

A NEW PROUDHON LIBRARY

ON JUSTICE
IN THE REVOLUTION AND
IN THE CHURCH

BY P.-J. PROUDHON

(1858 FIRST EDITION)

A WORKING TRANSLATION BY SHAWN P. WILBUR

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[The text presented here is a revised translation of the *Prologue* and *First Study* from the 1858 first edition of Proudhon's JUSTICE IN THE REVOLUTION AND IN THE CHURCH. I am specifically sharing it in the hopes that those interested in the New Proudhon Library project might take the time to read through some or all of it and provide me with feedback on its readability. The text will eventually include a glossary, translator's rationale and significant annotations, but at this stage I am most interested in the impression made by the text without those helps. Thanks in advance for any feedback you can provide. — SHAWN]

PROLOGUE

Under the name of an archbishop, I address these *Studies* to all the members of the French clergy.

As in the time of the Caesars, society is threatened with dissolution; and as in the time of the Caesars, the Church believes that it alone has the power to regenerate it.

The work you are about to read having as its aim to recognize the reality and intensity of the evil, to assign its cause, to discover its remedy and, above all, to demonstrate, from the point of view of justification, that is to say, of human perfectibility, the non-value of the ecclesiastical ministry, and to establish moral philosophy, outside of this influence, on its legitimate basis, the dedication belonged by right to the clergy.

In short, what should henceforth be, for the people, the organ of virtue, the Revolution or Religion? This is the object of my research. There is none greater or more meritorious.

1. — State of mores in the nineteenth century. Invasion of skepticism: social peril.

Where is the remedy?

And first of all, what is there of truth in the current crisis?

If we cast our eyes on the progress of the century, it seems that, indeed, as the Church denounces it, the situation is very compromised.

France has lost its mores. [*]

Not that the men of our generation are in fact worse than their fathers: the better known history of prior eras would strongly contradict that claim. The generations follow each other and improve: that is, on the whole, notwithstanding the incessant oscillations and deplorable gaps, what an attentive observation of the life of the peoples reveals to be most plausible thus far.

When I say that France has lost her mores, I mean something very different, that it has ceased to believe in its principles. It no longer has either intelligence or moral conscience; it does not even know what is meant by this word, *mores*.

We have arrived, moving from criticism to criticism, at this sad conclusion: that the just and the unjust, which we once thought we could discern, are terms of convention, vague, indeterminable; that all these words like *Law, Duty, Morality, Virtue*, etc., about which the pulpit and the school make so much noise, only serve to cover up pure hypotheses, vain utopias, indemonstrable prejudices; that thus the practice of life, directed by who-knows-what *human respect*, by *conventions*, is fundamentally arbitrary; that those who speak most of Justice prove, moreover, by the supernatural origin that they assign to it, by the extra-worldly sanction that they give to it, by the sacrifice that they never hesitate to make of it to established interests, and by their own conduct, how much their faith is lacking in seriousness; that thus the true compass of the relations of man is egoism, so that the most honest, the one whose trade is the safest, is also the one who confesses his egoism most frankly, because at least such a man does not take you for a traitor, etc., etc.

To sum things up in one word, *skepticism*, after having devastated religion and politics, has descended on morals: this is what the modern dissolution entails. The case is not new in the history of civilization: it already presented itself in the times of Greek and Roman decadence; I dare say it won't present itself a third time. Let us therefore study it with all the attention of which we are capable; and since we could not escape this last invasion of the scourge, let us at least know what we should expect from it.

Under the desiccating action of doubt, and without crime having perhaps become more frequent or virtue more rare, French morality, in its heart of hearts, is destroyed. There is nothing more that remains: the rout is complete. No thought of justice, no esteem for liberty, no solidarity between citizens. Not one institution that we respect, not one principle that is not denied, flouted. No more authority, either in the spiritual or the temporal realm: everywhere souls are driven back into themselves, without a point of reference, without light. We no longer have anything to swear to or by which to swear; our oaths are senseless. The suspicion that strikes principles attaching to men, we no longer believe in the integrity of Justice, in the honesty of the Power. With the moral sense, the instinct of self-preservation itself seems extinguished. General direction given over to empiricism, a stock-market aristocracy hurls itself, in its hatred of the *partageux*, on the public fortune: a middle class dying of cowardice and stupidity; a plebeian class sinking into poverty and bad advice; woman feverish with luxury and lust, youth immodest, childhood quaint, the priesthood, finally, dishonored by scandal and vengeance, no longer having faith in itself and barely troubling the silence of public opinion with its stillborn dogmas: such is the profile of our century.

The less timorous sense it and worry about it. — “There is no respect any more,” said a businessman to me. “Like that emperor who felt he was becoming a god, I feel that I am becoming a rogue and I wonder what I believed in when I believed in honor?”

“I am overcome with *spleen*,” confessed a young priest. He who, by his functions, by his faith and by his age, should have been sheltered from this English evil, felt the moral life in his heart collapsing.

Is that a life? Wouldn't it rather be called an expiation? The bourgeois atones, the proletarian atones, the Power itself, reduced to governing only by force, atones.

“The mind of man,” says M. Saint-Marc de Girardin, “has lost its clarity; the heart has no more joy. We feel foggy, we stumble trying to find our way, and that makes us sad. Cheerfulness is rare these days, even among youth.”

“*That nation has no principles*,” Lord Wellington said of us, in 1815. — We notice it at this hour. With what an increase of horror would Royer-Collard, were he witness to our failure, repeat his words of the same period:

“*Society is in dust*. All that remains are memories, regrets, utopias, follies, despair.”

Nevertheless, the doubt about Justice, and the demoralization that it brings with it, not adding appreciably to the sum of misdemeanors and crimes, the statesman, for whom external respect for the law suffices, would not need to worry about it up to this point. Statistics in hand, he would show that crime is proportional to pauperism, and he would demand that precious morality, which conscience no longer supports, of the combinations for finance and insurance. The religion of right and duty would thus be succeeded by the religion of interests, and all would be said. Order maintained in the street, force remaining in the law, the statesman could rest on his laurels and one would only have to repeat the proverb: The world moves by itself.

Sadly, history shows that if the safety of persons and property cannot be seriously affected by moral doubt, it is not the same for the family and society.

To form a family, so that the man and the woman find in it the joy and calm to which they aspire — qualities without which, brought together by desire, they will never be more than incompletely united — a *conjugal faith* is necessary. I mean thereby an idea of their mutual dignity, which, raising them above the senses, makes them still more sacred than dear to each other, and makes of their fruitful community a religion sweeter than love itself. Without this, marriage is no more than an onerous society, full of disgust and troubles, soon and necessarily replaced by free love.

Likewise, to form a society, to give the interests of individuals and families the security that is their first need — without which labor is refused, the exchange of products and values becomes a fraud, wealth an ambush for he who possesses it — requires what I shall call a *juridical faith*, which, raising souls above selfish appetites, renders them happier in the respect of the rights of others than in respect of their own fortune. Without this, society becomes a free-for-all where the law of the strongest is replaced by the law of the most deceitful, where exploitation succeeds primitive robbery, where the last word of war is servitude and the guarantee of servitude is tyranny.

Once again, to form a State, to confer support and stability to the Power, a *political faith* is needed, without which the citizens, given over to the pure attractions of individualism, cannot, whatever they do, be something other than an aggregate of incoherent and repulsive existences,

which the first breath will disperse like dust. Haven't we seen, since the Revolution, enough defections and recantations? How could a power subsist when contempt has invaded souls, when ministers, senators, magistrates, generals, prelates and functionaries, the army, the bourgeoisie and the plebs are as quick to change princes as the crown changes furnishings?

Through skepticism, the purely moral appeal of marriage, of generation and the family, and the attractions of labor and society being lost, the social being dissolves and the population itself tends to die out. This is the serious side of the present immorality.

As long as we are stung by moral doubt, all of us who have acquired the consciousness of our loneliness feel, through this weakness of Justice in us, diminished in the best part of ourselves and stripped of our dignity, which means our social potentiality.

Is it not decline, in fact, this ferocious sensualism, which makes us loathe marriage and generation, but drives us through love to the annihilation of the species? The number of abortions and infanticides doubled in 1856, according to the latest report on criminal justice. The height of pleasure is in sterility. We will have no children, these young spouses tell you, coldly!... Is this the wish of nature and of society?

Is it not decline, this lack of faith in the virtue of our neighbor and in our own virtue, which, keeping us in a state of latent war, makes us, whether we like it or not, indifferent to society, to the homeland, and careless regarding the general interests and posterity?...

The certainty of right and duty abolished in the hearts of men, society therefore expires. As no one can be honest when internally convinced of their own villainy, just so no society can persist with the now general opinion that it is composed from top to bottom of rabble.

Science and consciousness of Justice, as one learned professor said, that is what we lack, and the deprivation makes us die slowly, ignominiously.

And that is what the Revolution had promised us, what it would have given us long ago, if the misfortune of the times and the weakness of souls had not delayed its glorious and definitive manifestation.

Yes, this juridical, sacramental faith, this science of right and duty, which we seek everywhere in vain, which the Church never possessed and without which it is impossible for us to live, I say that the Revolution has produced all of its principles; that these principles, without our knowledge, govern and sustain us, but that we do not understand them; that, while desiring them from the bottom of our hearts, we reject them through prejudice, and that it is this infidelity to ourselves that creates our moral poverty and our servitude.

For sixty-three years the Revolution has been repressed by us, disguised, slandered and handed over to the enemy, whose banner we have taken up. And our immorality grew as we approached the principle against which our fathers had risen, but which they could not deny.

2. — The Counter-Revolution: Its Powerlessness.

France, and Europe in its wake, is in full counter-revolution; both are, at the same time, in full decadence. This fact is worth dwelling on, as those who complain the most about it are far from suspecting its agents and causes.

Everything that emerged from the Revolution, from its beginnings, successively turned against it and, by fighting the Revolution, served the dissolution: Democracy, Empire, Restoration, July

Monarchy, Republic of 1848, Representative System, Centralization, Concordat, Philosophy, Political Economy, Industrial Progress, institutions of Credit, Socialism, Literature.

Let us note, in a few short pages, this astonishing phenomenon.

Democracy. — No one would dare to deny that the object of the Revolution was to emancipate the masses and ensure the preponderance of labor over property. The Revolution is essentially democratic, to such an extent that the monarchy itself, transformed by the Revolution, had to call itself — and calls itself every day — democratic.

And I too, despite my disdain for popular ballot boxes, I belong to the democracy; I do not separate myself from it, and no one has the right to exclude me from it. Am I therefore a traitor or a splitter, because I say that the democracy is poisoned, and that more than anyone it has served the counter-revolution?

By taking the utopia of Jean-Jacques as its ideal, by substituting the politics of instincts for that of principles, by modeling its government on that of absolutism, the democracy ended in the suicide of 93, the mystical atrocities of 94, the defections of Thermidor and Brumaire, the too-forgotten elections of 1800 and 1804, and those of 1848, 1851 and 1852, which I hope will not be forgotten. Where is the democrat of good faith who dares at this hour to affirm the steadfastness, the high wisdom, the infallible reason of the multitude? And if you forsake the multitude; if after having made it vote, come what may, guiding its eyes and hands, you return it to tutelage, what is your democracy?

