

Jesus and the Origins of Christianity

— [SELECTIONS] —

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HISTORY of JEHOVAH
AND OF THE MESSIAH HIS SON

I

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT*¹

I was somewhat hesitant to write this book, because I envisioned it especially from the point of view of the interpretation of the Bible, and that labor is done by the Germans, who know, much better than I, antiquity and languages. I still hesitated, because that side, purely anti-Christian, anti-revelationist, seemed to me insufficient, at that hour, to give a true originality to my labor.

I reconsider that opinion. It is not a question for me of philology or of Voltaireanism. There is today, in France,² a sort of coming to terms between liberty and the Church: a self-styled religious movement, over which preside MM. Renan, Saisset, Simon, Cousin, Guizot, Thiers, etc.

It is necessary to combat this movement, by showing, through facts and analysis, what *religious sentiment* is, and what its role is in Humanity.

Religious sentiment is the exteriorization of the self, the personification of the conscience that takes itself for a superior being that inspires the man.

Religious sentiment is finished, when it is recognized; its goal is accomplished when the sentiment of justice fills the soul of man. — All the rest is pure aberration, folly and crime; this is what it is necessary to show through the history of Jehovah, — an entire philosophy will focus on a *word*.

¹ The chapter titles marked with an asterisk are not Proudhon's. — C. R.

² See the *Revue Indépendante*.

II MONOTHEISM

The idea of the unity of God has appeared to the philosophers the most grandiose of ideas, and we have regarded as a unique, marvelous phenomenon, the act of the little population of Israel, who, surrounded by idolaters, alone affirmed, more than a thousand years before Socrates, the unity of God.

At first glance, indeed, things appear quite eccentric, surprising. One is tempted to believe in a special grace for the Jewish people, in an illumination, a revelation.

Examined more closely, the phenomenon is reduced to nothing.

All peoples are *monotheists*, in the sense that they have their individual, unique God: it is the city that is affirmed in its God; the contrary would involve a contradiction.

Thus some worship *Dagon*, and others *Baal*, *Moloch*, *Astarté*, etc.

As for the affirmation of the universal God, the idea is as foreign to the Jews as to the peoples, up until the captivity in Babylon, that made them dream a *dream of ambition*, for Jehovah.

For, note it, *Jehovah*, king of all the earth, is always just the Jewish God become a conqueror. We must arrive at the time of the Maccabees in order to understand the absolute idea of God: the sovereign, supreme God,—who is not Jehovah nor Jupiter, who is no sort of Idol,—the one worshipped by Constantine, who vanished in 325 at the declaration of the Divinity of Christ. For there is no God without realization, without an idol.

The name of *Lord*, given to God, is proper to all the Gods; it is their common qualification, each city considering its God as its sovereign. — BAAL is *master*, *Moloch* king, *Adonai* lord, as *Dominus*, Jupiter is king, sovereign master, Juno queen, Diane queen, Astarte or Venus, queen;

Dagon, as they say *Fromenteau*, God of the wheat: an analogue of Jehovah, of *Ops*, of *Rhea*, of *Tellus* [Mater] the fertile, of *Plutus*, etc.

III. JEHOVAH

The expression, *de Ure Chaldaeorum*, which indicates the birthplace of Abraham, creates a geographical, or at least a lexicographical difficulty, which must disappear before considerations of another sort, which are not subject to doubt.

That city of *Ur* cannot have been in Chaldea, towards the mouths of the Euphrates; there is some confusion here. Without mentioning the authors who have reported, north of Haran, a city of Ur and other Chaldeans, we must observe:

That the terrestrial Paradise is placed in the north, at the sources of the Euphrates, the Aranes, etc., between the Taurus and the Caucasus;

That such is, according to Moses, the fatherland of the human race;

That Jehovah is called *God of the mountains*;

That indeed, he loves the wooded country, the running waters, the valleys; that he governs the rain and the snow: attributes that are not those of the Arab nor Assyrian divinities:

That he is a *chaste* God, severe in this respect, who drowns the human species for having given itself up to fornication: a character that can only be found among the Druid gods;

That he forbids *robbery* (Bedouin customs);

That Abraham, before going to Canaan, would not have made this detour from Chaldea to Haran, which lengthened his route by 200 or 300 leagues;

That Abraham, of the family of Arphaxad, descends from the *north* toward the south; that he is determined in his choice by the very nature of the country of Canaan, a wooded country, fertile in excellent fruit trees, vines, cornfields, and rich pastures: everything that represents to him the mother country.

