written by nature with ineffaceable characters in the depth of my heart. I have only to consult myself about what I want to do. Everything I sense to be good is good; everything I sense to be bad is bad. The best of all casuists is the conscience; and it is only when one haggles with it that one has recourse to the subtleties of reasoning. The first of all cares is the care for oneself. Nevertheless how many times does the inner voice tell us that, in doing our good at another's expense, we do wrong! We believe we are following the impulse of nature, but we are resisting it. In listening to what it says to our

senses, we despise what it says to our hearts; the active being obeys, the passive being commands. Conscience is the voice of the soul; the passions are the voice of the body. Is it surprising that these two languages often are contradictory? And then which should be listened to? Too often reason deceives us. We have acquired only too much right to challenge it. But conscience never deceives; it is man's true guide. It is to the soul what instinct is to the body; he who follows conscience obeys nature and does not fear being led astray. This point is important [continued my benefactor, seeing that I was going to interrupt him]. Allow me to tarry a bit to clarify it.

All the morality of our actions is in the judgment we ourselves make of them. If it is true that the good is good, it must be so in the depths of our hearts as it is in our works, and the primary reward for justice is to sense that one practices it. If moral goodness is in conformity with our nature, man could be healthy of spirit or well constituted only to the extent that he is good. If it is not and man is naturally wicked, he cannot cease to be so without being corrupted, and goodness in him is only a vice contrary to nature. If he were made to do harm to his kind, as a wolf is made to slaughter his prey, a humane man would be an animal as depraved as a pitying wolf, and only virtue would leave us with remorse.

Let us return to ourselves, my young friend! Let us examine, all personal interest aside, where our inclinations lead us. Which spectacle gratifies us more — that of others' torments or that of their happiness? Which is sweeter to do and leaves us with a more agreeable impression after having done it — a beneficent act or a wicked act? In whom do you take an interest in your theaters? Is it in heinous crimes that you take pleasure? Is it to their authors when they are punished that you give your tears? It is said that we are indifferent to everything outside of our interest; but, all to the contrary, the sweetness of friendship and of humanity consoles us in our suffering; even in our pleasures we would be too alone, too miserable, if we had no one with whom to share them. If there is nothing moral in the heart of man, what is the source of these transports of admiration for heroic actions, these raptures of love for great souls? What relation does this enthusiasm for virtue have to our private interest? Why would I want to be Cato, who disembowels himself, rather than Caesar triumphant? Take this love of the beautiful from our hearts, and you take all the charm from life. He whose vile passions have stifled these delicious sentiments in his narrow soul, and who, by dint of self-centeredness, succeeds in loving only himself, has no more transports. His icy heart no longer palpitates with joy; a sweet tenderness never moistens his

eyes; he has no more joy in anything. This unfortunate man no longer feels, no longer lives. He is already dead.

But however numerous the wicked are on the earth, there are few of these cadaverous souls who have become insensitive, except where their own interest is at stake, to everything which is just and good. Iniquity pleases only to the extent one profits from it; in all the rest one wants the innocent to be protected. One sees some act of violence and injustice in the street or on the road. Instantly an emotion of anger and indignation is aroused in the depths of the heart, and it leads us to take up the defense of the oppressed; but a more powerful duty restrains us, and the laws take from us the right of protecting innocence. On the other hand, if some act of clemency or generosity strikes our eyes, what admiration, what love it inspires in us! Who does not say to himself, "I would like to have done the same"? It is surely of very little importance to us that a man was wicked or just two thousand years ago; nevertheless, we take an interest in ancient history just as if it all had taken place in our day. What do Catiline's crimes do to me? Am I afraid of being his victim? Why, then, am I as horrified by him as if he were my contemporary? We do not hate the wicked only because they do us harm, but because they are wicked. Not only do we want to be happy; we also wish for the happiness of others. And when this happiness does not come at the expense of our own, it increases it. Finally, in spite of oneself, one pities the unfortunate; when we are witness to their ills, we suffer from them. The most perverse are unable to lose this inclination entirely. Often it puts them in contradiction with themselves. The robber who plunders passers-by still covers the nakedness of the poor, and the most ferocious killer supports a fainting man.

We speak of the cry of remorse which in secret punishes hidden crimes and so often brings them to light. Alas, who of us has never heard this importunate voice? We speak from experience, and we would like to stifle this tyrannical sentiment that gives us so much torment. Let us obey nature. We shall know with what gentleness it reigns, and what charm one finds, after having hearkened to it, in giving favorable testimony on our own behalf. The wicked man fears and flees himself. He cheers himself up by rushing outside of himself. His restless eyes rove around him and seek an object that is entertaining to him. Without bitter satire, without insulting banter, he would always be sad. The mocking laugh is his only pleasure. By contrast, the serenity of the just man is internal. His is not a malignant laugh but a joyous one; he bears its source in himself. He is as gay alone as in the midst of a circle. He does not draw his contentment from those

who come near him; he communicates it to them.

Cast your eyes on all the nations of the world, go through all the histories. Among so many inhuman and bizarre cults, among this prodigious diversity of morals and characters, you will find everywhere the same ideas of justice and decency, everywhere the same notions of good and bad. Ancient paganism gave birth to abominable gods who would have been punished on earth as villains and who presented a picture of supreme happiness consisting only of heinous crimes to commit and passions to satisfy. But vice, armed with a sacred authority, descended in vain from the eternal abode; moral instinct repulsed it from the heart of human beings. While celebrating Jupiter's debauches, they admired Xenocrates' continence. The chaste Lucretia worshiped the lewd Venus. The intrepid Roman sacrificed to fear. He invoked the god who mutilated his father, and he himself died without a murmur at his own father's hand. The most contemptible divinities were served by the greatest men. The holy voice of nature, stronger than that of the gods, made itself respected on earth and seemed to relegate crime, along with the guilty, to heaven.

There is in the depths of souls, then, an innate principle of justice and virtue according to which, in spite of our own maxims, we judge our actions and those of others as good or bad. It is to this principle that I give the name conscience.

But at this word I hear the clamor of those who are allegedly wise rising on all sides: errors of childhood, prejudices of education, they all cry in a chorus. Nothing exists in the human mind other than what is introduced by experience, and we judge a thing on no ground other than that of acquired ideas. They go farther. They dare to reject this evident and universal accord of all nations. And in the face of this striking uniformity in men's judgment, they go and look in the shadows for some obscure example known to them alone — as if all the inclinations of nature were annihilated by the depravity of a single people, and the species were no longer anything as soon as there are monsters. But what is the use of the torments to which the skeptic Montaigne subjects himself in order to unearth in some corner of the world a custom opposed to the notions of justice? Of what use is it to him to give to the most suspect travelers the authority he refuses to give to the most celebrated writers? - Will some uncertain and bizarre practices, based on local causes unknown to us, destroy the general induction drawn from the concurrence of all peoples, who disagree about everything else and agree on this point alone? O Montaigne, you who pride yourself on frankness and truth, be sincere and true, if a philosopher can be, and tell me whether there is some country on

earth where it is a crime to keep one's faith, to be clement, beneficent, and generous, where the good man is contemptible and the perfidious one honored?

It is said that everyone contributes to the public good for his own interest. But what then is the source of the just man's contributing to it to his prejudice? What is going to one's death for one's interest? No doubt, no one acts for anything other than for his good; but if there is not a moral good which must be taken into account, one will never explain by private interest anything but the action of the wicked. It is not even likely that anyone will attempt to go farther. This would be too abominable a philosophy — one which is embarrassed by virtuous actions, which could get around the difficulty only by fabricating base intentions and motives without virtue, which would be forced to vilify Socrates and calumniate Regulus. If ever such doctrines could spring up among us, the voice of nature as well as that of reason would immediately be raised against them and would never leave a single one of their partisans the excuse that he is of good faith.

It is not my design here to enter into metaphysical discussions which are out of my reach and yours, and which, at bottom, lead to nothing. I have already told you that I wanted not to philosophize with you but to help you consult your heart. Were all the philosophers to prove that I am wrong, if you sense that I am right, I do not wish for more.