The democracy, since it became a power, a fashion, has successively espoused all of the ideas most contrary to its nature. Faithful, above all, to the religious principle, but feeling, there as elsewhere, the need to innovate, it has made itself by turns paleo-Christian and neo-Christian, Protestant, deist, pantheist, metempsychosist, druidic, magical, mystical, fanatical, incorporating every available material. In economics, it is whatever you like, communist and feudalist, anarchic, monopolist, philanthropist, free trader, anti-egalitarian; — in politics, governmental, dictatorial, imperial, centralizing, absolutist, chauvinistic, Machiavellian, doctrinaire, disdainful of right, sworn enemy of all local and individual liberty; — in philosophy and literature, after denying Voltaire and the classics, Condillac, Diderot, Volney, all the Fathers and Doctors of the revolution, it has made itself transcendentalist, eclectic, *apriorist*, fatalistic, sentimentalist, idealistic, romantic, gothic, whimsical, gossipy and bohemian. It has taken on all the systems, all the utopias, all the charlataneries, having been unable to discover anything in the thought that had produced it.

February 1848 arrives. The democracy finds itself without genius, without virtue, without breath. Tell me why?

Empire. — We have said it until we can say it no more, we have said it only too often among a combative people: the empire was the sword of the Revolution, outstripping the work of the pen throughout Europe. That was its legitimacy and that will be its significance in the face of history. As a power, the empire remained without originality, because it was, like the democracy from which it had emerged, without an understanding of the Revolution. Was it the Emperor's fault? He had all the genius that the nation's thought contained, as much wit as everyone else and perhaps more virtue. What a fervor for royalty among the heroes emerging from Jacobinism! After the four Bonaparte brothers, who became kings, here is Bernadotte a king, Murat a king, Eugène Beauharnais viceroy, and Soult, and Masséna, and the insane Junot, who also wanted to be kings!

Duke or prince was not enough for these sons of artisans, who had become more superb than the Rohans. According to them, one *earns* a royal position as one earns a pension. Speak then, after that, of universal suffrage; say that the people have been deceived, that they have been frightened!... They had profited. *Vox populi*.

Restoration. — It rises at first, through the Charter, above even imperial glory. The Charter was the return to revolutionary life. But soon the Crown thinks it notices, it notices that the Revolution is leading it where it does not want to go; it conspires with the Church, the soul of the counter-revolution, and falls, after everything that the Revolution abhors and detests, after the sword, had multiplied under its wing: Jesuitism, eclecticism, romanticism, Saint-Simonism, Malthusianism, etc.

July Monarchy. — It was the crowning glory of the bourgeoisie; it could be, precisely because of this, the most legitimate of powers. A mass of common people to be emancipated presupposes a class of instructors and innovators: this is the fundamental fact of the Revolution. Louis-Philippe rejected this program. As Napoleon had tried to remake the old regime with his soldiers, he conceived the idea of remaking it with his bourgeois. He governed neither by religion, nor by force, nor by instincts; he governed by interests. Under Louis-Philippe the industrial feudalism, which currently reigns, was formed. We can say of this prince what has been said of Voltaire: *He has not seen everything he made, but he made everything we see*. He himself boasted of it in his letters to the leaders of the Holy Alliance; and Napoleon III, who stripped the Orleans family of its appanages, would not dare to revoke, without indemnity, the great fiefs with which his royal predecessor had flanked the *System*.

Parliamentary system. — From 1789 to 1799, from 1814 to 1851, the rostrum was the glory of French genius; its silence is our shame: I agree. But, by betraying all parties, by pleading all causes, by giving the spectacle of the most shameful palinodies, by serving truth less than intrigue, by sending, in turn, to the scaffold and to exile the monarchy, the Girondes, the Cordeliers, the Jacobins, the Thermidorians, the Clichyans and the Socialists, has it not refuted itself? Did it not make the people say that the voice of the Revolution was a voice of lies and iniquity: *Mentita est iniquitas sibi?*

Centralization. — “The sense of men nowadays has been so perverted,” said Michelet; “our friends have so lightly swallowed the gross blunders thrown at them by our enemies, that they believe and repeat that the Protestants prepared to dismember France, that all Protestants were gentlemen, etc. From that point on, see the beauty of the system: Paris and Saint-Barthélemy saved unity; Charles IX and the Guises represented the Convention.” (*Guerres de religion*, p. 305.)

In a meeting of Republicans that took place after December 2, where they deplored the inertia of the departments, awaiting the signal from the capital, someone having asked the question if it would have been better to save the Republic, at the price of decentralization, than to preserve *unity* by undergoing the coup d'état, the majority decided for the second opinion, *federalism* appearing incompatible with the Republic. So do not be surprised that on this root-stock of Jacobinism the monarchical bud is still flourishing. We abhor monarchy; but unity that is something else!

Do we at least possess this centralizing unit, the installation of which cost France fourteen months of terror and the Girondins their heads? Alas! No. Centralization presupposes parties

grouping together under a law of series, but always to the benefit of their liberty and their initiative. Paris and its government, its administrations, its companies, its monopolies, its pleasures, its parasitism, Paris absorbs and devours France: that is centralization!

Concordat. — What protests the civil constitution of the clergy aroused on the part of the priests!... Overcome by necessity, they nevertheless resign themselves. The Concordat brings in the Church, which those of 93 had proscribed, while imposing the civil constitution on it. God rest the soul of the old emperor! Behold, today, after fifty-three years, the Concordat is the providential act by which *He who reigns in heaven and who governs all empires* has substituted, in France, ultramontanism for the Gallican Church. O Louis XIV, O Bossuet!

Philosophy. — A social revolution supposes, with a new government, a new philosophy. To establish Justice, to develop the humanitarian thought of Cloutz, symbolized by the cult of Reason, a critique of it was essential. For that to continue, by elevating and clarifying it, the movement of the eighteenth century was enough: there was no need to appeal to the Germans, the Scots, the Platonists, and, under the pretext of materialism, to give the signal of a reaction, as Royer-Collard did. Did the worshipers of matter, since matter there is, ever cause a philosopher to be outlawed or a pyre to be lit, or set up as a principle the ignorance of the people and the stupefaction of humanity? Quite different, certainly, is the religion of the mind. For forty years, university spiritualism [*], rival or ally of the Church, has delivered intelligences to it. It was spiritualism which, in 93 and 94, sent the Revolution to the guillotine: it would do it again. The feast of 20 Prairial, of which the Law of 22 made a veritable auto-da-fé, was a call to the priestly party, and a sort of evocation of neo-Christianity and of all the sects that were to infect the Republic in 1848.

Socialism. — Its root is in 89: its object, to be considered only from the point of view of material interests, is the inversion of the relations between labor and capital. It is Justice, in its application to matters of the economy. Falling into the hands of dreamers, haranguers and gastrosophists, socialism, instead of the justice-bringer that the Revolution wanted it to be, has become sentimental, evangelical, theocratic, communist, eroto-bacchanalian, omnigamous; it has been all that the reaction could wish it to be, for its own profit and our shame: it was socialism that, after December 2, undertook to initiate Europe into the mysteries of *Bankocracy*.

Political Economy. — The creation of an economic science, based at once on the observation of industrial and mercantile spontaneity and on justice, is the last word of revolutionary thought. Terrible to feudalism, hostile to the Emperor, surly with the Bourbons, haughty with the Orleans, enemies of all governmental initiative and concentration, swearing only by liberty, the economists, much more than the Jacobins, could pass for the true representatives of the Social Republic. Only one thing was asked of them: it was to finally construct this science, the shapeless and contradictory materials of which they had been collecting for a century. Instead of answering, they went on to boast about *free trade*, *moral restraint*, *laissez-faire laissez-passer* and all the juggling and turpitude to be found on both sides of the Channel. They preached the reason of chance, the sovereignty of antagonism, respect for parasitism, the necessity of poverty; they supported, with all their strength, against democracy and against the Power, the prepotence of the big companies, and by their desperate defense of monopoly, served as godfathers to the new

feudalism. Then, when they saw themselves denounced as schemers, hypocrites, enemies of the people and foreign agents, they cried "*Wolf!*" against the Revolution.

Literature. — As it had its metaphysics, its ethics, its economy, its jurisprudence, the Revolution must also have its literature. The movement begins with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, continues with Beaumarchais and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. The harangues of the Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, and the Convention raise it to the sublime; the *Ruins* of Volney are inspired by the same spirit. Its enemies themselves take up the same tune: the antithesis of the Revolution comprised all the genius of De Maistre. Suddenly, by one of those reversals so frequent in the march of the human mind, the new muse abandoned her flag. To the harsh but misunderstood realities of a nascent world, she prefers, as the subject of her songs, the vanquished ideal, and we have *Romanticism*. Has it done us enough harm? It was romanticism that, in 1848, on the eve of the December elections, rebuked the socialists, saying that if they became the masters they would demolish Notre-Dame and that pieces of the Column would bring big money... Now, romanticism, like economism, like philosophy, and like everything that served the reaction, is worn out, but the corruption they sowed, the servitude they prepared, the ruins they piled up, all this remains, and one wonders after so many defections, what the movement that led to it means?

Isn't it a surprising thing, a Revolution opposed, abrogated by all those it carried in its bosom, all those who received its baptism? For ten years, I have followed the current of history with all the attention of which I am capable. As far as I could, I took cognizance of ideas and acts. Apart from a few strong characters who are known, I found everyone hostile to the Revolution: people of letters, people of law, business people, people of the schools and people of the political parties; poets, historians, novelists, magistrates, speculators, shopkeepers, industrialists; academics, economists, eclectics, pantheists, constitutionalists, imperialists, democrats; Gallicans, Protestants, Jews, Neo-Christians; youth, women, the bourgeoisie, the multitude, the clerk, the soldier, the academician, the scholar, the peasant, the worker, like the priest.

And as if the Revolution, growing distant, carried Justice with it, the more this world showed itself hostile, the more I found it corrupt.

The Democracy, through the mouth of Robespierre, asks the Supreme Being again for the sanction of human rights. Immediately the notion of right is obscured, and corruption, suspended for a moment, resumes its course. The Empire, the Restoration, the bourgeois monarchy show themselves more and more unfaithful to their origin; and the corruption advances. Philosophy and literature deny the tradition of the eighteenth century; and Platonism, Romanticism serve as an illumination for corruption. Political economy becomes Malthusian, and now woman has a horror of housework and motherhood. The Church elevates as an article of faith the pious legend of an immaculate conception, and never have such suspicions hovered over the mores of the priesthood.

If any life remains to us, if all honor is not lost, we owe it to that sacred flame of the Revolution, which no deluge can extinguish. Her conquests, her establishments, her organs, her liberties, her rights, her guarantees, all have perished: there remains to her only the soul of the people, more and more made in her image; and from this inaccessible temple, she imposes her terror on the world, which waits for her to impose her law on it again. The Counter-Revolution knows it: If, she says, I can be mistress for two generations, my reign is forever assured! — Two

generations would be enough for her to remake the conscience and the understanding to the people. But the generations flee her: never was the Revolution more alive than since the last triumph of the Counter-Revolution. All bruised and broken, the Revolution possesses us; she rallies us, governs us, assures us; through her we hope and act, and all that remains to us of spontaneity and virtue belongs to her. So the conscience of the people, long abused, turns with love towards this *Grand Orient*, and on the day when a hundred men knowingly renew the oath of 93, LIBERTY — EQUALITY — FRATERNITY, the Revolution will be established: she will reign.