He knows that this beautiful country is almost unoccupied, surrounded as it is by peoples of the Cham race, Arabs, Egyptians, etc., and peopled with savages;

That he is called the man from beyond the rivers.

Add the other physiological characteristics.

V.

GOD.

God. — “God exists,” says E. Saisset. To prove this, it is not necessary to pile up syllogisms upon syllogisms; the best argument, and the only one that does not give rise to criticism, is in the intimate awareness of our contingency³ and in the clear view of the essential imperfection⁴ of everything that surrounds us. God is accessible to our reason;

³ Concept.

⁴ Concept.

for if his essence is incomprehensible to us, because it is incommunicable, we can at least reach some of the powers of Jos being, because they have been communicated to us.⁵ God is not alone. First, it is a fact since the universe exists⁶ and then, God is sovereignly intelligent; he *must* therefore *conceive* the universe as a possible expression of himself;⁷ he is sovereignly free; he *must* therefore *want*⁸ to realize it outside himself, because he *cannot be indifferent to it*; he is sovereignly powerful, he must therefore realize it; in fact, he realizes the world *eternally* and infinitely, in order to give himself a suitable representation of his eternal and infinite essence.⁹ But he does not cease to be its *creator*, because he gives it and measures its being; and as he is its father, he is also its legislator, his power and his wisdom shine forth in the Universe;¹⁰ his justice and his goodness are felt in the heart of man.¹¹ He is everywhere present and everywhere sensitive.”¹²

This is how teachers turn in the eternal circle of their *concepts* and come to realize their dreams.

I have refuted all this forever, by an unanswerable argument: that the faculty of forming a *concept* does not give us the right to deduce it, to assert beyond the concept itself.

As for the specific fact of religious feeling, its universality, its spontaneity, its indestructibility, I explain it sufficiently, by showing that it is an *exteriorization of the conscience*, which will weaken indefinitely.

I conclude that if we make a God of our conscience, it is because our conscience is apparently what is *best in us*, and which we must respect even to the point of sacrificing our lives. — Here is my moral found.

As for religions and their history, we can show by their origin and their progress how this exteriorization takes place.

⁵ Vicious circle.

⁶ That is the question.

⁷ Pure hypothesis, incomparable.

⁸ Contradictions.

⁹ Words.

¹⁰ Fetishism: *cæli enarrant*.

¹¹ Mysticism: the conscience taken for other and personified.

¹² Naturalism (Extracts from the *Essai de philosophie religieuse*.)

Est Deus in nobis, says the poet.

How wonderful that we suppose God present in us, when we see Him in thunder, lightning, sun, rain, wind, sea, trees, germinations, fertilization, madness, epilepsy, idiocy, magnetism, sleepwalking, etc.!...

Now, admire what is happening; As our consciousness develops, we do not fail to immediately endow our God with a corresponding quality.

DEMONSTRATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. — Observation on the metaphysics of M. Vacherot and on the criticism of M. Renouvier.

Prove that we must come to an *anti-theism*.

Pure Reason gives God: *Universal Being, necessary, infinite, absolute, One, perfect, personal, intelligent, free and all-powerful*.

From this data, it is deduced that God acts in souls, just as in continuous creation. Hence, the religious feeling, the idea of respect for a superior sanction and for a human infirmity.

Hence, religious education and worship.

Hence, priesthood and Vicariate.

Hence, divine manifestation of all kinds: Incarnation, Redemption, etc.

Hence, finally, *preponderance of the principle* of authority over justice; and all the abuses, all the excesses of the ancien régime.

VI.

JEHOVAH AND JESUS

Current science denies final causes. I very much fear, for this science, that the time is not far away when it will be obliged to affirm them.

Final causes are only the counterpart of first causes. How is it possible to recognize ORGANIC causes or forces, and exclude their *finality*? How can we say that the climate influences the organism in such a way as to modify it, according to the conditions of the environment, and at the same time deny that the organism is not calculated for this environment? Here, the agent will not be an intelligent agent if one wishes, but is that any less true that there is *finality* in the constitution?

What does Mr. Darwin call *natural selection* if not a natural *finality*?

A priori the scientist, like the philosopher, does not understand that nature acts without a *goal*, without an *end*, any more than he can conceive of anything happening without a cause. This is finality affirmed.