For that purpose I need only to make you distinguish our acquired ideas from our natural sentiments; for we sense before knowing, and since we do not learn to want what is good for us and to flee what is bad for us but rather get this will from nature, by that very fact love of the good and hatred of the bad are as natural as the love of ourselves. The acts of the conscience are not judgments but sentiments. Although all our ideas come to us from outside, the sentiments evaluating them are within us, and it is by them alone that we know the compatibility or incompatibility between us and the things we ought to seek or flee.

To exist, for us, is to sense; our sensibility is incontestably anterior to our intelligence, and we had sentiments before ideas. Whatever the cause of our being, it has provided for our preservation by giving us sentiments suitable to our nature, and it could not be denied that these, at least, are innate. These sentiments, as far as the individual is concerned, are the love of self, the fear of pain, the horror of death, the desire of well-being. But if, as cannot be doubted, man is by his nature sociable, or at least made to become so, he can be so only by means of other innate sentiments relative to his species; for if we consider only physical need, it ought certainly to disperse men instead

of bringing them together. It is from the moral system formed by this double relation to oneself and to one's fellows that the impulse of conscience is born. To know the good is not to love it; man does not have innate knowledge of it, but as soon as his reason makes him know it, his conscience leads him to love it. It is this sentiment which is innate.

Thus I do not believe, my friend, that it is impossible to explain, by the consequences of our nature, the immediate principle of the conscience independently of reason itself. And were that impossible, it would moreover not be necessary; for, those who deny this principle, admitted and recognized by all mankind, do not prove that it does not exist but are satisfied with affirming that it does not; so when we affirm that it does exist, we are just as well founded as they are, and we have in addition the inner witness and the voice of conscience, which testifies on its own behalf. If the first glimmers of judgment dazzle us and at first make a blur of objects in our sight, let us wait for our weak eyes to open up again and steady themselves, and soon we shall see these same objects again in the light of reason as nature first showed them to us. Or, rather, let us be more simple and less vain. Let us limit ourselves to the first sentiments that we find in ourselves, since study always leads us back to them when it has not led us astray.

Conscience, conscience! Divine instinct, immortal and celestial voice, certain guide of a being that is ignorant and limited but intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and bad which makes man like unto God; it is you who make the excellence of his nature and the morality of his actions. Without you I sense nothing in me that raises me above the beasts, other than the sad privilege of leading myself astray from error to error with the aid of an understanding without rule and a reason without principle.

Thank heaven, we are delivered from all that terrifying apparatus of philosophy. We can be men without being scholars. Dispensed from consuming our life in the study of morality, we have at less expense a more certain guide in this immense maze of human opinions. But it is not enough that this guide exists; one must know how to recognize it and to follow it. If it speaks to all hearts, then why are there so few of them who hear it? Well, this is because it speaks to us in nature's language, which everything has made us forget. Conscience is timid; it likes refuge and peace. The world and noise scare it; the prejudices from which they claim it is born are its cruelest enemies. It flees or keeps quiet before them. Their noisy voices stifle its voice and prevent it from making itself heard. Fanaticism dares to counterfeit it and to dictate crime in its name. It finally gives up as a result of being

dismissed. It no longer speaks to us. It no longer responds to us. And after such long contempt for it, to recall it costs as much as banishing it did.

How many times in my researches have I grown weary as a result of the coldness I felt within me! How many times have sadness and boredom, spreading their poison over my first meditations, made them unbearable for me! My arid heart provided only a languid and lukewarm zeal to the love of truth. I said to myself, "Why torment myself in seeking what is not? Moral good is only a chimera. There is nothing good but the pleasures of the senses." O, when one has once lost the taste for the pleasures of the soul, how difficult it is to regain it! How much more difficult gaining it is when one has never had it! If there existed a man miserable enough to be unable to recall anything he had done in all his life which made him satisfied with himself and glad to have lived, that man would be incapable of ever knowing himself; and for want of feeling the goodness suitable to his nature, he would necessarily remain wicked and be eternally unhappy. But do you believe there is a single man on the whole earth deprived enough never to have yielded in his heart to the temptation of doing good? This temptation is so natural and so sweet that it is impossible always to resist it, and the memory of the pleasure that it once produced suffices to recall it constantly. Unfortunately it is at first hard to satisfy. One has countless reasons to reject the inclination of one's heart. False prudence confines it within the limits of the human I; countless efforts of courage are needed to dare to cross those limits. To enjoy doing good is the reward for having done good, and this reward is obtained only after having deserved it. Nothing is more lovable than virtue, but one must possess it to find it so. Virtue is similar to Proteus in the fable : when one wants to embrace it, it at first takes on countless terrifying forms and finally reveals itself in its own form only to those who did not let go.

Constantly caught up in the combat between my natural sentiments, which spoke for the common interest, and my reason, which related everything to me, I would have drifted all my life in this continual alternation — doing the bad, loving the good, always in contradiction with myself — if new lights had not illuminated my heart, and if the truth, which settled my opinions, had not also made my conduct certain and put me in agreement with myself. For all that one might want to establish virtue by reason alone, what solid base can one give it? Virtue, they say, is the love of order. But can and should this love win out in me over that of my own well-being? Let them give me a clear and sufficient reason for preferring it. At bottom, their alleged

principle is a pure play on words; for I say that vice is the love of order, taken in a different sense. There is some moral order wherever there is sentiment and intelligence. The difference is that the good man orders himself in relation to the whole, and the wicked one orders the whole in relation to himself. The latter makes himself the center of all things; the former measures his radius and keeps to the circumference. Then he is ordered in relation to the common center, which is God, and in relation to all the concentric circles, which are the creatures. If the divinity does not exist, it is only the wicked man who reasons, and the good man is nothing but a fool.

O my child! May you one day sense what a weight one is relieved of when, after having exhausted the vanity of human opinions and tasted the bitterness of the passions, one finally finds so near to oneself the road of wisdom, the reward of this life's labors, and the source of the happiness of which one has despaired. All the duties of the natural law, which were almost erased from my heart by the injustice of men, are recalled to it in the name of the eternal justice which imposes them on me and sees me fulfill them. I no longer sense that I am anything but the work and the instrument of the great Being who wants what is good, who does it, and who will do what is good for me through the conjunction of my will and His and through the good use of my liberty. I acquiesce in the order that this Being establishes, sure that one day I myself will enjoy this order and find my felicity in it; for what felicity is sweeter than sensing that one is ordered in a system in which everything is good? Subject to pain, I bear it with patience in thinking that it is fleeting and that it comes from a body that does not belong to me. If I do a good deed without a witness, I know that it is seen, and I make a record for the other life of my conduct in this one. In suffering an injustice, I say to myself, "The just Being who rules everything will certainly know how to compensate me for it." The needs of my body and the miseries of my life make the idea of death more bearable for me. They will be so many fewer bonds to break when it is necessary to leave everything.

Why is my soul subjected to my senses and chained to this body which enslaves it and interferes with it? I know nothing about it. Did I take part in God's decrees? But I can, without temerity, form modest conjectures. I tell myself: "If man's mind had remained free and pure, what merit would he gain from loving and following the order which he saw established and which he would have no interest in troubling? He would be happy, it is true. But his happiness would be lacking the most sublime degree, the glory of virtue and the good witness of oneself. He would be only like the angels, and doubtless the virtuous

man will be more than they are. He is united to a mortal body by a bond no less powerful than incomprehensible. The care for this body's preservation incites the soul to relate everything to the body and gives it an interest contrary to the general order, which the soul is nevertheless capable of seeing and loving. It is then that the good use of the soul's liberty becomes both its merit and its recompense, and that it prepares itself an incorruptible happiness in combating its terrestrial passions and maintaining itself in its first will."