From what precedes we draw a double consequence.

There is something strong in the Revolution that dominates opinions and masters interests, by which she imposes herself on her adversaries and triumphs over all resistance; — as also there is something that arouses against her the prejudices of caste, of party, of school, of profession, of education, of communion, of which the reason of the masses has not yet been able to rid itself.

What gives life to the Revolution is a positive element, an expression of the universal conscience, which the Revolution aims to determine and build, for the salvation and glory of humanity: it is JUSTICE.

What makes the Revolution suspect can only be a negative element: it is the negation of the principle on which Justice, which must exist by itself, has relied to this date, a principle incompatible with the revolutionary element [*], but still living in souls, and of which the Church is the organ.

Thus, two powers fight for the world: one born yesterday, which has all the harshness of green fruit, and only asks to grow; the other, having reached maturity, which only stirs to die.

What checks life in the first is the same as what suspends death in the other: what is this thing? To understand this, let us first know by what incident the Church, mother and rival of the Revolution, came to be in this state.

3. — The Church: why, despite its perpetual defeats, does it still exist?

The existence of the Church is no less marvelous in its long duration than that of the Revolution in its beginnings. Always beaten, it has survived all the defeats; it has grown through humiliation, and it has fed, so to speak, on its very adversity.

It is a surprising thing, which no one seems to have noted, that the Church, which loves to talk so much about its triumphs, has in reality lost as many battles as it has fought. It has succumbed in all its struggles: from Jesus Christ to Pius IX, it counts its years by its disasters.

So what gives it life? How can we explain the problem of this strange existence?

The problem of the Church is the same as that of the Revolution, but in an opposite sense: the persistence of one and the embarrassments of the other stem from the same cause.

Formed by a combination of circumstances that will be explained in these *Studies*, the Church of Christ is nourished, fortified and fattened by the detritus of other churches, the dissolution of which is incessantly brought about by other causes. But it does not triumph over these churches, any more than the tree triumphs over the corpse buried under its roots. It cannot, I repeat, boast of having conquered a single one. A church, whatever it may be, never allows itself to be defeated. That is against its nature. It dissolves by itself, or sometimes it merges, or else it is exterminated.

Thus the Church succumbed in its struggle against Judaism: the book of *Acts* contains the formal admission.

“Since you reject the word,” said Paul and Barnabas to the heads of the Synagogue, “we turn to the Gentiles, *convertimur ad gentes*.”

A church that crucifies, as false christ and false prophet, the founder of the rival church; that hunts, stones, casts down the apostles of that rival; that, rather than accepting the messianic interpretation of the Nazarenes, chooses to be exterminated *en masse* and dies heroically for its faith, has this church been defeated? Titus, and after him Adrian, destroyed Judaic nationality. Many defectors, despairing of Jehovah and Moses, went to swell the Christian ranks; others rallied, some to the Egyptians, some to the Magi: the Synagogue always protested, and still protests.

What I have just said about Judaism applies to all the powers that the Church has had to fight: paganism, Magism, Egyptianism, Druidism, Pythagoreanism, Platonism, Gnosticism, Arianism, Pelagianism, Manichaeism, Mohammedanism, the Greek schism, the Reformation, the Renaissance, ancient and modern philosophy, the third estate, empire, royalty, parliament, science, art, liberty, and finally the Revolution.

The Church has not conquered paganism any more than it had conquered Judaism. According to a statistical calculation quoted by Matter, the Christians, at the accession of Constantine, formed about one-twentieth of the population of the empire. At all points, their brotherhoods were made up of what the general dissolution caused the local religions to lose every day, religions struck in their principle by the progress of ideas, and especially by imperial domination. Far from the Church having conquered paganism, it gradually took from it, as it did from Judaism, all that it could; it has adopted pagan codes, hierarchy, institutions, rites. It was in order to appeal to paganism and to carry off the masses dispossessed of their gods, as much as to obey the logic of its own movement, that the Church posited, in the fourth century, the divinity of its Christ, and that later it consecrated the worship of images.

With the Gnostics, heirs to the ancient doctrines of Egypt, Syria, Persia, India and Greece, the Church only ended up giving a itself a gnosis, much less scholarly than that of Valentin, much less severe than that of Marcion, Cerdon, or Tertullian, and much less poetic than that of the two Bardesanes, but such as was necessary for a coarse multitude, which also wanted to have its *perfects*, to pass for *spiritual* or *pneumatic*, and could not tolerate the reproach of *psychism* addressed to it by the Gnostics.

Now, as the vitality of a Church is directly proportional to the intensity and homogeneity of its faith, which in its turn is inversely proportional to the intellectual activity that it arouses; the Gnostic sects, too given up to dialectics, too metaphysical, too idealistic, too liberal in their government, some too suspect in their morality, died out little by little, and their remnants, keeping their speculations *in petto*, came together in the Orthodox group. Force aided in this: were they defeated? Certainly not. They would present, from the beginning, the spectacle of what awaited the great Church herself, once she found herself coming to grips with reason, taste, liberty, nationality and Justice.

What are, in fact, Arianism, Manichaeism, Mohammedanism, the Greek schism and the Reformation, apart from the questions of doctrine, always foreign to the masses, which officially

separate them from the Roman Church, if not declarations of incompatibility between Catholic unity and the autonomy of nations and intelligences?

Arianism flourished especially in the East, homeland of Semitic monotheism. With the Greeks, the Romans, the Gauls and the Barbarians, it did not last; but it was reborn in Mahomet and settled within the Arab tent, in the patriarchal life, where Christian dogma would not penetrate.

In Persia, the orthodoxy retreated before the Zoroastrian dualism, revived by Mani. And what demonstrates the truth of this physiology is that the same thing would happen in Persia to Islamism, when it replaced the religion of Christ.

In the ninth century, the Greeks, already separated for four centuries by the fact of the imperial partition, consummated their split with the Latins. After the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the patriarchate passed to Saint Petersburg. It would go to Peking rather than reconcile with Rome.

In the sixteenth century, Germany, England, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland separated in their turn. What do the theses of the doctors and their variations matter? The confessions of faith of the Reformation were thrown away, while Rome continued to chant its *Credo*: does it count that as a victory?

What is the empire of Charlemagne, setting itself up in the Middle Ages opposite the papacy, too fortunate to be its client? — It is the political church, which is reforming itself after an eclipse of 325 years, through the dismemberment of the temporal one. Has the papacy defeated the empire?

What is this organization of laicism, formed under the name of the *third estate*, separate from the nobility and the clergy, by the establishment of the *communes*? — The industrial church, which is established in its turn in relation to monasticism, as the emperor and the king of France, the heads of the political church, had established themselves in relation to the Holy See. The clergy opposed the establishment of the communes as much as they could: did they defeat the third estate?

What is the institution of parliaments? — The church of right formed for the administration of Justice, having its jurisdiction outside the episcopal jurisdiction, its schools outside the seminaries, its right distinct from canon right. The Revolution transformed the parliaments: would the Church claim that it was she who defeated them?

What is this great movement of the Renaissance? — Another formation of churches, for the worship of philosophy, letters, arts, sciences, whose first word is to disregard Christ and his religion. To disregard Christianity! It is the whole thought of Bacon's *Organon*; it is the quintessence of Descartes. Raphael, with his virgins, protests against Christianity no less than Luther, with his free examination. Under Louis XIV, men of letters, Christians by their baptism and in their prayers, communed with pagan antiquity. Through the resurrection of the ancients and the transfusion of the Greek and Latin muses into our idiom, they founded literary catholicity, a marvelous catholicity, which admits all languages, all styles, all ideas, all geniuses, all races, all epochs, and from so many diverse productions, makes one and the same universal literature! Did the Church triumph over the Renaissance?

According to the laws that govern organized beings, the Church should have perished a thousand times. What remains to her of all that the spontaneity of conscience, the independence of

the mind, the sovereignty of nations, the power of emperors and kings could achieve? She has lost everything, and this miserable domain that she once held from the devotion of a princess, this poor heritage of Saint Peter, is also disputed.

And yet the Church resists all attacks; she survives all schisms, all heresies, all dismemberments, the institutions of Saint Louis as well as the Gallican liberties, Pothier as well as Descartes, Luther as well as Voltaire. She survived her own immoralities; she had her reforming pontiffs long before the Reformation; and now that the Reformation is but a word, the Council of Trent unquestionably governs the Orthodox universe. What did I say? As the churches more advanced than her in philosophy and freedom fall into dissolution, she picks up their shreds and is constantly reformed by her very immobility. That is how we have just seen her succeed the Gallican Church, in all that remains in France of Christian hearts: this is how she will succeed all the so-called reformed Churches, unless the reason of humanity does not conclude definitively against the reason of these Churches, against theology. The Church has nothing but the breath, and this breath is more vivacious than all the energies that she has seen born, stronger than all the institutions that have been formed outside of her by imitating her.

Here, then, as in the Revolution, we must admit the presence of a principle that has remained beyond all attack; a principle whose gradual weakening is unquestionable, since wherever the Church presents itself with a certain movement of thought and a superior degree of instruction, as among the Gnostics and the Reformed, it is proceeding towards a rapid dissolution; but a principle that, having preserved its roots in the depths of consciences, suffices to maintain the Church, to constantly bring back to it the ashes of dissidence, which would cause it to be reborn from itself, if it were possible that, this principle always persisting in hearts, the Church that represents its faith should cease to exist.

This principle, creator and preserver of the Church, is *Religion*.

The Revolution affirms Justice, as I was saying a moment ago; it believes in Humanity: that is why it is invincible, and why it is always advancing.

The Church believes in God: she believes in Him more than any sect; she is the purest, the most complete, the most dazzling manifestation of the divine essence, and she alone knows how to worship Him. Now, as neither the reason nor the heart of man has been able to free itself from the thought of God, which is proper to the Church, the Church is indestructible.

In all eras of history, prior to the promulgation of Christianity and since its propagation, mankind has believed, with unanimous consent, that religion was a necessary basis for society, that theological faith was the *sine qua non* of virtue, and that all justice had its source and its sanction in divinity.

The rare examples of atheistic protest that the history of philosophy has collected have only confirmed the common belief, by showing that atheists either denied Justice and morality, or gave only a false theory of them, or replaced the religious guarantee by that of an arbitrary subordination.

Now, the analysis of religious ideas and the logic of their development demonstrate that, notwithstanding the diversity of myths and rites, all cults are basically identical; that consequently there is and can only be one religion, one theology, one Church; finally, that the Catholic Church is the one whose dogmatism, discipline, hierarchy and progress best realize the principle and the

theoretical type of religious society, the one, consequently, that has the most right to the government of souls, to speak at first only of that right.

To every objection of free examination, to any outright dismissal of secular authority, the Church can eternally answer, without it being possible for a believing soul to reject its response:

Do you believe in God?

Do you believe in the necessity of religion?

Do you believe, consequently, in the existence of a Church, that is to say of a society established on the very thought of God, inspired by Him, and installing itself above all as an expression of religious duty?