It is asked for what purpose vipers, weevils, bats, etc. were created.

I answer that I don't know.

What I know is that the weevil is perfectly organized to eat wheat, the viper to devour insects, worms, mice, birds, and other animals, etc., the ox to chew the cud, the male and the female to mate, father, etc.

This means that, in every organism, the first cause, the development, and the end, are one and the same.

What is the finality of each being in relation to the Universe?

I do not know; but if I close myself in the circle of the organic whirlwind, I see clearly that in the organism the teeth are made to grind, the eye to see and lead, etc., all finally to ensure life, development and reproduction of the animal, in the environmental conditions given to it. It is really the finality of all this, or I no longer understand anything about the language. If environmental conditions change, either the animal will perish, or its organism will modify by *natural selection*, to adapt to these new conditions. There is purpose in all of this, it is impossible to deny it: let us dare to say it, there is calculation, intelligence, foresight.

To whom can we relate calculation, this intelligence, this foresight, more certain than reflective reason? I know nothing of it; but it is *finality* and of the best quality.

If I generalize, and if I ask myself what is, in relation to the universe, the end of man; and what is the end of the universe itself? I answer again that I know nothing about it. But it is no less true that if I study the organization of this man, I discover that everything has been planned to make him what I call a man; if I study more thoroughly the laws of his intelligence, his conscience, his industry, his economy, etc., I again discover that everything is given to make him live in a certain relationship with his peers; that if he lacks these social ends, he deteriorates, he is unhappy, etc.

Yes, there is finality there, there is some in society; there is in everything; from which I am inclined to conclude, by analogy, that there is an end to society itself, an end to the universe; but I do not know this end.

I conceive for the universe of which I am a part three ways of being, three states, and I cannot conceive of more or less than three:

1. Either I imagine the universe, all this visible nature, as an explosion, a whirlwind, a conflagration, a creation, an ejaculation, which had a beginning and which will end; an animated whole, which does not have its reason in itself, whose cause is external to it, which consequently must end because it is finite. This is the supernaturalist and monotheistic conception, which we find in all cosmogonies.

How did this great material whole come into being, and how did it emerge from the bosom of its unknown cause? I do not know. What will become of it when it disappears? I cannot even conjecture.

Everything I know is here. I see beings, emerging from nothing, develop for a time, then decompose and die; I was able to judge by the observations made on the globe that I inhabit that it did not always exist as it was slowly formed; that on this globe organisms that are now extinct were produced, etc.

And I conclude: by way of generalization, from the small to the large, and by analogy, that it is thus with the great whole, that its life is not eternal but that it is finite, created and perishable. The beginning and the end of the Universe will be, I grant, two mysteries: but everything in it denounces that its life is finite!... GOD alone is infinite, eternal. *Providential conception of the disadvantages of this thesis.*

2. Or else, I will deny that I have the right to conclude, regarding the universe, from the particular to the general, and while all the parts that compose it are finite in their evolution, it itself is eternal and infinite. It is a circle without limits, swirling for all eternity, which neither increases nor diminishes, neither loses nor gains, remains adequate to itself, in number, weight, measurement, shapes, etc. This is the materialist and fatalistic conception, the reign of pure necessity, of blind fatality.

In this universe, cause and effect are identical; the end, the means and the principle are the same thing; nothing is exhausted; movement, in its universality, is inherent to matter; it is not an *effect*, but a *state*, etc.

3. Or, finally, without affirming or denying anything about the eternity of matter, of the nature of God, leaving aside these unfathomable questions, and sticking to the phenomena, I conceive the great Whole in a perpetual and progressive transformation, and therefore the principle is in the force of *collectivity*, a force that must constantly renew and strengthen itself, and whose action cannot come to an end; if it is true, as I maintain, that the result of any collectivity is to produce new forms, new beings, greater values which, adding to the old ones, create an ever new field of practice.

This is the progressive conception, from which neither intelligence nor finality are excluded, but which is explained by this word: *Liberty*.

It is *liberty*, in becoming, that gives itself an ever higher end. According to this: the end of the universe is the new progress towards which it tends; the end of humanity, to contribute to this progress.

VI

THE SUPERNATURAL

Most of the discussions of rationalists against prophecies, revelations and miracles, in a word, against the supernatural, are sterile; they don't stand, I realized that early on; and here is why:

The supernatural is out of time; outside space, outside the laws of matter and animal life, outside the categories of reason.