If, even in the state of abasement which we are in during this life, all our first inclinations are legitimate, and if all our vices come to us from ourselves, why do we complain of being subjugated by them? Why do we reproach the Author of things for the evils we do to ourselves and the enemies we arm against ourselves? Ah, let us not corrupt man! He will always be good without difficulty and always be happy without remorse! The guilty who say they are forced to crime are as dishonest as they are wicked. How is it they do not see that the weakness of which they complain is their own work; that their first depravity comes from their own will; that by willing to yield to their temptations, they finally yield to them in spite of themselves and make them irresistible? It is doubtless no longer in their power not to be wicked and weak; but not becoming so was in their power. Oh how easily we would remain masters of ourselves and of our passions — even during this life — if when our habits were not yet acquired, when our mind was beginning to open, we knew how to occupy it with the objects that it ought to know in order to evaluate those which it does not know; if we sincerely wanted to enlighten ourselves — not to be conspicuous in others' eyes, but to be good and wise according to our nature, to make ourselves happy in practicing our duties! This study appears boring and painful to us because we think about it only when we are already corrupted by vice, already given over to our passions. We settle our judgments and our esteem before knowing good and bad, and then, in relating everything to this false measure, we give to nothing its just value.

There is an age when the heart is still free, but ardent, restless, avid for the happiness it does not know; it seeks it with a curiosity born of incertitude and, deceived by the senses, finally settles on a vain image of happiness and believes it has found it where it is not. These illusions have lasted too long for me. Alas, I recognized them too late and have been unable to destroy them completely. They will last as long as this mortal body which causes them. At least, although they may very well seduce me, they no longer deceive me. I know them for what they are; in following them, I despise them. Far from seeing them as the object of my happiness, I see them as its obstacle. I aspire

to the moment when, after being delivered from the shackles of the body, I shall be me without contradiction or division and shall need only myself in order to be happy. While waiting, I am already happy in this life because I take little account of all its ills, because I regard it as almost foreign to my being, and because all the true good that I can get out of it depends on me.

To raise myself beforehand as much as possible to this condition of happiness, strength, and freedom, I practice sublime contemplations. I meditate on the order of the universe, not in order to explain it by vain systems but to admire it constantly, to worship the wise Author who makes himself felt in it. I converse with Him; I fill all my faculties with His divine essence; I am moved by His benefactions; I bless Him for his gifts. But I do not pray to Him. What would I ask of Him? That He change the course of things for me, that He perform miracles in my favor? I who ought to love, above all, the order established by His wisdom and maintained by His providence, would I want this order to be disturbed for me? No, this rash wish would deserve to be punished rather than fulfilled. Nor do I ask Him for the power to do good. Why ask Him for what He has given me? Did He not give me conscience for loving the good, reason for knowing it, and liberty for choosing it? If I do the bad, I have no excuse. I do it because I want to. To ask Him to change my will is to ask Him what He asks of me. It is to want Him to do my work while I collect the wages for it. Not to be contented with my condition is to want no longer to be a man, it is to want something other than what is, it is to want disorder and evil. Source of justice and truth, God, clement and good, in my confidence in You, the supreme wish of my heart is that Your will be done! In joining my will to Yours, I do what you do; I acquiesce in Your goodness; I believe that I share beforehand in the supreme felicity which is its reward.

As I justly distrust myself, the only thing that I ask of Him, or rather that I expect of His justice, is to correct my error if I am led astray and if this error is dangerous to me. The fact that I act in good faith does not mean I believe myself infallible. Those of my opinions which seem truest to me are perhaps so many lies; for what man does not hold on to his opinions, and how many men agree about everything? The illusion deceiving me may very well come from myself; it is He alone who can cure me of it. I have done what I could to attain the truth, but its source is too elevated. If the strength for going farther is lacking to me, of what can I be guilty? It is up to the truth to come nearer.

The good priest had spoken with vehemence. He was moved, and

so was I. I believed I was hearing the divine Orpheus sing the first hymns and teaching men the worship of the gods. Nevertheless I saw a multitude of objections to make to him. I did not make any of them, because they were less solid than disconcerting, and persuasiveness was on his side. To the extent that he spoke to me according to his conscience, mine seemed to confirm what he had told me.

The sentiments you have just expounded to me, I said to him, appear more novel in what you admit you do not know than in what you say you believe. I see in them pretty nearly the theism or the natural religion that the Christians pretend to confound with atheism or irreligiosity, which is the directly contrary doctrine. But in the present condition of my faith I have to ascend rather than descend in order to adopt your opinions, and I find it difficult to remain precisely at the point where you are without being as wise as you. In order to be at least as sincere as you, I want to take counsel with myself. Following your example, I ought to be guided by the inner sentiment. You yourself have taught me that, after one has long imposed silence on it, to recall it is not the business of a moment. I will carry your discourse with me in my heart. I must meditate on it. If after taking careful counsel with myself, I remain as convinced of it as you are, you will be my final apostle, and I shall be your proselyte unto death. Continue, however, to instruct me. You have only told me half of what I must know. Speak to me of revelation, of the scriptures, of those obscure dogmas through which I have been wandering since childhood, without being able either to conceive or to believe them and without knowing how I could either accept or reject them.

Yes, my child, he said, embracing me, I shall finish telling you what I think. I do not want to open my heart to you halfway. But the desire you give evidence of was necessary to authorize my having no reserve with you. I have told you nothing up to now which I did not believe could be useful to you and of which I was not profoundly persuaded. The examination which remains to be made is very different. I see in it only perplexity, mystery, and obscurity. I bring to it only uncertainty and distrust. I decide only in trembling, and I tell you my doubts rather than my opinions. If your sentiments were more stable, I would hesitate to expound mine to you. But in your present condition you will profit from thinking as I do. Moreover, attribute to my discourse only the authority of reason. I do not know whether I am in error. It is difficult in discussion not to adopt an assertive tone sometimes. But remember that all my assertions here are only reasons for doubt. Seek the truth yourself. As for me, I promise you only good faith.

You see in my exposition only natural religion. It is very strange

that any other is needed! How shall I know this necessity? What can I be guilty of in serving God according to the understanding He gives to my mind and the sentiments He inspires in my heart? What purity of morality, what dogma useful to man and honorable to his Author can I derive from a positive doctrine which I cannot derive without it from the good use of my faculties? Show me what one can add, for the glory of God, for the good of society, and for my own advantage, to the duties of the natural law, and what virtue you produce from a new form of worship that is not a result of mine? The greatest ideas of the divinity come to us from reason alone. View the spectacle of nature; hear the inner voice. Has God not told everything to our eyes, to our conscience, to our judgment? What more will men tell us? Their revelations have only the effect of degrading God by giving Him human passions. I see that particular dogmas, far from clarifying the notions of the great Being, confuse them; that far from ennobling them, they debase them; that to the inconceivable mysteries surrounding the great Being they add absurd contradictions; that they make man proud, intolerant, and cruel; that, instead of establishing peace on earth, they bring sword and fire to it. I ask myself what good all this does, without knowing what to answer. I see in it only the crimes of men and the miseries of mankind.

I am told that a revelation was needed to teach men the way God wanted to be served. They present as proof the diversity of bizarre forms of worship which have been instituted, and do not see that this very diversity comes from the fancifulness of revelations. As soon as peoples took it into their heads to make God speak, each made Him speak in its own way and made Him say what it wanted. If one had listened only to what God says to the heart of man, there would never have been more than one religion on earth.

There had to be uniformity of worship. Very well. But was this point so important that the whole apparatus of divine power was needed to establish it? Let us not confuse the ceremony of religion with religion itself. The worship God asks for is that of the heart. And that worship, when it is sincere, is always uniform. One must be possessed of a mad vanity indeed to imagine that God takes so great an interest in the form of the priest's costume, in the order of the words he pronounces, in the gestures he makes at the altar, and in all his genuflexions. Ah, my friend, remain upright! You will always be near enough to the earth. God wants to be revered in spirit and in truth. This is the duty of all religions, all countries, all men. As to the external worship, if it must be uniform for the sake of good order, that is purely a question of public policy; no revelation is needed for that.