If so, you are Christian, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman, you confess Christ and all His doctrine; you receive the priesthood He established; you recognize the infallibility of the councils and of the sovereign pontiff; you place the pulpit of Saint Peter above all the tribunes and all the thrones: you are, in a word, orthodox.

If not, dare to say so: for then it is not only against the Church that you are declaring war, it is against the faith of the human race.

Between these two alternatives, there is room only for ignorance or bad faith.

It must be confessed that, to this day, no nation has been encountered that says: I possess justice within me; I will make my own mores; I do not need the intervention of a Supreme Being for that, and I can do without religion.

The argument therefore remains; and as, from the religious point of view, the principle of all the churches, Latin Catholicism has remained, and by far, the one that is most rational and complete, the Church of Rome, despite so many and such formidable defections, is the only legitimate one.

How does it happen, then, that she suffers objections from all sides?

How does it happen that, summarizing in her history and in her dogma all tradition and all religious speculation; as such, being able to claim the initiative and ownership of all that constitutes the social state, as founded on religion, she sees herself slapped by her sons, treated as a prostitute by her daughters, ridiculed by the smallest of her grandchildren, contested even in the matter of the bread that she eats, of the tomb that she has chosen for herself?

Ah! It is because the human soul, although it calls itself religious, in reality believes only in its own will; it is because at base it considers its own Justice more exact and surer than the justice of God; it is because it aspires to govern itself, by its own virtue; it is because it is disgusted by the constitution of any Church, and because its devouring ambition is to walk in its own strength and autonomy.

Faith in Justice itself, setting aside all piety, and even contrary to all piety: this is what, since the beginning of the world, has raised up war against the Church, and what animates the Revolution.

But this also explains the resistance encountered by the latter. Insofar as it represents Justice, the essence of our nature, the Revolution is everything that man in his pride values it is what makes the life and movement of societies, and sometimes rekindles the spark at the heart of Church itself. But as she is freed from the divine idea, the Revolution is suspect; until she has somehow justified herself, her crimes weigh on her, and the world, still religious, still priestly, still hierarchical despite everything, remains hostile to her.

On the part of the peoples, divided in their thought, sympathy and distrust are therefore equally earned by the Church, equally earned by the Revolution. To one, religious consideration; to the other, legal consideration. But to the latter, the horror that the indictment of atheism has always inspired; to the former, the rage for liberty.

4. — The issue is between the Revolution and the Church.

A question therefore inevitably arises, which allows for no dismissal:

Are the Revolution and the Church, each representing an element of consciousness, called to a reconciliation?

Or must one be subordinated to the other?

Or will there finally be a point at which one or the other must be eclipsed? This amounts to asking whether Religion and Justice, from the point of view of society, are not incompatible by nature, the former having to be confined within the limits of conscience, at most within the circle of the family, while the second embraces everything?

Fusion, subordination, or elimination: there is no room for a fourth hypothesis.

Now, if we found that the last of these hypotheses was the true one, it would become useless to dwell any longer on the other two. So there is every advantage in asking ourselves at first glance if theological reason is not the very negation of juridical reason, and *vice versa*; and if, consequently, while the Church accuses the Revolution of modern skepticism and immorality, it is not she who, through her theology, having confounded intelligences for a long time, has altered the sense of right in them and produced the dissolution that kills us?

What is Religion, and what is Justice? What are they to each other, and what are their respective functions? This is the problem. It is important to grasp it in its universality, lest we fall into new and more pitiful illusions.

Generally, in the enlightened world, we separate ourselves conspicuously from pure orthodoxy. We smile at Revelation, as the Scriptures propose it; prophecies, miracles and all the naiveties of legend are rejected. But we like to call ourselves spiritualistic, theistic; we readily admit an inspiration, a permanent action of Heaven in Humanity; we bow before Providence; the propagation of the Gospel is regarded as a monument of this influence from on high; we are not far from saying with Napoleon that Christ was more than a man...

Is this all common sense? Is revelation and all that follows not implied in the spiritualist hypothesis, the theology determined *a priori* by the notion of God and his relations with man; and can this theology or theodicy be anything other than Catholicism?

I am simply posing here the question, of which we will find, in the course of these *Studies*, the irrefutable and completely new solution.

Now, if Christianity is nothing other than the necessary development, theoretical and practical, of the religious concept, in whatever way and to as a low degree as it may arise, is it not supremely unreasonable, not to say in flagrant bad faith, to bring back, under the pretext of religious purification or rational theology, the spirits of fifteen, twenty or thirty centuries back and present this retrogression to them as progress?

A number of these mystics, apparently incapable of analyzing the principle of their faith and following its consequences, declared themselves against divine right, affirmed the Revolution,

calling themselves at the same time followers of a *Natural Religion*, which, according to them, would be known only through the light of the reason, and would not require external worship or priesthood.

But do not all these ideas of God, of Heaven or of future life, of revelation, of sacraments, of Church, of worship, of priesthood, form, in human understanding as in the practice of nations, an unbreakable chain? And if so, is it not clear that the first link in this chain is as repugnant to Revolution and Justice as the last? The proof is that there are, in an embryonic state, who knows how many churches ready to seize the succession from Catholicism, who knows how many popes awaiting the death of Pius IX to take his tiara!

It is especially fashionable to protest against the fundamental dogma of the fall, against hell and the devil, and to do so by virtue of a so-called philosophical theism, of a devotion made up entirely of inner feeling. Our poets sing of the end of Satan while blessing God!

Do not all these oppositions give rise to one another in an identical absolute? Is not the dogma of original sin the corollary of the ideas of Religion and Providence, identical and adequate to the psychological principle that makes Justice in us an impression of Divinity, from which it follows that, for revolutionary reason, God and Devil are the same thing?

We grant that Justice is obligatory, even without hope of remuneration here below. But we do not give up the hope of an indemnity in a *better world*; so that this so-called *Duty* is basically only a credit that we give to the Sovereign Distributor: what hypocrisy!

We advocate reason, but maintain an even higher esteem for faith, provided, of course, that this faith has nothing in common with that of the priests. We praise Justice, but we put love above it. Our people of letters, women and men, summarize the social philosophy in three words: *Believe, Love, Labor*.

As for me, I affirm labor. But I have all sorts of reservations about love and I reject faith

Love, when it is not a slave to right, is the poison of souls and the devastator of society. As for faith, I repeat, there is none other than that which engendered the Church.

Weary of these disputes, some take a heroic stand: that is to say that there is no other religion than morality; that spiritualism, theism, etc., all of that is useless, and that what matters is to be an honest man.

Good for them! I like this talk, and I draw an excellent omen from it. But then tell us what is morality, what is right, and how it applies to the various relations of life; show where its corruption comes from; prove above all, to these people infatuated with their immortality, that Justice is sufficient unto itself and that if Justice is sufficient, the present life is also sufficient and does not need an extension into eternity.

It is thus that by a higher criticism we are led to recognize, on the one hand, that outside the Church, Christian and Catholic, there is neither God, nor theology, nor religion, nor faith: there, as in logic, morality and languages, the unity of the human spirit bursts forth; — on the other hand, we are led to recognize that society must be founded on pure Justice, the Practical Reason of the human race, the analysis and experience of which agree in demonstrating its incompatibility, in the social order, with the conception of a supernatural world, with Religion.

Hence this decisive conclusion:

That all the previous history of mankind, dominated by the religious principle, forms a clearly characterized period, in which all the political and economic constitutions of the peoples, their

legislation and their morals, despite innumerable varieties, are basically similar, amounting to the negation of the rights of man and of the citizen; — and that the French Revolution, making the juridical principle prevail, opens a new period, an entirely contrary order of things, of which it is now a question for us of determining the parts.

Shall I go, then, at this hour, to take up again an exhausted polemic over the choice of a religion; to argue with the sects; to quibble with the Church, the mistress of all of them, over her dogmas and her mysteries; to challenge the authenticity of her Scriptures, remake her history and reveal her origins, her encroachments and her borrowings; to explain these myths, to oppose to her genesis, to her deluge, to her theophanies, astronomy, geology, physics, chronology, philology and, political economy, the entire encyclopedia of human knowledge; then to mock her worship, blame her discipline, display her shame, recall her abasement and her revenge?

Shall I ask her to account for her vicariat, as if I cared about this divine ministry; shall I say that she has failed the inspirations of the Most High, as if I were instituting myself as a prophet in her place; shall I pretend, with the author of *Terre et Ciel*, that the time is right for a renewal of theology, that the need is felt everywhere, and on this pious pretext, start theologizing in competition with the episcopate?

No, no, I am not one to give in to such whims.

I would never have contested the authority of the Church, if, like so many others who make themselves its competitors, I admitted the necessity of a supernatural guarantee for Justice. I would not have this strange presumption, assuming that the idea of God is indispensable to morality, to believe myself more capable than the Church, more capable than the human race, which has labored for more than sixty centuries, of deducing in theory and realizing in practice such an idea. I would have bowed before such an ancient faith, the fruit of the most learned and the longest elaboration of which the human mind has given the example; I would not have admitted for a moment that insoluble difficulties in the order of science retained the slightest value when it came to my faith; I would have thought that this was precisely what made up the mystery of my religion, and for having drawn a few metaphysical threads, I would not have thought myself a revelator. Above all, I would have feared to shake in others, by imprudent attacks, a guarantee that I myself would have declared necessary.

This is what, following the logic of my hypothesis, I would never have done, all the less since, after all, as I said just now, such a controversy, calculated to disrupt the consciences, could not lead to a solution.

I repeat: the Church has succumbed in all of its struggles, and it persists, even if that means signing pragmatic sanctions and concordats, simulating an agreement between reason and faith, adapting its biblical texts to the data of science, putting a little more reserve in its mores, a semblance of tolerance in its government.

Like the reed in the fable, *it bends and does not break*. The way its inept rivals lead it, it would endure, always bending, another eighteen centuries. In the face of the political power, it bends and it endures; in the face of philosophy, it bends and it endures; in the face of science, it bends and it endures; in the face of the Reformation, it bends and it endures. And it will endure as long as it is not attacked in its stronghold, as long as the Revolution, raising the debate higher, does not rid Justice of this divine sanction which makes it lame and of which the Church is the supreme representative.

5. — Plan of this work.

The reader now knows the plan of this work.

The question for me is quite different from that posed by the mystics. Instead of seeking what is, for the justification and happiness of humanity, the best of religions, I ask myself if Justice is possible with any religion. And as Justice has never been exercised or even conceived in its purity and plenitude, as it has been constantly mixed, penetrated by theologism, I ask again, after having noted how right is corrupted and perishes through its union with faith, what would become of it, abandoned to itself, what would society be like if, by an effort of conscience, it decided to set aside the practice of its religious conceptions, and to follow Justice alone?

So I have not established the controversy on the basis of dogma. I set dogma aside and do not quibble over articles of faith. It may be that all that is said about the essence of God and about the supernatural world is true. What can I know with any certainty? Nothing. On what basis can I deny it? Again, there is none. It may be that deep in my heart beats a secret desire for survival, testimony to an ulterior destiny: I will not take the trouble to either verify or contest it. I place myself belief and allow it all its fantasies for the time being. My criticism refuses to enter the regions of the absolute.