How could reason touch it?

Everything that is alleged against it is false. It affirms itself by virtue of an indestructible, incoercible faculty of consciousness; it poses itself against a limited science, incapable of furnishing any answer to the questions that the human soul invincibly asks itself, while it claims to satisfy them. How could reason increase on such terrain? It can only be silent; if it speaks, it wanders; Willingly or unwillingly, it remains confused. Much more, the supernatural, after having exposed the inevitable problems posed by religious consciousness, after having solved them in its own way, with the aid of its hyperphysical conceptions, uses science itself and intellectual dialectic to give a sort of rational confirmation of its theses, and to make them penetrate reason, which does not even have the means to repel them!

The supernatural conceives God, an absolute being, consequently the summary of all ontological contradictions, with the same facility, perhaps with more facility, than the scientist conceives the world. This God, he affirms it to you. What will you refute it with? If the supernatural affirmed God either in the name of science or in the name of experience, we could reply, we would verify. But no: it affirms by virtue of the inner sense, to which metaphysics then only lends its formulas; but we would be gravely mistaken if we believed that the idea of God is a metaphysical idea.

The supernaturalist conceives with the same facility the creation of adult Adam, by the infinite power, that we conceive or believe to conceive the formation of the human Being by the ordinary ways of generation.

Now, singularly, while rationalists and believers struggle over this divine creation of our species, the materialist school affirms and proves spontaneous generations. But, what is a spontaneous generation? A divine creation. What does the more or less advanced state of the created Being matter? Isn't the spontaneous formation of the germ, without a generator, without a father, just as marvelous, incomprehensible, as that of Adam could have been?

The supernaturalist conceives, without any difficulty, the transmutation of bodies, this transmutation that makes the whole miracle of the Eucharist.

Now, it is quite true that, up to the present time, chemistry has done nothing but split matter, distinguish the elements in it; it already has eighty. But, on the one hand, our metaphysical conceptions lead us to a conception of the unity of substance, which is a first step towards the supernatural; on the other hand, nothing proves that we will not one day decompose oxygen, gold, which would probably show the identity of all bodies, consequently transubstantiation.

The supernaturalist affirms three persons in God, two natures in Jesus Christ.

Now, not only can the rationalist not reply to this, since he reasons only by virtue of logic and science through observation; and because to refute the supernaturalist he should place himself on his ground, which is possible. But the antinomies of reason, those of political economy, are no less strange.

Did Hegel, who explains the world, religion, humanity, reason, everything in short, with this mechanism of antinomies, thesis, antithesis, synthesis, ever explain a single one of these so-called transformations?

The supernaturalist believes in angels and demons: so do the spiritualists; and he excites phenomena inexplicable by reason (somnambulism, animal magnetism).

The supernaturalist believes in transport by air; he affirms the ubiquity of God; he says that the risen Jesus passed through walls; and we see phenomena of physics, electro-magnetism, etc., which seem just as marvelous as these.

The conception of the Messiah is essentially a conception of a supernatural order, bristling with syntheses; the supernaturalist, relating it to human destiny, gives it a reason, an end, an explanation: what can the philosopher do about it? Twelve apostles, four evangelists, the whole Church, the synagogue, the prophets, giving on this subject their particular testimonies, there remained variants, inconsistencies, contradictions, incompatibilities, a host of details, irreconcilable assertions. But, once again, what is all this for the religious conscience, whose fundamental dogma subsists and which answers you that if it happens to contradict itself, to confuse itself, to be obscure, that comes precisely from his efforts to explain in human, syllogistic language, according to the data of time and space, and the laws of reason, what is in itself outside of Space and Time, superior to reason and to categories. The contradictions of the evangelists are human infirmity; they come from the incommensurability that exists between reason and faith, they are not moreover articles of faith. They are, in truth, half-revelations, clues to unexplained mysteries.

Such is the situation of the two parties; the supernatural cannot be attacked by reason, whereas it is given to it to still avail itself of license and of reason.

As for me, I declare, I see only one way of escaping such an obsession with the supernatural. It is, like spiritualism, to expect it at its works, to judge it by its fruits, *a fructibus eorum cognoscitis eos*.