I did not begin with all these reflections. I was carried along by the prejudices of education and by that dangerous amour-propre which always wants to carry man above his sphere, and, unable to raise my feeble conceptions up to the great Being, I made an effort to lower Him down to my level. I reduced the infinite distance He has put in the relations between His nature and mine. I wanted more immediate communications, more particular instructions; not content with making God like man, I wanted supernatural understanding in order that I myself would be privileged among my fellows, I wanted an exclusive form of worship; I wanted God to have said to me what He had not said to others, or what others had not understood in the same way as I did.

Regarding the point at which I had arrived as the common point from which all believers start in order to arrive at a more enlightened form of worship, I found nothing in natural religion but the elements of every religion. I considered this diversity of sects which reign on earth, and which accuse each other of lying and error. I asked, "Which is the right one?" Each answered, "It is mine." Each said, "I and my partisans alone think rightly; all the others are in error." "And how do you know that your sect is the right one?" "Because God said so." "And who told you that God said so?" "My pastor, who certainly knows. My pastor told me this is what to believe, and this is what I believe. He assures me that all those who say something other than he does are lying, and I do not listen to them."

What, I thought, is the truth not one, and can what is true for me be false for you? If the methods of the man who follows the right road and of the man who goes astray are the same, what merit or what fault belongs to one of these men more than the other? Their choice is the effect of chance; to blame them for it is iniquitous. It is to reward or punish them for being born in this or in that country. To dare to say that God judges us in this way is to insult His justice.

Either all religions are good and agreeable to God; or if there is one which He prescribes to men and punishes them for refusing to recognize, He has given it certain and manifest signs so that it is distinguished and known as the only true one. These signs exist in all times and all places, equally to be grasped by all men, great and small, learned and ignorant, Europeans, Indians, Africans, savages. If there were a religion on earth outside of whose worship there was only eternal suffering, and if in some place in the world a single mortal of good faith had not been struck by its obviousness, the God of that religion would be the most iniquitous and cruel of tyrants.

Are we, then, sincerely seeking the truth? Let us grant nothing to the right of birth and to the authority of fathers and pastors, but let us recall for the examination of conscience and reason all that they have taught us from our youth. They may very well cry out, "Subject your reason." He who deceives me can say as much. I need reasons for subjecting my reason.

All the theology that I can acquire on my own from the inspection of the universe and by the good use of my faculties is limited to what I have explained to you previously. To know more one must have recourse to extraordinary means. These means could not be the authority of men; for since no man belongs to a different species from me, all that a man knows naturally I too can know, and another man can be mistaken as well as I. When I believe what he says, it is not because he says it but because he proves it. Therefore the testimony of men is at bottom only that of my own reason and adds nothing to the natural means God gave me for knowing the truth.

Apostle of the truth, what then have you to tell me of which I do not remain the judge? "God Himself has spoken. Hear His revelation." That is something else. God has spoken! That is surely a great statement. To whom has He spoken? "He has spoken to men." Why, then, did I hear nothing about it? "He has directed other men to give you His word." I understand: it is men who are going to tell me what God has said. I should have preferred to have heard God Himself. It would have cost Him nothing more, and I would have been sheltered from seduction. "He gives you a guarantee in making manifest the mission of his messengers." How is that? "By miracles." And where are these miracles? "In books." And who wrote these books? "Men." And who saw these miracles? "Men who attest to them." What! Always human testimony? Always men who report to me what other men have reported! So many men between God and me! Nevertheless let us see, examine, compare, verify. Oh, if God had deigned to relieve me of all this labor, would I have served him any less heartily?

Consider, my friend, in what a horrible discussion I am now engaged, what immense erudition I need to go back to the most remote antiquity—to examine, weigh, and compare the prophecies, the revelations, the facts, all the monuments of faith put forth in every country of the world, to fix times, places, authors, occasions! What critical precision is necessary for me to distinguish the authentic documents from the forged ones; to compare the objections to the responses, the translations to the originals; to judge of the impartiality of witnesses, of their good sense, of their understanding; to know whether anything has been suppressed, anything added, anything transposed, changed,

falsified; to resolve the contradictions which remain; to judge what weight should be given to the silence of adversaries concerning facts alleged against them; whether these allegations were known to them; whether they took them seriously enough to deign to respond; whether books were common enough for ours to reach them; whether we have been of good enough faith to allow their books to circulate among us and to let remain their strongest objections just as they made them.

Once all these monuments are recognized as incontestable, one must next move on to the proofs of their authors' mission. One must have a good knowledge of all of the following: the laws of probability and the likelihood of events, in order to judge which predictions cannot be fulfilled without a miracle; the particular genius of the original languages, in order to distinguish what is prediction in these languages and what is only figure of speech; which facts belong to the order of nature and which other facts do not, so as to be able to say to what extent a skillful man can fascinate the eyes of simple people and can amaze even enlightened ones; how to discern to which species a miracle ought to belong and what authenticity it ought to have — not only for it to be believed, but for it to be a punishable offense to doubt it; how to compare the proof of true and false miracles and how to find certain rules for discerning them; and, finally, how to explain why God chose, for attesting to His word, means which themselves have so great a need of attestation, as though He were playing on men's credulity and intentionally avoiding the true means of persuading them.

Let us suppose that the divine Majesty were to deign to lower itself sufficiently to make a man the organ of its sacred will. Is it reasonable, is it just to demand that all of mankind obey the voice of this minister without making him known to it as such? Is there equity in providing this minister as his only credentials some special signs given to a few obscure people, signs of which all the rest of men will never know anything except by hearsay? In every country in the world, if one were to accept the truth of all the miracles which the people and the simple folk say they have seen, every sect would be the right one; there would be more miracles than natural events, and the greatest of all miracles would be if there were not miracles wherever fanatics are persecuted. It is the unalterable order of nature which best shows the Supreme Being. If many exceptions took place, I would no longer know what to think; and as for me, I believe too much in God to believe in so many miracles that are so little worthy of Him.

Let a man come and use this language with us: "Mortals, I announce the will of the Most High to you. Recognize in my voice Him who sends me. I order the sun to change its course, the stars to form another

arrangement, the mountains to become level, the waters to rise up, the earth to change its aspect." At these marvels who will not instantly recognize the Master of nature? It does not obey impostors. Their miracles are worked at crossroads, in deserts, within the confines of a room; it is there that they have an easy time with a small number of spectators already disposed to believe everything. Who will dare to tell me how many eyewitnesses are needed in order to make a miracle worthy of faith? If your miracles, which are performed to prove your doctrine, themselves need to be proved, of what use are they? You might as well perform none.

The most important examination of the proclaimed doctrine remains. For since those who say that God performs miracles on earth also claim that the Devil sometimes imitates them, we are no farther advanced than before, even with the best-attested miracles; and since the magicians of Pharaoh dared, in the very presence of Moses, to produce the same signs he did by God's express order, why would they not in his absence have claimed, with the same credentials, the same authority? Thus, after the doctrine has been proved by the miracle, the miracle has to be proved by the doctrine, for fear of taking the Demon's work for God's work. What do you think of this vicious circle?

Doctrine coming from God ought to bear the sacred character of the divinity. Not only should it clarify for us the confused ideas which reasoning draws in our mind, but it should also propound a form of worship, a morality, and maxims that are suitable to the attributes with which we conceive His essence on our own. If it taught us only things that are absurd and without reason, if it inspired in us only sentiments of aversion for our fellows and terror for ourselves, if it depicted for us only a god who is angry, jealous, vengeful, partisan, one who hates men, a god of war and battles always ready to destroy and strike down, always speaking of torments and suffering, and boasting of punishing even the innocent, my heart would not be attracted toward this terrible god, and I would take care not to give up the natural religion for this one. For you surely see that one must necessarily choose. Your God is not ours, I would say to its sectarians. He who begins by choosing a single people for Himself and proscribing the rest of mankind is not the common Father of men. He who destines the great majority of His creatures to eternal torment is not the clement and good God my reason has shown me.