What I challenge in belief is that it comes, with its hypotheses, to support the commandment of practical, experimental and positive reason, the revelations of which are given to me directly in myself and by the testimony of my fellow men; reason, as such, endowed with a certainty and a reality that no theology can reach; reason finally which is myself, and which I cannot invalidate without dishonor or abdicate without suicide.

If then, after examination, it is found that belief, which is presented to me as the indispensable pledge of Justice, instead of assuring it, compromises it; if by a necessary consequence the Church, organ of religious thought, was at the same time the agent of our temptation; if such were the principle of all human decadence and retrogradation; if it was through this that Justice, vitiated, has remained doubtful to us until this day: then, without further tolerating a perfidious belief, I would have the right and the duty to protest against an unfair surety, to stand up for Justice, against the Church and against God himself, and to establish myself as its guarantor and father.

Anyone who has studied these questions will recognize that in this I am only applying the precepts of the purest orthodoxy. It is the doctrine of the saints that damnation should be preferred to sin, if, by some chance, God imposed the option on us. Now, what for theology is only a casuistical fiction, has become, through the Revolution, a factual truth. The transcendent Being, conceived and worshipped as the author and support of Justice, is the very negation of Justice; religion and morality, which the consent of the people has made sisters, are heterogeneous and incompatible. It is necessary to choose between the fear of God and the fear of evil, between the risk of damnation and the risk of improbity: that is my thesis.

A veil of mystery is spread over all the things of moral life. To lift this veil will be to demonstrate the genius of the Revolution and hasten the fulfillment of destinies.

What is *Justice*, or as others say, *right* and *duty*? Is it a simple abstraction, an idea, a relation, abstractly conceived, like the general laws of nature and of the mind? First of all, what is this idea? How have we conceived it? How does it impose obligations on the conscience?

What is *conscience* itself? A prejudice? But a prejudice necessarily prejudges something... A faculty? Where does it reside? What is its function? What is its mode of exercise? Where is its organism?

What is *equality*? We revolve around this word, we pronounce it with our lips: in reality we don't want it. The poor don't care, the rich hate it, the democracy denies it, no one believes it. — Is equality by nature or against nature? If equality is by nature, it is also by right; how then are we to explain the inequality? If it is against nature, in other words, if it is inequality that is natural, what does Justice mean?

What is *government* among men? What is the *State* and the *reason of State*? If the reason of State is in conformity with Justice, of what use is it? If it is an exception to Justice, what is a Justice subject to so many exceptions? Is the political order the same as the economic order? Do they blend into each other? How and when? These are formidable questions that academic science would be careful not to raise.

What is *liberty*? Is it also a prejudice, or more simply, as modern philosophy explains it, a way of conceiving the organic life within us, the fatality of nature and of the spirit?

What is *progress*? An organic or free evolution? If progress is only the evolution of the forces of humanity, it is pure fatalism: there is no progress, and in this case how are we to explain so many and such terrible declines? If, on the contrary, progress is the work of liberty, how does it accord with the nature of our organism, which is fatal?

What is *marriage*? Of what does this union consist, which all peoples distinguish from amorous union? The Church, which claims its consecration, admits that it has not yet understood it. Is it a simple legal *concubinage*? Should it be classified among the civil or commercial societies? What is *paternity*? What is the *family*?... Our moralists, who preach the domestic virtues to us, have forgotten to give us the definition of all these things.

What is *love* in the social life of man? What is it worth? What does it deserve? How does it command us to exercise it with Justice?

What is *woman*, in the family and in society, and why is there this distinction between the sexes among persons? Are women equal to men or not? In the first case, what good is this duplication? In the second, what is it for? Does woman, apart from motherhood, have a meaning, a proper function in the moral world? Does she count there, and for how much?

What is *labor*? What is *property*? What is the *ideal*? What is *tolerance*? What is *punishment*?... What do all these things have in common with Justice?

What is *death*? It causes us enough trouble for us to know something about it. Will we be forever told that it is the cessation of the phenomena that constitute life, as life is the set of phenomena that prevent death? Or, with the priests, that it is the door of eternity? Does death cut Justice, as it cuts the thread of existence?

What is meant by *moral sanction*? Is it within humanity or outside humanity? What difficulties in the first case! What doubts in the second!

What is *religion*? What is *prayer*? What is *God*? Is religion eternal or transitory like its forms? Are we moving towards a religious transformation or towards a resorption of religion in Justice? Admitting that religion was only a preparatory form of civilization, it still remains to be said what was its role, function and mandate; and as nothing happens in social life that does not have its

roots in the entrails of humanity, we must also say what religion must be reduced to, and what the mode of exercise of this faculty will be in subsequent ages.

Is there a *system of society*, as all ancient and modern utopians and legislators have understood it? What is this system? How are we to recognize it, to demonstrate it? Is there no system? What then is social order?

It is a grand undertaking, to extract from the mass of human facts the principles that govern them, to clarify a dozen notions that the past has bequeathed to us without understanding them, and for which we fight as our fathers fought!

In summary :

What is the fundamental, organic, regulating, sovereign principle of societies; the principle that, subordinating all the others, governs, protects, represses, punishes the rebellious elements and, if need be, demands their elimination? Is it religion, the ideal or interest? is it love, force, necessity or hygiene? There are systems and schools for all these affirmations.

This principle, in my opinion, is Justice.

What is Justice? — The very essence of humanity.

What has it been since the beginning of the world? — Nothing.

What should it be? — Everything.

I will say little about the execution of this book, a simple commentary, as you can see, on the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a kind of framework for a philosophy of the Revolution.

If it is true that Justice is innate in the heart of man, it does not follow that its laws were determined from the outset in the human mind with clarity, and for all categories of application: it is only little by little that we acquire the knowledge of them, and their formula is the prize of a long labor.

The definition of Justice, obtained by an evolution of six or eight thousand years, opens the second age of civilization: the Revolution is its prologue.

Now, just as the physical sciences cannot be built *a priori* on pure notions, but require the observation of facts, likewise the science of justice and mores cannot emerge from a dialectical deduction of notions: it must be drawn from the phenomenality that these notions engender, as any physical law emerges from the series of phenomena that express it.

Thus, I am not dogmatizing; I observe, I describe and I compare. I am not going to look for the formulas of right in the fantastic soundings of an illusory psychology; I demand them from the positive manifestations of humanity.

This way of dealing with ethics, when everyone starts it with Jupiter, is the greatest originality of my work. The honor for it goes to natural philosophy, which is the philosophy of common sense.

By this method, the whole secret of which consists in following history, we can explain the aberrations of the moral sense among the ancients, the growing superiority of the moderns, the nature and role of the religious principle, and the longstanding powerlessness of philosophers, who are fortunate when they do not put their ideology at the service of the reigning interests or of their own secret ambitions, to establish the science of mores on solid bases.

I admit, moreover, that I have not had to incur great scholarly expenses. The history has been extensively, deeply researched; the materials are uncovered, and I have made it a rule to give

preference to the most authentic. I believed that my work, whatever care I took in it, could only be considered an appeal; that to write the Bible of the Revolution nothing less than a vast concourse of minds was needed, beginning afresh at new expense the examination of antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modern times. I concluded that my only care should be to set my milestones well, sure that by the way in which they would be set and their results indicated, history, revealing itself in a new light, would show, as in a panorama, the thought, the power and all the riches of the Revolution.

Perhaps I will be reproached for not having kept to the facts of history, supported by the evidence of philology and literature, and for having given in my dissertations a certain place to anecdote. — I thought that with the science of mores becoming entirely experimental, experimentation should exclude nothing, lest it mutilate itself and fall short of the truth. Every act of public and domestic, collective and individual life, is in my eyes the domain of science; and this is seldom the least instructive part.

I have not been as brief as I would have liked: the time has not come for the Revolution to make *Etrennes mignonnes* and catechisms. What is needed for a cause threatened in its very existence are demonstrations, facts and science. All of this takes time and space. Let us first philosophize with the breadth that unrecognized truth requires: afterwards, the abbreviators may have their say.

I have given these *Studies* the form of an epistle or rather of a lecture, which is the Greek homily, because, admitting all tones and all styles, it responds better than any other to the variety of my subject, at the same time as it excludes pedantry, declamation and commonplace.

I address them, these *Studies*, to an archbishop: first, because the part that this archbishop played in a so-called biography of my person was the occasion that made me undertake them; then, because the respect for such a serious character is a guarantee to me that, while making use of the greatest liberty of discussion, nothing offensive to the people or outrageous for institutions will escape my pen.

We are treated readily, my co-religionists and I, as atheists; thanks to this epithet, we are, so to speak, placed outside justice and morals.

Although I am not terribly frightened by the indictment of atheism, I cannot, however, allow it to degenerate into calumny and proscription. I have been thinking about God as long as I have been alive, and do not recognize in anyone a greater right than mine to talk about the subject. I have thought about it especially from the point of view that I am dealing with today: the reader will judge in what ways this meditation has gone well for me.

If sometimes I happen to talk about myself, the reason will not escape anyone. The facts of my life are less than nothing, and I can defy the whole industry of biographers to squeeze out of my insignificant existence either praise or blame. But I have had the signal honor of being taken as a type. A whole class of citizens are attacked in my person; a tendency is stigmatized; an order of ideas and a category of interests are proscribed. I have the right to follow my adversaries onto the terrain it has pleased them to choose, even in their licenses.

We do not know what will come of these masses created by the Revolution. We imagine that all their eloquence is in the vote. It is up to me, more than anyone else, to serve as their interpreter. What the people would think if, by a sudden illumination, they could at a glance embrace the philosophical-politico-theological work of forty centuries, what their conscience

would experience, what their reason would conclude: these are things that I can say. I had the rare advantage, if it is one, of being born of the people, of learning what made the people what they are today, and of remaining one of the people. If my ideas are not new, they at least smell of the soil from which they have sprung.

M. Granier de Cassagnac has written somewhere: *Socialism must be suppressed...* Others flatter themselves that they have crushed it...

As for me, the last to come and the most mistreated of this great movement that, rightly or wrongly, has been called *Socialism*, and which is only the development of the Revolution, I do not ask for the suppression or the crushing of anyone. Let the discussion be free, and let my adversaries defend themselves: that is all I want. I make war on old ideas, not on old men.

I thought, in 1848, that, after so many catastrophes, all those formulas of the ancient antagonism, by which Aristotle and Machiavelli had not been fooled — monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, bourgeoisie, proletariat, etc. — should no longer have more than a transitional value; that the constitution of the power mattered little, provided that it passed quickly, after having created the economic order; that in the spirit of the new France, politics should be eclipsed like worship and make way for justice, and that granting the same importance as before to theological reason and reason of state was to mislead the Revolution and regress.

In days of unrest, I argued this thesis energetically, trading criticism for criticism, sarcasm for sarcasm. I have done no worse than Voltaire, whose battle cry so many people, who were silent then, repeat in a low voice today.

Now the period of demolition is over. The country knows that it no longer believes in anything: 1848 will at least have had the merit of making it see this fact. Are we up to the task, men of the Revolution, of making it believe in something? I dare to hope so. If, after five years of silence, I take up the pen again, it is certainly not to wage war against ghosts whose public common sense is enough to do justice. Peace to the dying, respect to the dead!