I pass therefore all its premises to it; I admit all its hypotheses, its God, its Christ, its Providence, its mysteries; I close my eyes to the difficulties of the texts and I speak to it, no longer as a man of theory or speculation, but as a man of practice:

In the final analysis either religion serves us absolutely nothing, and must be treated by us as curiosity or rather intemperance of spirit; or else its object is to support us, to direct us in our intellectual and moral improvement.

Now, what precept of justice and morality does religion furnish me that I do not find directly in my conscience, and of which my conscience is not the judge?

What truth, what positive light does it give me about the world, about myself, about my fellow men, that my reason is not enough to perceive?

I am willing for a moment to believe in your miraculous tradition; but I demand, and I have the right to do so, that it does not lead me astray, that, in what concerns my temporal life, she reasons justly; that, in institutions, it is moral.

Truth and Justice, that is what I ask of religion; that if it shows itself to be uncertain, wavering, contradictory, then I condemn it without remission. Because, from the moment that it intervenes in the temporal, and that it places itself on the ground of human reason, of human law, it is bound to reason correctly and to do exact justice.

APPENDIX

MORALITY AND IDEALISM*

I

RELIGIOUS CONSCIENCE

How through its influence on imagination and judgment, it alters facts and changes reality.

I said that for the supernaturalist, nothing seems impossible:

Divine creation of the adult man;

Resurrection of the dead, or reintegration of the soul into the body;

Passage of a body through walls or penetrability of matter;

A man walking on water: reversal of the laws of balance;

Instant cure of diseases;¹³

Ubiquity: Apollonius seen on the same day, at the same time, in places five or six hundred leagues apart;

Rapture to heaven;

Faculty of making oneself invisible, etc.;

Particular dialectic: Countless contradictions, as in the Universe;

Changing ontology: the material and immaterial soul.

The story of Jesus, or his monograph, apart from a few milestones, can only be conjectural.

.° General expectation of a Messiah, among the Jews, and everywhere.

2. Preaching and death of John the Baptist, herald of this Messiah, and preaching penance, or public retreat; year 28.

3. Almost at the same time, preaching and death of Jesus, leader of a religious and social reform.

4. A few years after him, appearance of the sect of the Nazarenes, attesting that this Jesus is the Messiah, and that he is resurrected; giving a new meaning to messianism; and breaking with Judaism; Jewish persecution from 34 to 45.

5. Consequence of this rupture, the Gospel announced to the Pagans.

Paganism attacked; the Church founded in Antioch, and the disciples taking the name of Christians; Policy of Paul, *and in general of the Christians*, controlled by the situation, with regard to Caesar and Rome: it explains that of Jesus; *coup de théâtre* of Jerusalem.

6. First attempt at unifying Christian communities in an apostolic council, year 36.

7. The Gospel texts.

These facts can be considered absolutely certain.

¹³ Homeopaths, through their clinical direction, save time on Allopaths and Expectants, as medical statistics prove. (Cf. Dr. Cretin.)

We could add a few others, but of lesser importance.

1. That Jesus preached in Galilee, Samaria, the Decapolis, along the Jordan, for *eight or ten months*.

2. That he was crucified in Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate, who shared in the condemnation.

3. That the *official* reasons for the condemnation were, for the priests, that he was a blasphemer and destroyer of religion; as for Pilate, who was content with this motive, he could have had two reasons: 1. that it was important to Roman policy to ensure respect for the established religion; 2. that ultimately, whatever Jesus thought, he was an *agitator*.

4. At base, Jesus, being neither a blasphemer nor an enemy of Rome, we must think that he was slandered, and that the real cause of his condemnation was: That interpreting messianism in a purely spiritual and moral sense, he tended to disillusion the people, and thereby cause the priesthood and the Philistine and Sadducean parties to lose all kinds of influence; that denouncing avarice, hypocrisy, the tyranny of priests and sectarians, the misery of the exploited masses, he tended towards a religious simplification and a social reform equally threatening to established privileges.

5. Stoning of Stephen and persecution of the brothers, forced to flee; martyrdom of James, around the years 34, 36, 42, etc.

6. Conversion of Paul, according to himself; his retirement in Arabia, etc.¹⁴

7. That the Gospels are of an independent writing, diverse in authors, times and places: shortly after the year 70 for the first three, and perhaps a little later for the fourth, as well as the Apocalypse.