With respect to dogmas, my reason tells me that they ought to be clear, luminous, and striking by their obviousness. If natural religion is insufficient, this is due to the obscurity in which it leaves the great truths it teaches us. It is for revelation to teach us these truths in a

manner evident to man's mind, to put them within his reach, to make him conceive them in order that he may believe them. Faith is given certainty and solidity by the understanding. The best of all religions is infallibly the clearest. He who burdens the worship he teaches me with mysteries and contradictions teaches me thereby to distrust it. The God I worship is not a god of shadows. He did not endow me with an understanding in order to forbid me its use. To tell me to subject my reason is to insult its Author. The minister of the truth does not tyrannize my reason; he enlightens it.

We have set aside all human authority, and without it I cannot see how one man can convince another by preaching an unreasonable doctrine to him. Let us have these two men confront each other for a moment and find out what they can say to one another, using that harshness of language which is usual for the two parties.

THE INSPIRED MAN Reason teaches you that the whole is greater than its part, but I teach you on behalf of God that it is the part which is greater than the whole.

THE REASONER And who are you to dare tell me that God contradicts Himself, and whom would I prefer to believe — Him who teaches me eternal truths by reason, or you who proclaim an absurdity on His behalf?

THE INSPIRED MAN Me, for my instruction is more positive, and I am going to prove invincibly that it is He Who sends me.

THE REASONER How? You will prove to me that it is God who sends you to testify against Him? And what kind of proof will you use to convince me that it is more certain that God speaks to me by your mouth than by the understanding He gave me?

THE INSPIRED MAN The understanding He gave you! Small and vain man! As if you were the first impious person led astray by his reason corrupted by sin!

THE REASONER Nor would you, man of God, be the first imposter who gave his arrogance as proof of his mission.

THE INSPIRED MAN What! Do philosophers, too, indulge in insults?

THE REASONER Sometimes, when saints set the example for them.

THE INSPIRED MAN Oh, I have the right to. I speak on God's behalf.

THE REASONER It would be well to show me your credentials before making use of your privileges.

THE INSPIRED MAN My credentials are authentic. The earth and the heavens will testify for me. Follow my reasonings carefully, I beg you.

THE REASONER Your reasonings! You are not thinking. To teach me that my reason deceives me, is that not to refute what it has said in your favor? Whoever wants to impugn reason should convince others without making use of it. For let us suppose that you have convinced me by reasoning; how will I know whether it is not my reason, corrupted by sin, which makes me acquiesce to what you tell me? Moreover, what proof, what demonstration will you ever be able to use that is more evident than the axiom it is supposed to destroy? It is just as believable that a good syllogism is a lie as it is that the part is greater than the whole.

THE INSPIRED MAN What a difference! My proofs are irrefutable. They belong to a supernatural order.

THE REASONER Supernatural! What does that word mean? I do not understand it.

THE INSPIRED MAN Changes in the order of nature, prophecies, miracles, wonders of every sort.

THE REASONER Wonders, miracles! I have never seen anything of the kind.

THE INSPIRED MAN Others have seen it for you. Crowds of witnesses, the testimony of peoples . . .

THE REASONER Is the testimony of peoples of a supernatural order?

THE INSPIRED MAN No, but when it is unanimous, it is incontestable.

THE REASONER There is nothing more incontestable than the principles of reason, and an absurdity cannot be made authoritative by the testimony of men. Once again, let us see supernatural proofs, for the attestation of mankind is not such a proof.

THE INSPIRED MAN O hardened heart! Grace does not speak to you.

THE REASONER It is not my fault, for, according to you, one must have already received grace to be able to ask for it. Therefore, begin

to speak to me in place of it.

THE INSPIRED MAN Ah, that is what I am doing, and you do not hear me. But what do you say of prophecies?

THE REASONER I say, in the first place, that I have no more heard prophecies than I have seen miracles. I say, moreover, that no prophecy could be an authority for me.

THE INSPIRED MAN Henchman of the Demon! And why are prophecies not an authority for you?

THE REASONER Because for them to be an authority three things would be required whose coincidence is impossible: that is, that I was witness to the prophecy, that I was witness to the event, and that it was demonstrated to me that this event could not have tallied fortuitously with the prophecy. For even if a prophecy were more precise, more clear, and more luminous than an axiom of geometry, the clarity of a prediction made at random does not make its fulfillment impossible; and therefore when that fulfillment does take place, it is not a strict proof of anything about him who predicted it.

See, then, what your alleged supernatural proofs, your miracles and prophecies come down to: a belief in all this on the faith of others, and a subjection of the authority of God, speaking to my reason, to the authority of men. If the eternal truths which my mind conceives could be impaired, there would no longer be any kind of certainty for me, and far from being sure that you speak to me on behalf of God, I would not even be sure that He exists.

There are many difficulties here, my child, and these are not all. Among so many diverse religions which mutually proscribe and exclude one another, a single one is the right one, if indeed there is a right one. In order to recognize it, it is not sufficient to examine one of them; they must all be examined, and in any matter whatsoever one must not condemn without hearing. The objections must be compared to the proofs; it must be known what each objects to in the others, and what it responds to their objections against itself. The more a sentiment appears to us to have been demonstrated, the more we ought to try to find out the basis for so many men's not finding it so. One would have to be quite simple to believe that it suffices to hear the learned men of one's own party to inform oneself of the arguments of the opposing party. Where are the theologians who pride themselves on good faith? Where are those who, in order to refute the arguments of their adversaries, do not begin by weakening them? Each shines in his own party; but one who in the midst of his own

people is proud of his proofs would cut a very foolish figure with these same proofs among people of another party. Do you want to inform yourself from books? What erudition must be acquired, how many languages must be learned, how many libraries must be gone through, what an immense amount of reading must be done! Who will guide me in the choice? It will be difficult to find in one country the best books of the opposing party, and even more so those of all the parties. If one were to find them, they would soon be refuted. The absent party is always wrong, and poor arguments spoken with assurance easily efface good ones expounded with contempt. Moreover, there is often nothing which is more deceptive than books, and which renders less faithfully the sentiments of those who wrote them. If you had wanted to judge the Catholic faith on the basis of Bossuet's book, you would have discovered that you were wide of the mark after having lived among us. You would have seen that the doctrine used to respond to the Protestants is not the one taught to the people, and that Bossuet's book bears little resemblance to the instructions of the sermon. In order to judge a religion well, it is necessary not to study it in the books of its sectarians, but to go and learn it amongst them. That is very different. Each religion has its traditions, its views, its customs, and its prejudices which constitute the spirit of its belief and must also be considered for it to be judged.

How many great peoples print no books and do not read ours! How can they judge our opinions? How can we judge theirs? We scoff at them, they despise us; and if our travelers ridicule them, they need only travel among us to return the favor. In what country are there not sensible people, people of good faith, decent people, friends of the truth who, in order to profess it, would need only to know it? However, each sees the truth in his own worship and finds absurd the worship of other nations. Therefore, either these foreign forms of worship are not as extravagant as they seem to us, or the reason we find in our own proves nothing.

We have three principal religions in Europe. One accepts a single revelation, the second accepts two, the third accepts three. Each detests and curses the other two, accusing them of being blind, hard-hearted, opinionated, and dishonest. What impartial man will dare to judge among them if he has not carefully weighed their proofs, carefully listened to their arguments? The religion which accepts only one revelation is the oldest and appears to be the most certain. The one which accepts three is the most modern and appears to be the most consistent. The one which accepts two and rejects the third may very well be the best, but it certainly has all the prejudices against it. The

inconsistency leaps to the eyes.

In the three revelations the sacred books are written in languages unknown to the people who follow them. The Jews no longer understand Hebrew; the Christians understand neither Hebrew nor Greek; neither the Turks nor the Persians understand Arabic, and the modern Arabs themselves no longer speak the language of Mohammed. Is this not a simple way of instructing men — always speaking to them in a language they do not understand? These books are translated, it will be said. A fine answer! Who will assure me that these books are faithfully translated, that it is even possible that they be? And if God has gone so far as to speak to men, why must He need an interpreter?