The Revolution had passed into the status of a myth. I come, the first, to present its exegesis.

I do not know if this Revolution, which began gloriously in France, will continue in France. Sixty years of retrograde madness have aged us so much; we have been so thoroughly purged of all liberal ferment, that doubt about our right to the hegemony of nations is permitted.

Whatever may become of our weary race, however, posterity will recognize that the third age of humanity has its point of departure in the French Revolution; that the understanding of the new law has been given to us in its fullness; that practice has not completely failed us either; and that to succumb in this sublime childbirth was not, after all, without glory.

At this hour, the Revolution is defined: it therefore lives. The remains no longer think. Will the being who lives and who thinks be suppressed by the corpse?

JUSTICE
IN THE REVOLUTION
AND IN THE CHURCH

FIRST STUDY
POSITION OF THE PROBLEM OF JUSTICE

To His Eminence Mgr. MATTHIEU, Cardinal-Archbishop of Besançon.

MONSIGNOR,

Have you heard of a small book, in 32mo format, yellow cover, which appeared, some two years ago, under this title: PROUDHON, *by Eugène de Mirecourt*, from Gustave Havard, Publisher, Rue Guénégaud, Paris?

— No, you answer, my memories do not go back so far. I don't know the author or his work.

— Excuse me, Monsignor: this little book is part of a collection called *Les Contemporains*. It is number 32 in the series. It is a so-called biography whose author, M. de Mirecourt, after having recognized, in his own way, that my private life is unassailable, nevertheless concludes and clearly suggests, to anyone with a Christian heart, that I am a scoundrel. The nature of the information obtained by the author, the spirit in which his notice is written, the interest it claims to serve, everything, in my eyes, reveals an ecclesiastical origin.

— In truth, sir, I don't understand you. What at you getting at?

— There is found there a quotation from a letter addressed to the biographer by a *holy archbishop*, who, however, is not otherwise identified. As this letter contains details about my family, about my life as a young man, spent entirely in the country, I believed that it could only come from you, Monsignor. Do you recognize it?

— Sir, what do you mean by this interrogation? Your questions are becoming more indiscreet. I don't owe you an explanation.

— Well, Monsignor, I have seen the letter; that good M. de Mirecourt was kind enough to show it to me. The holy archbishop who provided the author of *Les Contemporains* with such precious notes is none other than Mgr. CÉSAIRE MATTHIEU, archbishop of Besançon, cardinal, senator, and, as in the past, prince of the Holy Empire...

For God's sake, Monsignor! What did you think you were doing? You, in collaboration with a libelous enterprise? You, the friend of M. de Mirecourt! — which will not, God forbid, cause me to forget myself so far as to treat you as *Le compère Matthieu!*... Did you even know the man with whom you had this correspondence? Was it in order to encourage his work — a work of scandal, some have said of blackmail — that you blessed this *bohemian* pen, which is not intimidated by the *police correctionnelle*?

M. de Mirecourt approached me one evening on my doorstep, and declared his intention of publishing my biography. The approach he made to me was just a courtesy, he said: he wanted to *salvage the man*; it was for him only an assessment of my ideas in chronological order. It was then that he showed me the letter he had from you, Monsignor, which affected me, I admit, to the highest degree. Pastor of my native town, in the absence of charity for my person, all you needed

was that spirit of compatriotism, which animates all Franche-Comtois, to refrain from handing over a member of the Bisontine family to the malice of the pamphleteer.

Well, Monsignor! Do you think I care about my biography and its author? Am I not one of the least abused of *Les Contemporains*? And you yourself, after all, have you not done me justice? What pained me was to encounter you in such a matter; it was that you represented my country to me, and that when I saw your signature I felt one of those invisible bonds that bind every man to his country break within me.

However, I did not allow my feelings to show, and contented myself with telling M. de Mirecourt that he would oblige me very much by refraining from discussing my person, in any manner, with the public. — It is impossible, he replied, *I am committed*.

I did not know M. de Mirecourt at all. I had not read any of his publications, as I have today only read the one that concerns me. I assumed that after his *courteous* approach, he himself, an honest critic, would bring me the first copy of his booklet. No doubt he discharged this duty towards you, Monsignor, who cultivates his correspondence. Imagine my surprise on reading this buffoonery steeped in devotion, in which my private life is defiled, and at the end of which the claw of an archbishop is visible!

Here, then, is where French society stands under a religion of charity and a regime of order! These are the morals that the saviors of the family, the protectors of privacy, the masters of the spiritual life, work to make for us! This is what amuses the public, what Justice suffers, as guardian of persons as well as properties, what the Church approves and encourages! Twenty thousand copies of this alleged biography have been sold. Encouraged by success, M. de Mirecourt continues his martyrology; today he is at number 80.

Of course, I am careful not to give the author of *Les Contemporains* more importance than his readers grant him. I don't even believe that in his heart of hearts he professes any principle, that he belongs to any church. He just doesn't think. Notice, however, that this man, who in the preface placed at the head of number 32, boasts about *the care with which he goes after information*, who, moreover, seems to defy reprisals, who even provokes them, feels supported. He has a committed stance, a calculated plan for all cases. **Since it has pleased him to include me in his gallery of caricatures, he came back to me on his account of things!...** Well! Good people who are disconcerted by defamation, please be silent. M. de Mirecourt is not alone here; and when he made up his mind on this trade, he fully counted on your cries. He is above every slight. I don't want to know anything about his life. Responding to the evil he says of others with the evil he may have committed is a bad way of reasoning, which does not get to the bottom of things. The question is higher: all the barbs you direct against the libelist are wasted. We have to get to the point.

M. de Mirecourt — what do his antecedents and his pseudonym mean to me? — is for me a volume, 32mo and 92 pages, nothing more. What is this volume? What does it want from me? What idea does it represent? In the name of what interest did it come to seek me in my retirement, to research my life, my family, my business, and, decking me out with the Catholic *san-benito*, flouting me in the face of the world, in the process of forgetting me?

Now, to these questions, which arise naturally from the fact, I have not gone far to seek the answer. No offense to those who say the opposite, but there is more to the author of *Les Contemporains* than a literary adventurer, exploiting public curiosity at the expense of the celebrities of the time. M. de Mirecourt is a sign of the times. He is a champion of divine right,

whose work is connected with the system of reaction that prevails at the moment throughout Europe. He thus apostrophizes his detractors:

“Who are you? where are you from? Advocates of an unworthy cause, plead at your ease and expect no reply. You can, as much as you please, defend both M. de Lamennais and all those who have deserved our condemnation. The tip of the democratic ear and the rancor of party pierces far too much in your anger...”

And elsewhere :

“In times of revolution, there are two men that a dictator must silence, no matter what the cost: Proudhon and Girardin.”

In his journal, — M. de Mirecourt publishes a journal, — he speaks like a volunteer in the army of faith...

You are a legal scholar, Monsignor, everyone knows it, and you like to parade it. You know the axiom of law: *Is fecit cui prodest*. You will therefore agree: M. de Mirecourt is only a *straw man* here. Soldier, volunteer or mercenary of the counter-revolution — I don't know and I don't care care which — immorality and misery would not explain it entirely. Outside of the environment that makes him possible and produces him, he would have no reason to exist. Without his relations with you, Monseigneur, which means with all of the Besançon clergy, my biography would have become impossible for him; without the Christian point of view that you provided him, he would not have been able to give it meaning. Even his bravado, his affectation of effrontery, which serve him to confuse the enemy — he would not support them, if he did not find support in the conscience of the devout and reactionary public. *It is an old war stratagem*, by means of which he hopes, like the crusaders of Peter the Hermit and Saint Bernard, to obtain, by amassing money, the remission of his sins, and to regain the esteem of honest people. And the ground he has chosen for his battlefield, which, at least as far as I'm concerned, you suggested to him, Monsignor; the theme that he develops, repeated from the ecclesiastical pamphleteers of the last century, the Frérons and the Desfontaines, is this: apart from Authority and Faith, outside the Church and absolute government, there is neither virtue, nor probity, nor modesty, nor delicacy, nor conscience; there is only corruption, laziness, pride, lust, ferocity, hypocrisy. Witness Lamennais, George Sand, Emile de Girardin, Eugène Sue and, to be clear, Proudhon.

You see, Monsignor, that I am going straight for the enemy, spear-tip to the body. M. de Mirecourt, a brainless writer, is in my eyes only an insolvent debtor: the real respondent, prince of the Church, is you. No recriminations: in four lines I summarize the work of M. de Mirecourt and I set the debate. You can now advise him to leave it at that: the public need hear no more. What I have to say for myself will be useful for everyone.

When the magnin passes, says the peasant of Franche-Comté, *I must geld*. You must have heard this rustic apothegm in your pastoral tours. We call *magnin*, in our country, the industrialist who gelds calves, pigs, lambs, kids and foals. Every year, in the spring, the magnin makes his rounds. When he crosses through a village, or passes a farm, he plays a tune on the flageolet. The peasant comes out immediately and calls the magnin: *Tempus castrandi*, says Ecclesiastes.

I hear the flageolet of Time. It warns me that the time has come to fight the great fight. It is necessary, while the multitude is on their knees, to snatch *virtue* from the old mysticism, to

extirpate from the hearts of men that remnant of *latria* [*] that, maintaining superstition, destroys justice in them and prolongs immorality.

The eighteenth century was only a skirmish. Its criticism, libertine and superficial, could not obtain a victory that demanded, along with the highest reason, the purest morality.

How could Voltaire, with all his wit, have *écrasé l'Infâme*, when he gave it *La Pucelle [d'Orléans]* as a safe conduct?...

How could the Revolution, with all her vigor, have established liberty, when she bowed to theology? A philosopher with Bailly, Condorcet, Cloutz, Marat and Volney, the Revolution in the person of Robespierre gives herself to God, and the next day finds herself Christian. As soon as she relies on faith, revolutionary virtue leads to the corruption of Thermidor.

Socialism itself, which initially announced itself as being both the speculative and practical Reason of Humanity, which as such presented itself as Antichrist; socialism, which remained theological in its dogmas, evangelical in its discourse, pontifical in its churches, speaking to a failing society of voluptuousness, of passionate growth, of free love, of the emancipation of women and the rehabilitation of the flesh, when it was necessary to administer to it the energetic cordial of Justice, — socialism failed in its mission and contradicted itself: its work has to be started anew.

No more ambiguity, at this hour; no more of these compromises [* transactions] that dishonor all parties. The Revolution is attacked in its ideas and in its mores; **it is withered in its generations: the question is posed** between Justice according to Faith and Justice according to Liberty. It is a question of knowing if man, finally taking possession of himself, can, through the sole effort of his conscience, advance in virtue; or if he is condemned by the infirmity of his nature to remain eternally impure, only capable only of Justice when he is visited by the tongue of fire of the Holy Spirit.

For me, always respecting the dignity of others even when my own is attached to the pillory; respecting in religion the naive conscience of the people, in the priest the minister of this conscience, I do not come, at this solemn hour, to display an unseasonable impiety, to jeer at venerated symbols, to strike out at the anointed of the Most High. Anyone can close my book, who would look there for a sacrilegious pastime. I seek the laws of the just, the good and the true: it is only in this capacity that I allow myself to question religion.