8. That the Epistles of Paul, the only ones whose date can be assigned approximately, were written from 37 or 38 to 66.

From all of these facts and the writings that form the *New Testament*, we can draw the *following conjectures*:

That, according to the Gospels and the Epistles, the mission of Jesus was accomplished in the years 28 and 29, and that it was completed by his death and resurrection;

But that the facts and even the speeches cannot be explained rationally, that if the career of Jesus had been much longer, and if he would have led the movement after his death until 56 or 70, everything is told by the Evangelists as having been said, preached, announced in the time preceding the crucifixion;

But a host of things presuppose events subsequently accomplished, which Jesus naturally could not have known or foreseen before the year 29; there are so many things that those that can be related to this first period are reduced to almost nothing; that, however, these same things flow from the same source, are full of the same spirit, expressed in the same style, tend to the same goal; from which it follows that the split is not possible; that we cannot, in fact, recognize, in Gospel history, anything which denotes two different authors; while between the Epistles, the Gospels, the Apocalypse, the Acts, the difference is considerable;

From which it follows that if the same character is both the author and the hero of everything contained in the Gospels, as it does not seem possible to me to doubt, and if these facts and these speeches

¹⁴ Cf. Annotated Bible.

suppose a lapse much longer than a year, at most, it must be admitted that Jesus survived his torture; that he continued his work, hidden from everyone; so that what he said, so that his teaching, contained by the narrators, in the period that extends from baptism to crucifixion, actually occurred over a greater number of years.

Conclusion: That, if this is so, Jesus was the invisible leader of the primitive Church, for a time impossible to fix; but whose end it is permissible to mark, either at the assembly of the apostles, in 56, or at the fall of Jerusalem, in 70.

This main thesis stated summarily, demonstrate it, explaining according to it the new Messianism, etc., etc.

II

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

It is composed by *centons*.¹⁵

The centon is so much the background that it serves to shape events, and becomes the very material of history.

But that does not prevent this literature, born of pagan and Israelite decomposition, from sometimes reaching a sublime height.

We have the precepts, the words and the *sayings* of Jesus Christ.

There are many other things, like the *magnificat*.

This hymn, attributed to the mother of Christ, is of the Christianized Jew, who sings of the redemption of Israel, the exaltation of the new Church, and the fulfillment of the promises of Jehovah. These are couplets, in the ordinary form:

1. — *Magnificat anima mea dominum, etc.*

9. — *Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini ejus in secula. Gloria, etc.*

These odes cannot fit into the French language. Anyone who tried to translate or imitate them would inevitably fail. You must know their meaning, and sing them in an ancient idiom, Latin or Hebrew.

Hebrew poetry consists of movements of lightning and and claps of thunder. Its style usually consists of a redoubling of the idea, or antithesis. The chain of speeches is in the ideas themselves, but almost never indicated in the style.

No transition; it is not developed, nor wordy, — the stanzas of the *magnificat*, rendered in French, become cold, the mixture of a completely primitive chant in the tone of lament, and ideas so condensed, so lofty, forms in the original, in the situation of the writer and in his time, a sublime contrast.

In French, this is no longer felt. I imagine the Greeks must have judged the same.

¹⁵ A centon is “a piece of verse or prose composed of passages borrowed from one or more authors.”
— TRANSLATOR.

The French poet could not help insisting on the thought, he would retain it, delight in it, feast on it; — the Hebrew strikes the idea, and passes. So many memories evoked in the last verse: *Sicut locutus est*. — These long promises of Jehovah, this long wait through the centuries, from *Abraham to Simeon*. Feeling here is moved; the tears come: a French poet could not help but make this point. This is all the stuff of an ode. — All messianism, the religion of emancipation breathes in the words: *Represit humilitatem*, etc.

III

LITERATURE AND MORALITY

Origin of evil, replacement of religions by the cult of oneself.

Nature, in all of its creations, and in each of its creations, is logical; it therefore tends towards order; it wants order; it seeks harmony, beauty, perfection.

And this is because nature, or the physical and visible universe, is logical; it is because by virtue of this logic, it tends towards the perfection of order, that man, who is nothing other than the universe become alive and sensitive, having acquired consciousness of himself and feeling, is intelligent, an animal following logic, seeking order, worshiping beauty, and obeying Justice.

But the *matter* or the elements implemented by nature seem incapable of achieving this *perfection*, the final goal of universal tendencies. Thus, it is evident from experience that, in the system of worlds, the sphere is conceived, so to speak, as a figure of which all the exterior points are equally distant from the center.; the circle, likewise, etc. — And, yet, there is no perfect sphere; nature is incapable of *realizing* it.