I shall never be able to conceive that what every man is obliged to know is confined to books, and that someone who does not have access to these books, or to those who understand them, is punished for an ignorance which is involuntary. Always books! What a mania. Because Europe is full of books, Europeans regard them as indispensable, without thinking that in three-quarters of the earth they have never been seen. Were not all books written by men? Why, then, would man need them to know his duties, and what means had he of knowing them before these books were written? Either he will learn these duties by himself, or he is excused from knowing them.

Our Catholics make a great to-do about the authority of the Church; but what do they gain by that, if they need as great an apparatus of proofs to establish this authority as other sects need for establishing their doctrine directly? The Church decides that the Church has the right to decide. Is that not an authority based on good proofs? Step outside of that, and you return to all our discussions.

Do you know many Christians who have taken the effort to examine with care what Judaism alleges against them? If some individuals have seen something of this, it is in the books of Christians. A good way of informing oneself about their adversaries' arguments! But what is there to do? If someone dared to publish among us books in which Judaism were openly favored, we would punish the author, the publisher, the bookseller. This is a convenient and sure policy for always being right. There is a pleasure in refuting people who do not dare to speak.

Those among us who have access to conversation with Jews are not much farther advanced. These unfortunates feel themselves to be at our mercy. The tyranny practiced against them makes them fearful. They know how little troubled Christian charity is by injustice and cruelty. What will they dare to say without laying themselves open

to our accusing them of blasphemy? Greed gives us zeal, and they are too rich not to be wrong. The most learned, the most enlightened among them are always the most circumspect. You will convert some miserable fellow, who is paid to calumniate his sect. You will put words into the mouths of some vile old-clothes dealers, who will yield in order to flatter you. You will triumph over their ignorance or their cowardice, while their learned men will smile in silence at your ineptitude. But do you believe that in places where they feel secure you would win out over them so cheaply? At the Sorbonne it is as clear as day that the predictions about the Messiah relate to Jesus Christ. Among the Amsterdam rabbis it is just as clear that they do not have the least relation to Jesus. I shall never believe that I have seriously heard the arguments of the Jews until they have a free state, schools, and universities, where they can speak and dispute without risk. Only then will we be able to know what they have to say.

At Constantinople the Turks state their arguments, but we do not dare to state our own. There it is our turn to crawl. If the Turks demand from us the same respect for Mohammed that we demand for Jesus Christ from the Jews, who do not believe in him any more than we believe in Mohammed, are the Turks wrong? Are we right? According to what equitable principle shall we resolve this question?

Two-thirds of mankind are neither Jews nor Mohammedans nor Christians, and how many million men have never heard of Moses, Jesus Christ, or Mohammed? This is denied; it is maintained that our missionaries go everywhere. That is easily said. But do they go into the still unknown heart of Africa, where no European has ever penetrated up to now? Do they go to deepest Tartary, to follow on horseback the wandering hordes who are never approached by a foreigner, and who, far from having heard of the Pope, hardly even know of the Grand Lama? Do they go into the immense continents of America, where whole nations still do not know that peoples from another world have set foot in theirs? Do they go to Japan, from which their maneuvers got them thrown out forever, and where their predecessors are known to the generations now being born only as guileful intriguers who came with a hypocritical zeal to take hold of the empire by stealth? Do they go into the harems of the princes of Asia to proclaim the Gospel to thousands of poor slaves? What have the women of this part of the world done to prevent any missionary from preaching the faith to them? Will they all go to hell for having been recluses?

Even if it were true that the Gospel has been proclaimed everywhere on earth, what would be gained by it? Surely on the eve of the day that the first missionary arrived in some country, someone died there who

was not able to hear him. Now tell me what we are going to do with that person? If there were only a single man in the whole universe who had never been preached to about Jesus Christ, the objection would be as strong for that single man as for a quarter of mankind.

Even if the ministers of the Gospel have made themselves heard by distant peoples, what have they told them which could reasonably be accepted on their word and which did not demand the most exact verification? You proclaim to me a God born and dead two thousand years ago at the other end of the world in some little town, and you tell me that whoever has not believed in this mystery will be damned. These are very strange things to believe so quickly on the sole authority of a man whom I do not know! Why did your god make these events take place so far from me, if he wanted me to be under an obligation to be informed of them? Is it a crime not to know what takes place at the antipodes? Can I divine that there were a Hebrew people and a city of Jerusalem in another hemisphere? I might as well be obliged to know what is happening on the moon! You say that you come to teach this to me. But why did you not come to teach it to my father, or why do you damn this good old man for never having known anything about it? Ought he to be eternally punished for your laziness, he who was so good and beneficent, and who sought only the truth? Be of good faith; then put yourself in my place. See if I ought to believe on your testimony alone all the unbelievable things you tell me and to reconcile so many injustices with the just God whom you proclaim to me. I beg you, let me go and see this distant country where so many marvels take place that are unheard of in this one. Let me go and find out why the inhabitants of this Jerusalem treated God like a thief. They did not, you say, recognize him as god? What shall I do then, I who have never even heard Him mentioned except by you? You add that they were punished, dispersed, oppressed, enslaved, that none of them comes near that city anymore. Surely they well deserved all that. But what do today's inhabitants say of the deicide committed by their predecessors? They deny it; they, too, do not recognize God as God. The children of the others, then, might as well have been left there.

What! In the very city where God died, neither the old nor the new inhabitants acknowledged him, and you want me to acknowledge him, me who was born two thousand years after and two thousand leagues away? Do you not see that before I put faith in this book which you call sacred, and of which I understand nothing, I must be informed by people other than you when and by whom it was written, how it was preserved, how it was transmitted to you, what arguments are given

by those in your country who reject it, although they know as well as you all that you teach me? You are well aware that I must necessarily go to Europe, Asia, and Palestine and examine everything for myself. I would have to be mad to listen to you prior to that time.

Not only does this discourse appear reasonable to me, but I maintain that every man in his senses ought to speak thus in a similar case and dismiss without more ado the missionary who is in a hurry to instruct and baptize him before verification of the proofs. Now, I maintain that there is no revelation against which the same objections do not have as much strength as, or more strength than, against Christianity. From this it follows that if there is only one true religion and every man is obliged to follow it under penalty of damnation, one's life must be spent in studying them all, in going deeper into them, in comparing them, in roaming around the country where each is established. No one is exempt from the first duty of man; no one has a right to rely on the judgment of others. The artisan who lives only by his work, the laborer who does not know how to read, the delicate and timid maiden, the invalid who can hardly leave his bed — all without exception must study, meditate, engage in disputation, travel, roam the world. There will no longer be any stable and settled people; the whole earth will be covered only with pilgrims going at great expense and with continuous hardships to verify, to compare, and to examine for themselves the various forms of worship that people observe. Then it will be goodbye to the trades, the arts, the humane sciences, and all the civil occupations. There can no longer be any other study than that of religion. He who has enjoyed the most robust health, best employed his time, best used his reason, and lived the most years will hardly know what to think in his old age; and it will be a great deal if he learns before his death in what worship he ought to have lived.

Do you want to modify this method and give the least hold to the authority of men? At that moment you surrender everything to it. And if the son of a Christian does well in following his father's religion without a profound and impartial examination, why would the son of a Turk do wrong in similarly following his father's religion? I defy all the intolerant people in the world to answer this question in a manner satisfactory to a sensible man.

Pressed by these arguments, some would prefer to make God unjust and to punish the innocent for their father's sin rather than to renounce their barbarous dogma. Others get out of it by obligingly sending an angel to instruct whoever, despite living in invincible ignorance, has lived morally. What a fine invention that angel is! Not content with subjecting us to their contrivances, they make it neces-

sary for God Himself to use them.