Religion! It belongs to humanity; it is the fruit of its loins. To whom would it be despicable? Let us honor in any religious faith, in any Church, recognized or not recognized by the State, let us honor even in the God whom it worships the human conscience; let us keep charity, peace, with the people to whom this faith is dear. It is our duty, and I will not fail in it. But public piety satisfied, the system of theology belongs to my criticism: the law of the State abandons it to me.

Let each read these writings, as they were written, with the calm that truth demands. Our moral life is at stake — our eternal salvation, as the Church says — and never was a higher question raised among men.

CHAPTER ONE.

Definitions, method, axioms.

By engaging in this controversy, where we must find ourselves in perpetual antagonism, will you allow me, Monsignor, at least one thing, which is to lay down principles?

Everything connected with morality, as you know, seems affected by mystery, and this is not the least cause of the discredit into which this study has fallen. Since the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar*, in particular, moralists seem to have advised themselves to spread over the laws of conscience the character of a semi-revelation, which satisfies right reason as little as sincere faith. Let us first try to get some ideas from common sense.

I — DEFINITIONS. 1. The word MORES [Fr. *mœurs*] comes from the Latin *mos*, genitive *moris*, plural *mores*, which means custom, usage, habit, institution, and in the plural, mores. The root of this word is the same as that of *modus*, mode, manner, fashion; *modius*, measure, muid or bushel; *moderare*, to moderate, to temper, to govern by break or measure; *modestia*, a quality of the soul that consists in maintaining moderation and propriety in everything. *Vir modestus*, in the classical authors, is the man of good manners, measured in words and feelings.

Related to the same subject: *meta*, limit; *metrum*, meter; *mensura*, measure, etc.

The Greek ἔθος or ἦθος, from which we have made *éthique*, ethics, goes back to the radical ἔω, to go, to come, presents an analogous meaning. It means gait, march, arrival. Latin, more abstract, reveals the legal genius of the people-king; Greek makes an image, and is better suited to poetry.

The Greeks also used, to say *mores*, the word τροποι, [Fr.] *tournoires*, that is to say modes, forms, manners, usages. According to Dion, the Emperor Augustus, who larded his conversation with Greek phrases, took the title of επιμηλήτης τροπῶν, which Suetonius translates thus: *Recepit morum legumque regimen*; he took the direction of morals and laws.

According to etymology, mores would be the *manners, gaits and turns* of living beings, as both individuals and species, in their thoughts, their language, their relationships, their loves, in a word in all the *acts* of their existence.

Hence the name of *practical philosophy*, philosophy of acts, which is sometimes given to morality, and which I retain as more proper to express the object of these studies.

I therefore understand by *mores*, the formal conditions of life, in all its states and relations. Just as being cannot be conceived without attributes, the soul without faculties, substance without modes, science without method, so life, individualized or grouped, cannot be conceived without conditions; and every living being, whether man or beast, by the very fact that it lives, necessarily has mores.

2. The modes of the subject, individual or collective, being dependent both on its intimate constitution and on the environment in which it is called to live, it follows that among subjects of the same species, the mores can be, in some way, different. Thus there are the mores of the peoples of the North and the mores of the peoples of the South, monarchical mores and republican mores, workers' mores and bourgeois mores, the mores of the peasant and those of the soldier, oratorical more and ecclesiastical mores.

But, whatever the variety of mores, there is always a common ground that it cannot reach, and which remains impenetrable; a ground that constitutes the essence of the being, on which come to be molded the modifications that it receives from the outside, and the integrity of which makes its glory: we will call it, if you will, *dignity*.

3. Dignity has *felicity*, physical and spiritual, as its maxim or rule of conduct. So that these three terms, felicity, dignity and mores, are adequate, united, and cannot logically find themselves in opposition.

Thus the mores of a subject can be said to be good or bad, excellent or detestable, and he himself will be worthy or unworthy, according to whether the whole of his conduct is more or less in accord with his nature and his destiny, with the laws of his development and the conditions of his well-being, with the order of nature that surrounds him and the end of all things.

4. Hence, in the order of mores, the idea of *good* and *evil*, synonymous, let us not forget, with that of *happiness* and *sorrow*.

It is, in fact, as a result of the propriety of norms or of their subversion that the subject experiences either contentment or discomfort, so that, according to the consistency or anomaly of his mores, he is happy or miserable. These relations are linked to each other, like the effect to the cause, like the mode to the substance. Pleasure or pain, such is the inevitable consequence of the sincerity of mores or of their perversion.

Which amounts to saying that the dignity of the subject constitutes for him a positive law, having happiness as its sanction, if he obeys it; suffering, if he violates it.

5. All beings, individuals or societies, tend by the spontaneity of their lives to make their dignity prevail in all the circumstances in which they find themselves engaged and to make these conform to their mores: it would imply a contradiction if a subject fought against its essential modes, and was fundamentally wicked. To be hurtful to oneself! It is absurd. Undoubtedly the accidents and complications of existence can suspend, delay, make more difficult the production of just mores: this is a consequence of the variability of the environment in which we live, as well as of our organization itself. But, unless the subject succumbs to an external force, sooner or later order will triumph within it. Immorality cannot become the natural and permanent state of any subject, any more than disease.

I call *virtue*, in general, the more or less active energy with which the subject, man or nation, tends to determine its mores and to maintain its dignity.

But this virtue, like everything related to movement and life, is subject to hesitations and relaxations; it has its failures, its intermittences, its illnesses and its eclipses: this is *vice*, *sin*, *crime*.

6. Since evil can be the effect, sometimes of ignorance and excessive constraint, sometimes of the cowardice of the subject itself, the pain it entails in the conscience takes on an entirely different character, depending on whether it is derived from the first of these causes or from the second. The sin of ignorance does not leave vivid and lasting traces in the soul: it does not infect the will, and the memory quickly rejects it. While the evil committed by cowardice engenders a bitter sorrow, poison of the soul, which withers the dignity, the subject in its essence, the life at its source, and often leads to suicide: this is *remorse*.

7. Moreover, as every anomaly is susceptible to improvement, every infirmity to recovery, just so moral evil can be repaired: this is what we call *reparation*, *rehabilitation*, *expiation*, and in

certain cases *chastisement, vengeance*. If the expiation is voluntary and spontaneous, we call it *repentance*. To tell the truth, repentance is the only valid reparation for sin, for it is the only one that cures the remorse and contempt of others. Where remorse does not appear, we may see an enemy, a ferocious beast, a monster, but it would hardly be possible to find a *culprit*.

There are still other notions that come up frequently in books on morals: some of those are *religion, justice, liberty*, etc. The definition of these notions is itself one of the most difficult problems, which these *Studies* are precisely intended to resolve.

II

SCIENCE AND METHOD. — Mores being the acts or phenomena by which the invisible, immutable essence of the subject is translated outside, it follows first of all that morality constitutes within it, like sensibility, intelligence, love and all the affections, a positive thing, real, not fanciful; that consequently it is subject to *laws*, and can become the object of a *science*.

Now, as has been observed above (Def. 2), the subject being constantly modified by the environment in which it lives, mores depend on two kinds of causes: a *constant*, deriving from its innermost essence, and *variables*, which come from outside.

The procedure of science, or its *method*, will therefore consist, after having classified the facts according to the faculties to which they belong, in comparing acts of the same category with each other; then to extracting from their variations the common character or tendency, which is their law.

We call *ethics* or *morals* the science of mores, that is to say, of the formal conditions of human life and its happiness, both in the solitary state and in the social state.

This is the *science of good and evil*, allegorized in Genesis by the fruit of the forbidden tree.

III.

AXIOMS. — In addition to definitions, the science of mores presupposes *a priori* the certainty of a certain number of indemonstrable principles or first principles, among which I limit myself to citing the following:

1. *Nothing necessary is nothing*: — principle of NECESSITY.
2. *Nothing can be drawn from nothing nor be reduced to nothing*: — principle of REALITY.
3. *Nothing happens by virtue of nothing*: — principle of CAUSALITY.
4. *Nothing is done for the sake of nothing*: principle of FINALITY or FELICITY.
5. *Nothing can be balanced by nothing*: — principle of EQUALITY and STABILITY.
6. *Nothing can be the expression of nothing*: — principle of MEANING or PHENOMENALITY.
7. *Nothing becomes or declines in zero time*: — principle of EVOLUTION or DURATION.
8. *Nothing is composed only of parts*: — principle of SERIES or SYNTHESIS.

All these notions and propositions flow logically from the conception of life and its modes. They apply to all systems and cannot be contradicted: we will see where the difficulties begin.

CHAPTER II.

How the notion of Justice results from the opposition of the individual and the group. — Difficulty of the problem: necessity of a solution.

IV

In the subject considered in isolation, the study of Morals, whatever variations they undergo under outside influences, does not appear to suffer from any serious difficulty. Man subordinating nature to himself, the contradiction does not arise anywhere.

It is not the same with the subject considered in its relations with its peers, and one wonders first of all if a science of mores, in a collectivity, is possible.

Such is the question that, from the vestibule of the temple, saddens the spirit with its dark obscurity. Here, in fact, begins the series of problems that cause the despair of the philosophers and the triumph of the revelators.

I have said above (Def. 3) that in the subject, whatever it may be, individual or group, considered in itself and apart from all external relations, the rule of mores is the good of the subject, what is called the *maxim of felicity*.

But the individual and the group cannot be separated from one another, nor, consequently, their mores studied separately: they essentially penetrate one another. Now, it can happen, and experience proves that it does indeed happen every day, that the interest of the individual and that of the group, despite the bond of sympathy that unites them, are different and even opposed: how are we to reconcile these two interests, if, for one as for the other, the maxim of morals remains the same, *felicity*?

In order to resolve this contradiction there is one way, only one, indicated by common sense, on which the human multitude and the majority of legislators are in agreement: it is to subordinate the individual interest or that of the smallest number to the interest of the greater, to subordinate personal dignity to social dignity.

This subordination would constitute JUSTICE.

Thus individual dignity would form the first degree of human morality; social dignity, or Justice, would form the second. The first being subordinated to the second, it would follow that while individual dignity, limited by egoism, finds its reason in itself and its happiness in the respect of its prerogatives, its sorrow in their violation, Justice comes to break this order, and subject the subject to torture by imposing itself on him with a character of coercion that can go so far as to demand the sacrifice of life, and suffers neither complaint nor negligence. So that individual dignity does not remain, and man has felicity only to the extent that the society of which he is a part leaves it to him.

Such would be *Right*, exclusively social in principle, and such would be *Duty*, exclusively personal. They both signify that if the care for the personal prerogative, if the satisfaction of the needs and affections that compose our life are not in themselves in any way bad, since they are given by nature itself, neither are they, in our innermost being, obligatory, since they are resolved in egoism and only a matter of free will; but that it is otherwise with the social prerogative, the

antithesis of the personality, which, far from submitting to the decisions of egoism, imposes itself on it, at all costs, by authority.

Here arise formidable questions.

Man is free, egoistic by nature, I would even say legitimately egoistic, very capable of devoting himself out of love and friendship, but rebellious in the face of constraint, as befits every free and worthy being. It is a question of knowing if he will give his consent to this subordination that is made a law for him, if it is even possible that it is given to him: for it is obvious that without consent, there is no Justice.