Hence a distinction between *real* and *ideal*.

The gap between the real and the ideal constitutes disorder, sin, evil.

(Abyss between *mind* and *matter*: two extremes of nature. The *idea* and the *fact*.)

Thus disorder is only a fact of impotence or inferiority of the substance with regard to the IDEA, or the WORD, or WISDOM.

In other words, *God cannot produce his equal*, which he should have done, however, if he wanted to prevent sin.

Thus, like the ideal and Justice, *sin* is inherent to the human being, and to all creation. To free ourselves from it, we have only our idea of right and the beautiful, which, served by an energetic will, constantly repairs in us the inevitable, and more or less shocking, defect caused by inferiority, or the refractory nature of matter.

This role of *conscience* and *intelligence* in us is precisely what Christian mythology has called effective grace, redemption, reparation for original sin through the merits of Christ. — Here only, theology has made a divine personification of what is in us a faculty of the first order; as matter, or the senses tempt us and damn us, so conscience, the *pure idea* of Justice, beauty and order, lifts us up and saves us: it is the consolation of all our miseries, the paradise of our souls.

The conception of the *glorious body*, that is to say of a perfect creation, adequate to the idea, is here a proof of the truth of our interpretation; it is a testimony of theology provided against itself.

If therefore the Justice that is immanent in us, if the intelligence with which we are endowed, form our beatitude, if they are our redemption, our medicine, our salvation, we do not have to look elsewhere for the fulfillment of our destiny. It is in us; it depends on us.

He who purifies himself and cultivates his soul is saved, as happy as he can be; he has seen God, or the Gods, and has nothing more to wish for. He who lives in sin, in infamy, is miserable; he is the slave of death, he lives in terror, anguish, remorse; If he does not mend his ways at the last moment, if he ends up in impenitence, he is a damned person, an unworthy creature, a failed man, who would have done better not to live.

Jehovah dooms and resurrects, does good and evil, etc.;

That the world was made for man;

That the question of the origin of evil, or original sin, is the same for the believer as for the atheist.

IV

IDEALISM

What is an IDEALIST, as opposed to a *justicier*?¹⁶

He is a man who, instead of taking *Justice* and *truth* exclusively for his conduct, forms an idol for himself, to the service of which he subordinates everything else.

Thus the theist adores GOD and *loves him* above all, making his respect for right dependent on him and his will.

Thus the Church has created an idealist system, where God, the Trinity, Christ, the Angels, Paradise, etc., worship, the mysteries, and ultimately *morality*, appear.

Thus the French people put political *Unity, glory*, before liberty, guarantees, equilibrium, etc.

So, one wants to be Mirabeau, the other Vergniaud, etc.

All our opinions, at present, are *idealisms*.

Principle of nationality.

Principle of free exchange.

Principle of natural frontiers.

ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY. — We live by ideals; abuse and consumption of novels and dramas; *lottery, stock market gambling*, etc.

It is by the *ideal* that we conduct ourselves in all our relations with the sex; every young girl dreams of a handsome boy, a brave knight, etc.; every young man wants a nymph, etc.

The voluptuous is led by the ideal; the gourmand by the ideal; the miser, the proprietor, the ambitious, by the ideal.

The poet, the painter, the writer, whose occupation is to produce idealities, to remake nature, are above all eager for idealities, that is to say, for the ideal.

Why did the city of Paris give Lamartine a chalet in the Bois de Boulogne? Because it loves the ideal, and rewards it; then, because it believes that it honors itself.

¹⁶ Cf. On the Principle of Art, ch. III, p. 28.

IDEALIST JESUS. — Mr. Renan slandered Jesus, by making him an idealist, by making him profess transcendental disdain, and dare everything, do everything for the success of such a plan.

When I make the distinction between Jesus the man and Jesus God, I must therefore be careful to add that the blame falls mainly on the *idealist*, but that, as for the Jesus who is *weak* in character, although the facts remain the same, nevertheless he remains less odious, given this very weakness.

There was neither calculation nor premeditation on the part of Jesus; he is not a systematic imposter, serving his ideal, that is to say his personal glory and his fantasy; he is an excellent man, devoted, but improvident and weak, who falls from precipice to precipice, and drags us there with him.

Thus there are definitely, according to the gospels, three ways of explaining Jesus, and his preaching, and his results.