You see, my son, to what absurdity pride and intolerance lead, when each man is so sure of his position and believes he is right to the exclusion of the rest of mankind. All my researches have been sincere — I take as my witness that God of peace Whom I adore and Whom I proclaim to you. But when I saw that these researches were and always would be unsuccessful, and that I was being swallowed up in an ocean without shores, I retraced my steps and restricted my faith to my primary notions. I have never been able to believe that God commanded me, under penalty of going to hell, to be so learned. I therefore closed all the books. There is one open to all eyes: it is the book of nature. It is from this great and sublime book that I learn to serve and worship its divine Author. No one can be excused for not reading it, because it speaks to all men a language that is intelligible to all minds. Let us assume that I was born on a desert island, that I have not seen any man other than myself, that I have never learned what took place in olden times in some corner of the world; nonetheless, if I exercise my reason, if I cultivate it, if I make good use of my God-given faculties which require no intermediary, I would learn of myself to know Him, to love Him, to love His works, to want the good that He wants, and to fulfill all my duties on earth in order to please Him. What more will all the learning of men teach me?

If I were a better reasoner or better educated, perhaps I would sense the truth of revelation, its utility for those who are fortunate enough to acknowledge it. But if I see in its favor proofs I cannot combat, I also see against it objections I cannot resolve. There are so many solid reasons for and against that I do not know what to decide, and I neither accept nor reject it. I reject only the obligation to acknowledge it, because this alleged obligation is incompatible with God's justice and because, far from removing the obstacles to salvation, it would have multiplied them and made them insurmountable for the greater part of mankind. With this exception I remain in respectful doubt about this point. I am not so presumptuous as to believe myself infallible. Other men have been able to achieve certainty about what seems uncertain to me. I reason for myself and not for them. I neither blame them nor imitate them. Their judgment may be better than mine, but it is not my fault that it is not mine.

I also admit that the majesty of the Scriptures amazes me, and that the holiness of the Gospel speaks to my heart. Look at the books of the philosophers with all their pomp. How petty they are next to this one! Can it be that a book at the same time so sublime and so simple is the work of men? Can it be that he whose history it

presents is only a man himself? Is his the tone of an enthusiast or an ambitious sectarian? What gentleness, what purity in his morals! What touching grace in his teachings! What elevation in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his speeches! What presence of mind, what finesse, and what exactness in his responses! What a dominion over his passions! Where is the man, where is the sage who knows how to act, to suffer, and to die without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato depicts his imaginary just man, covered with all the opprobrium of crime and worthy of all the rewards of virtue, he depicts Jesus Christ feature for feature. The resemblance is so striking that all the Fathers have sensed it; it is impossible to be deceived about it. What prejudices, what blindness one must have to dare to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the son of Mary? What a distance from one to the other! Socrates, dying without pain and without ignominy, easily sticks to his character to the end; and if this easy death had not honored his life, one would doubt whether Socrates, for all his intelligence, were anything but a sophist. He invented morality, it is said. Others before him put it into practice; all he did was to say what they had done; all he did was to draw the lesson from their examples. Aristides was just before Socrates said what justice is. Leonidas died for his country before Socrates had made it a duty to love the fatherland. Sparta was sober before Socrates had praised sobriety. Before he had defined virtue, Greece abounded in virtuous men. But where did Jesus find among his own people that elevated and pure morality of which he alone gave the lessons and the example? From the womb of the most furious fanaticism was heard the highest wisdom, and the simplicity of the most heroic virtues lent honor to the vilest of all peoples. The death of Socrates, philosophizing tranquilly with his friends, is the sweetest one could desire; that of Jesus, expiring in torment, insulted, jeered at, cursed by a whole people, is the most horrible one could fear. Socrates, taking the poisoned cup, blesses the man who gives it to him and who is crying. Jesus, in the midst of a frightful torture, prays for his relentless executioners. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a wise man, the life and death of Jesus are those of a god. Shall we say that the story of the Gospel was wantonly contrived? My friend, it is not thus that one contrives; the facts about Socrates, which no one doubts, are less well attested than those about Jesus Christ. At bottom, this is to push back the difficulty without doing away with it. It would be more inconceivable that many men in agreement had fabricated this book than that a single one provided its subject. Never would Jewish authors have found either this tone or this morality; and the Gospel has characteristics of truth that are so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable that its contriver would

be more amazing than its hero. With all that, this same Gospel is full of unbelievable things, of things repugnant to reason and impossible for any sensible man to conceive or to accept! What is to be done amidst all these contradictions? One ought always to be modest and circumspect, my child — to respect in silence what one can neither reject nor understand, and to humble oneself before the great Being who alone knows the truth.

This is the involuntary skepticism in which I have remained. But this skepticism is in no way painful for me, because it does not extend to the points essential to practice and because I am quite decided on the principles of all my duties. I serve God in the simplicity of my heart. I seek to know only what is important for my conduct. As for the dogmas which have an influence neither on actions nor on morality, and about which so many men torment themselves, I do not trouble myself about them at all. I regard all the particular religions as so many salutary institutions which prescribe in each country a uniform manner of honoring God by public worship. These religions can all have their justifications in the climate, the government, the genius of the people, or some other local cause which makes one preferable to another according to the time and place. I believe them all to be right as long as one serves God suitably. The essential worship is that of the heart. God does not reject its homage, if it is sincere, in whatever form it is offered to Him. I have been called — in the form of worship which I profess — to the service of the Church, and I perform with all possible exactness the tasks prescribed to me. My conscience would reproach me for voluntarily failing to do so on any point. You know that after a long interdict I obtained, through M. de Mellarede's influence, permission to resume my functions in order to help me to live. Formerly I said the Mass with the lightness with which one eventually treats the most serious things when one does them too often. But since adopting my new principles, I celebrate it with more veneration. I am filled with the majesty of the Supreme Being, with His presence, and with the insufficiency of the human mind, which has so little conception of what relates to its Author. Bearing in mind that I bring to Him the prayers of the people in a prescribed form, I carefully follow all the rites, I recite attentively, I take care never to omit either the least word or the least ceremony. When I approach the moment of the consecration, I collect myself so as to perform it in the frame of mind that the Church and the grandeur of the sacrament demand. I try to annihilate my reason before the supreme intelligence. I say to myself: "Who are you to measure infinite power?" I pronounce the sacramental words with respect, and I put into them all the faith within my power. Whatever may be the case

in regard to this inconceivable mystery, I have no fear that I shall be punished on Judgment Day for having profaned it in my heart.

I have been honored with a sacred ministry, although in the lowest rank, and I shall never do or say anything to make myself unworthy of fulfilling its sublime duties. I shall always preach virtue to men; I shall always exhort them to do good; and insofar as I am able, I shall set them a good example. I shall not fail to make religion lovable to them; I shall not fail to strengthen their faith in the truly useful dogmas every man is obliged to believe. But God forbid that I ever preach the cruel dogma of intolerance to them, that I ever bring them to detest their neighbor, to say to other men, "You will be damned." Were I in a more noticeable rank, this reservation could cause me trouble. But I am too unimportant to have much to fear, and I can hardly fall lower than I now am. Whatever happens, I shall never blaspheme divine justice and shall never lie about the Holy Spirit.

It has long been my ambition to have the honor of being a parish priest. I still have this ambition, but I no longer hope for its fulfillment. My good friend, I find nothing so fine as being a parish priest. A good parish priest is a minister of goodness, just as a good magistrate is a minister of justice. A parish priest never has to do harm. If he cannot always accomplish the good by himself, he is always in a fitting position to encourage it, and he often obtains it if he knows how to make himself respected. O if I could ever serve some poor parish of good people in our mountains, I would be happy, for it seems to me that I would be the cause of my parishioners' happiness. I would not make them rich, but I would share their poverty. I would remove from them the stigma and the contempt they suffer, more unbearable than indigence. I would make them love concord and equality, which often banish poverty and always make it bearable. When they saw that I was in no way better off than they and nevertheless lived in contentment, they would learn how to be consoled for their fate and how to live in contentment like me. When instructing them, I would be less attached to the spirit of the Church than to the spirit of the Gospel, in which the dogma is simple and the morality sublime, and in which one sees few religious practices and many works of charity. Before teaching them what must be done, I would always make an effort to practice it, so that they would clearly see that I believe all that I say to them. If I had Protestants in my neighborhood or in my parish, I would not distinguish them at all from my true parishioners in everything connected with Christian charity. I would bring them all to love one another without distinction and to regard one another as brothers, to respect all religions, and to live in peace, with each

observing his own. I think that to urge someone to leave the religion in which he was born is to urge him to do evil, and consequently is to do evil oneself. While waiting for greater enlightenment, let us protect public order. In every country let us respect the laws, let us not disturb the worship they prescribe; let us not lead the citizens to disobedience. For we do not know with certainty whether it is a good thing for them to abandon their opinions in exchange for others, and we are very certain that it is an evil thing to disobey the laws.

My young friend, I have just recited to you with my own mouth my profession of faith such as God reads it in my heart. You are the first to whom I have told it. You are perhaps the only one to whom I shall ever tell it. So long as there remains some sound belief among men, one must not disturb peaceful souls or alarm the faith of simple people with difficulties which they cannot resolve and which upset them without enlightening them. But once everything is shaken, one ought to preserve the trunk at the expense of the branches. Consciences which are agitated, uncertain, almost extinguished, and in the condition in which I have seen yours, need to be reinforced and awakened; and in order to put them back on the foundation of eternal truths, it is necessary to complete the job of ripping out the shaky pillars to which they think they are still attached.

You are at the critical age when the mind opens to certitude, when the heart receives its form and its character, and when one's whole life, whether for good or for bad, is determined. Later the substance is hardened, and new impressions no longer leave a mark. Young man, receive the stamp of truth on your still flexible soul. If I were more sure of myself, I would have taken a dogmatic and decisive tone with you. But I am a man; I am ignorant and subject to error. What could I do? I have opened my heart to you without reserve. What I hold to be sure, I have told to you as being sure. I have told you my doubts as doubts, my opinions as opinions. I have told you my reasons for doubting and for believing. Now it is for you to judge. You have taken your time. This caution is wise and makes me think well of you. Begin by putting your conscience in a condition where it wishes to be enlightened. Be sincere with yourself. Make your own those of my sentiments which have persuaded you. Reject the rest. You are not yet depraved enough by vice to be in danger of choosing badly. I would suggest our conferring about it, but as soon as people engage in disputation, they get heated. Vanity and obstinacy get mixed up with it; good faith is no longer present. My friend, never engage in disputation, for one enlightens neither oneself nor others by it. As for me, it is only after many years of meditation that I

have made my decision. I am sticking to it; my conscience is tranquil, my heart is contented. If I wanted to start over again with a new examination of my sentiments, I would not bring to it a purer love of the truth, and my mind, which has already become less active, would be less in a condition to know it. I shall stay as I am, lest the taste for contemplation gradually become an idle passion and make me lukewarm about the exercise of my duties, and lest I fall back into my former Pyrrhonism, without recovering the strength to get out of it. More than half of my life is past; I have left only the time I need for turning the rest of it to account and for effacing my errors by my virtues. If I am deceived, it is in spite of myself. He who reads in the depth of my heart well knows that I do not like my blindness. In my powerlessness to escape from it by my own lights, the only means that remains to me for getting out of it is a good life; and if God can bring forth children for Abraham from the very stones, every man has a right to hope for enlightenment when he makes himself worthy of it.

If my reflections lead you to think as I do, if my sentiments are also yours and we have the same profession of faith, here is the advice I give you. No longer expose your life to the temptations of poverty and despair; no longer spend it loitering ignominiously at the mercy of foreigners; and stop eating the vile bread of charity. Go back to your own country, return to the religion of your fathers, follow it in the sincerity of your heart, and never leave it again. It is very simple and very holy. I believe that of all the religions on earth it is the one which has the purest morality and which is most satisfactory to reason. As to the expenses of the trip, don't worry; they will be provided for. And do not fear the shame of a humiliating return. One ought to blush at making a mistake and not at correcting it. You are still at an age when everything can be pardoned, but when one no longer sins with impunity. If you wish to listen to your conscience, countless vain obstacles will disappear at its voice. You will sense that in the uncertainty in which we dwell, it is an inexcusable presumption to profess a religion other than that in which we were born, and a falseness not to practice sincerely the religion which we profess. For if we go astray, we deprive ourselves of a great excuse at the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge. Will He not pardon the error on which we were weaned sooner than the error we dared to choose ourselves?

My son, keep your soul in a condition where it always desires that there be a God, and you shall never doubt it. What is more, whatever decision you may make, bear in mind that the true duties of religion are independent of the institutions of men; that a just heart is the true temple of the divinity; that in every country and in every sect the

sum of the law is to love God above everything and one's neighbor as oneself; that no religion is exempt from the duties of morality; that nothing is truly essential other than these duties; that inner worship is the first of these duties; and that without faith no true virtue exists.

Flee those who sow dispiriting doctrines in men's hearts under the pretext of explaining nature. Their apparent skepticism is a hundred times more assertive and more dogmatic than the decided tone of their adversaries. Under the haughty pretext that they alone are enlightened, true, and of good faith, they imperiously subject us to their peremptory decisions and claim to give us as the true principles of things the unintelligible systems they have built in their imaginations. Moreover, by overturning, destroying, and trampling on all that men respect, they deprive the afflicted of the last consolation of their misery, and the powerful and the rich of the only brake on their passions. They tear out from the depths of our hearts remorse for crime and hope of virtue, and yet boast that they are the benefactors of mankind. They say that the truth is never harmful to men. I believe it as much as they do, and in my opinion this is a great proof that what they teach is not the truth.

Good young man, be sincere and true without pride. Know how to be ignorant. You will deceive neither yourself nor others. If ever you have cultivated your talents and they put you in a position to speak to men, never speak to them except according to your conscience, without worrying whether they will applaud you. The abuse of learning produces incredulity. Every learned man disdains the common sentiment; each wants to have his own. Proud philosophy leads to freethinking as blind devoutness leads to fanaticism. Avoid these extremes. Always remain firm in the path of truth (or what in the simplicity of your heart appears to you to be the truth), without ever turning away from it out of vanity or weakness. Dare to acknowledge God among the philosophers; dare to preach humanity to the intolerant. You will perhaps be the only member of your party, but you will have within yourself a witness which will enable you to do without the witness of men. Whether they love you or hate you, whether they read or despise your writings, it does not matter: speak the truth; do the good. What does matter for man is to fulfill his duties on earth, and it is in forgetting oneself that one works for oneself. My child, private interest deceives us. It is only the hope of the just which never deceives .

I have transcribed this writing not as a rule for the sentiments that one ought to follow in religious matters, but as an example of the way one can reason with one's pupil in order not to diverge from the method I have tried to establish. So long as one concedes nothing to

the authority of men or to the prejudices of the country in which one was born, the light of reason alone cannot, in the education founded by nature, lead us any farther than natural religion. This is what I limit myself to with my Emile. If he must have another religion, I no longer have the right to be his guide in that. It is up to him alone to choose it.

We work in collaboration with nature, and while it forms the physical man, we try to form the moral man. But we do not make the same progress. The body is already robust and strong while the soul is still languorous and weak, and no matter what human art does, temperament always precedes reason. Up to now we have given all our care to restraining the former and arousing the latter, in order that man may as much as possible always be one. In developing his nature, we have sidetracked its nascent sensibility; we have regulated it by cultivating reason. The intellectual objects moderated the impression of the objects of sense. In going back to the principle of things we have protected him from the empire of the senses. It was simple to rise from the study of nature to the quest for its Author.

When we have gotten there, what new holds we have given ourselves over our pupil. How many new means we have for speaking to his heart! It is only then that he finds his true interest in being good, in doing good far from the sight of men and without being forced by the laws, in being just between God and himself, in fulfilling his duty, even at the expense of his life, and in carrying virtue in his heart. He does this not only for the love of order, to which each of us always prefers love of self, but for the love of the Author of his being — a love which is confounded with that same love of self — and, finally, for the enjoyment of that durable happiness which the repose of a good conscience and the contemplation of this Supreme Being promise him in the other life after he has spent this one well. Abandon this, and I no longer see anything but injustice, hypocrisy, and lying among men. Private interest, which in case of conflict necessarily prevails over everything.