Either he is Messiah, Word and Son of God, as the Church says: in this case everything is explained, and all that remains against this thesis are the objections of general philosophy.

Or, if he is a simple man, he is an idealist, in this case, an ambitious man and an imposter.

Or, finally, he is a moralist lost in an unfavorable environment, who is overwhelmed by events, and who, compromised in popular superstition, after having devoted himself to an excellent cause, dies for an absurd idea.

In the latter case, we can forgive him all the better, save him, since philosophy and experience teach us that the establishment of Justice is long and difficult; that it requires centuries; that the reform meditated by Jesus could not be accomplished in such a short time, like *a flash of lightning*; that the masses still needed religion; and that, superstition for superstition, the one to which he was given birth by his *resurrection* is as valuable as any other.

JESUS RESURRECTED. — It was a principle in the time of Jesus that Christ could not die: *christus non moritur*; that he would not taste of death, *non gustabis mortem*.

According to this, Jesus, who foresaw his torture, could, in a sense, predict his resurrection.

All men, according to the Pharisees, and according to himself, *had to be resurrected*. All the more reason for the Messiah to be put to death.

It was he who had to give the signal. Ehen would this resurrection happen? They know nothing about it; only, they thought it was close. Jesus, reasoning in this general hypothesis, had nothing to fear.

All that distinguished him from the Pharisees was that, according to him, Christ had to *suffer, turn pale*, and even be put to death, *occidi*, before being raised to glory. All of this was in Daniel.

What is curious is that for more than three hundred years, the Church has been busy getting rid of primitive Christianity, and all the gnoses it gave birth to:

Millennialism;

Communism;

End of the world;

Coming and general resurrection, etc., etc.

RELIGION OF THE IDEAL. — Sometimes one would believe that by this word M. Renan means the religion of pure right; but we are soon undeceived. He has little faith in Justice, in reforms, in political action, he likes to withdraw into himself, live from his ideal, solitary, disdain, etc.

Idealism, fundamentally, is egoism;

The religion of the ideal is also only Egoism.

Here is the progress of this ideal:

First, man believes in higher powers, which he seeks to make favorable. This belief is an idealism.

He offers them sacrifices, perfumes, all the *best* he has and what he judges most capable of testifying to his devotion, and of honoring the gods.

Another idealism.

Later he said: God does not eat... What shall I give him?

Genuflections, unemployment, music, songs, prayers; he will fast, macerate, etc. There are some who kill themselves for their idol.

Or else, he wants to unite with God, and eats him! Eucharist = Idealism.

Others, finally, refining further, eliminate the rite, sacraments, masses, songs, prayers, communions; uniting oneself in thought intimately with God; detaching oneself from society, esteeming nothing, neither business, nor power, nor wealth, nor opinion. It is a transcendental and disguised selfishness. A devotee of this type like Madame Guyon, Saint Thérèse, is like a *lover*, for whom the possession of the loved object takes the place of everything, who would like to be in secret, hidden, with him alone, who is ready, in order to follow him, to abandon everything, labor, study, family, friends, duties, etc.

In this high union with God, in this absolute egoism, we come to regard all things as indifferent so much that sin itself seems indifferent, one of the necessities of the body, one of the inconveniences of matter. Drinking, eating, giving in to sleep, are indifferent things; likewise committing adultery, eating the goods of others, etc., all is indifferent.

Thus Jesus, according to Renan, ate, in turn, at Peter's, Lazare's, Simon's or elsewhere. He didn't pay attention to it. He sends his disciples to Jerusalem to prepare the Passover for him without money.

Religious idealism and absolute egoism in him are therefore synonymous.

Last term of the Religion of the Ideal.

Once he has reached this egoism, the idealist, who no longer has either God or religion, creates an idol for himself, to which he sacrifices everything:

Homeland, family, friends, etc.

It will be his *system*, or his *idea*, or his ambition, his pleasure, his delight; he makes everything serve himself; he makes himself center and God.

Idealism is therefore the instrument of all seduction, the principle of all the mystifications and abominations of the earth. It is through it that we deceive men, that we *refine* them, that we exploit them, that we fool them, that we push them to crime (*Séide* in Mahomet), and that we make them drink their own infamy (all the lost girls and women).

A piece on *idealism*, as a conclusion to the life of Jesus, is therefore essential especially to refute Renan.