Who will state the right? Who will formulate the duty? Who will speak for society? Who will take the part of the individual? In whose name or what name will this Justice, reputed to be sovereign, which on occasion demands the abandonment of felicity, present itself? How are we to make it recognize, accept, acknowledge? Who will define its precepts? Who will be responsible for carrying them out? What will be the compensations offered to self-love? Even more, how, under this law, which would no longer proceed from his pure individuality, could man still be virtuous or cowardly, guilty or repentant? How would he be moral? We can easily imagine remorse, proceeding from sin against oneself, but what will Justice be, born of disobedience to a factitious, adventitious, foreign law, entirely of reason? Who will arrogate to himself the right to punish, even alleging the good of the culprit, the care of his soul, the salvation of his dignity? What agreement is possible between these two terms, society and the self? And if agreement is impossible, if society must always, necessarily prevail, even without compensation, what becomes of individuality, forced to step aside, to abdicate? Isn't war with egoism better then, for poor humans, than peace under the regime of right? Strength at least is heroic and beautiful; it does not dishonor the vanquished, while the height of shame is arbitrariness. What will become, under this regime of Justice, of liberty, audacity, enterprising genius, all our most generous manifestations, without which our existence is nothing? How are we to say that a subject exists, when he is required, by the duty whose stigmata the community imprints on him, to abandon the natural course of his mores out of respect for an invisible, anonymous morality? What! Justice is presented to us as the second term of morals, and here it is the negation of life itself!

These questions, taken together, make up the problem of Justice, which is none other than the problem of society as a whole.

As long as man has united with man for the common defense and for the search for subsistence, this terrible problem has been posed, and the solution does not seem more advanced than it was on the first day. Revolutions follow one another; religions, governments and laws change; and it cannot be said which has done more harm to society, its belief in Justice or its perseverance in revolt. As in the centuries of initiation, minds dream of right, equality, peace. But it is still just a dream. The truth has not shown itself; the maxim of self-interest, scarcely softened by belief in the gods and by the terror of torture, governs the world; and if the mores of humanity have been distinguished up to now from those of beasts, it is by a hypocrisy of equity and fraternity of which their *stupidity* [* *bêtise*] at least renders them incapable.

V

Moreover, the conception of justice, as the subordination of egoism to the collective interest, is in no way, as some have claimed, a prejudice of education, a fiction of fanaticism or authority. It is inherent in the social condition and results from the very nature of things.

Man is a sociable animal, the most sociable of all the animals. He cannot develop and live except in society. This fact of nature, which Rousseau's rhetoric was once pleased to deny, is no longer disputed today.

From the sociability of man is deduced, as a necessary consequence, the subordination of the individual to the group, that is to Justice.

As the whole is greater than the part, the body more precious than the member; in the same way society is superior to the individual, and its prerogative, on pain of death for the individualities themselves, must come first.

To ensure the social prerogative, outside of which the interest of each is compromised, it is therefore necessary that each member of society be ready, at the first request, to sacrifice his most immediate and most considerable interest to the general interest, which in a host of cases will be his slightest interest; consequently, that in all his actions he has society in view, that he adopts its mores, that he becomes, so to speak, an incarnation of Justice, which entails the negation of his own personality and seems a contradiction.

The subordination of the individual to the group is observed in all associated animals, in which it appears as the consequence of the physiological principle that, in every organism, subordinates each faculty to the general destiny. Thus among the bees everything is organized with a view to the community. There is only one female, served by seven or eight males, which are killed as soon as the laying of the eggs has rendered them useless. The workers have no sex. All their love, their intelligence, their happiness, all their soul is in the hive, outside of which they perish, like creatures without a reason for existence, bodies whose life has been withdrawn.

Nature, by making all men, if not equal, at least very nearly equivalent (*Studies* III and VI); by giving them an exalted feeling of their dignity, by creating the individuals of the two sexes in equal number, and positing itself the distinction of families in the formation of couples (*Study* XI) — nature, I say, does not seem to have wanted such a murderous subordination for man. She leaves him his personality. But whoever says society necessarily says restriction of egoism: within what limits does this restriction take place for man? Of what nature is it? What is this feeling that, by preserving freedom, by multiplying its power through the union of forces, must nevertheless subordinate it, since without subordination, there is no common life, no society?

Opinion in this respect is so well established, common sense so firm, that among all peoples the quality of being moral is denied to him who lives outside of society and its laws. For the same reason, only those acts that imply the subordination of the individual will to the social will are regarded as just. The others, of whatever interest they may be for society or for the individual, are deemed, from the point of view of morals, indifferent.

This lets us put our finger on the error of some writers who, in modern times, have tried to explain Justice by egoism.

Let the physiologist deduce from the consideration of human life and its laws rules of conduct for subsistence, habitation, clothing, labor, the relations of the sexes, the education of children, etc.; he will have made a code of *hygiene*: no one will say that he has made a treatise on DUTIES.

The laws of hygiene can furnish the motive and the occasion for a right to be exercised, for a duty to be fulfilled: they constitute by themselves neither duty nor right, and it is in vain that one would claim to solve the problem of justice in this way. To seek the law of morals in a theory of health is to confuse two totally distinct orders of ideas; it is to deny morals.

Just as the utilitarian, following the example of Bentham, seeks in the natural relations established between men labor, property, exchange, credit, rules and guarantees for the conduct of operations, security and the well-being of existence; let him go so far as to demonstrate that in many cases the individual who understands his true interest finds it to his advantage to sacrifice something of his own rather than to engage in a struggle with his fellows and with society: this philosopher of a new species will be able to be a great *economist*; he will have nothing in common with one who teaches Justice, Right.

Political and domestic economy, an eminent science, which yields in dignity only to the science of right itself, can furnish, like public and private hygiene, ample material for the prescriptions of the legislator and for the establishment of morals. It is not Justice: it is not only common sense; it is, as I have said, the very nature of things that declares it.

In all these cases the law, hygienic or economic, is proposed to the subject, but in the form of advice, without injunction from the conscience, and with the probability of a benefit, if he takes it upon himself to submit to it, or a claim, if he refuses. Justice imposes itself, repugnant, gratuitous, obligatory: an abyss separates this sphere from all the others.

The problem therefore remains whole, constantly reproduced by the universal consciousness and by the fatal antinomy of society and the individual; and no one so far has given the solution.

In principle and in fact, Justice is the condition *sine qua non* of society; all mouths proclaim it. But how, from the point of view of the individual dignity involved, are we to justify Justice? This is what none of those who put forward Duty, Society and Divinity have been able to do. And the definition lacking, as the affirmation of the law is unanimous, its violation is general.

Could it be that humanity, in its rigorous elements, is an impossible creation, that our ambiguous species is neither solitary nor sociable, that it cannot subsist either by right or by egoism, and that all the morality of man consists in safeguarding his private interest against the incursions of his fellow men, by paying tribute to a fiction, much like the pagans who, before sitting down to eat, offered a libation to the gods?

The thing is worth examining. Because, if it was found, as some claim, that our Justice with its formulas is only a play-acting of our antagonism, it must be admitted that that would be to singularly reduce our glory, and all that science would have to say would be that we are peculiar animals. Let us go further: man not daring to admit his law of nature, which is egoism; unable to follow his social reason, which requires sacrifice; tossed between peace and war, speculating both on the hypothesis of right and the reality of robbery, man would truly have no mores: he would be a creature that is, by essence and destination, immoral.

So, while Justice seems the law of the multitude, all the more obligatory for this multitude as its fate is more miserable, we see the individual, as he grows in strength, in wealth, in genius, casting off the mask, freeing himself from prejudice, posing in his pride, as if, by displaying his

selfishness, he was returning to his dignity. Talent, power, fortune, have always been, in the opinion of the people, a reason to dispense with the duties imposed on the masses. The least author, the most obscure Bohemian, if he thinks himself a genius, puts himself above the law: what about the princes of literature and the princes of art? princes of the church and princes of the state?... Like religion, morality is sent back to the plebs: beware lest the plebs, in turn, decide between the great lord and the bourgeois!... And who could still be fooled? Haven't we, in the last seventy years, changed maxims twenty times? Are we not, above all, worshipers of success? And while redoubling our hypocrisy, don't we make a profession of thinking and saying to whoever will listen that crime and virtue are only words, remorse a weakness, Justice a scarecrow, morals a little bell?

Justice, morals! We can say of them what the English say today of the protective regime, that they are an expired patent of invention, a recipe that has become useless. Alas! Everyone possesses this fatal secret and behaves accordingly. There is no Justice, these poor children tell you. The natural state of man is iniquity, but iniquity limited, restricted, like the war that is its image, by armistices, truces, exchanges of prisoners, provisional peaces, which cunning and necessity form, and which resentment and revenge break.

A publicist, M. de Girardin, with his usual neatness, has highlighted this situation. "I deny morality," he wrote in a pamphlet published some time after the *coup d'etat*; "I deny Justice, right, modesty, good faith, virtue. Everything is crime, naturally crime, necessarily crime; and I propose against crime," — guess what, Monseigneur; a religion? Oh, no! M. de Girardin is of his century, hardly mystical, and not at all a theologian; — "a system of insurance..."

I defy all the Juvénals, all the Victor Hugos on earth, to find anything stronger than this quip of M. de Girardin.

VI

Let us now sum up, and from what we are permitted to affirm with certainty of the mores in the individual, let us conclude what they must be for him in society, on pain of the negation of society; consequently, under what conditions there can exist for our species a science of morals.

According to our definitions, every subject necessarily has mores, just as it has faculties and passions. (Def. 1st).

These mores form the essence of the subject; they constitute its dignity, they are the guarantee and the law of its well-being. (Def. 2, 3 and 4).

The mores are therefore both reality and idea in the subject: reality, since they are nothing other than the subject itself considered in the generality of its essence and in the exercise of its faculties (Ax. 6); idea or relation, since they result from the communion of the subject with nature and other beings. (Def. 1 and 2.)

For the same reasons, the mores explain the subject (Ax. 4): they explain its organism, its faculties, its passions, its virtues and its vices, its joys and its sorrows, its corruptions and its improvements; they give the first and the last word of being, and whoever does not know the mores of man, even if he had the most perfect knowledge of his organism, would know nothing of man.

That is not all. The subject, as a moral being, knows itself and feels itself; it has instinct, intuition, knowledge of its law; it affirms it, wants it, adheres to it with love; it has the intimate

certainty that through it and through it alone it can be happy, and it strives with all the energy of its will to realize it, by subjecting everything around it to it. (Def. 5, Ax. 4).

Applying these principles to the man who lives in society, I conclude:

The social condition cannot be for the individual a diminution of his dignity; it can only be an increase of it.

It is therefore necessary that JUSTICE, which is the generic name given to the mores of the subject constituted in society, must also be, in order to be something, *reality* and *idea*; that it is a power of the soul, together with the relation of subordination that unites the individual to society; that he feels it in himself through his conscience, as he feels love, ambition, voluptuousness; that he knows it through his understanding; that he is assured of the excellence of this law, both from the point of view of his personal happiness and that of the preservation of the social group; that by it finally all the facts of collective life are explained, its establishments, its utopias, its aberrations; so that Justice, by which everything exists in the social whole, without which nothing can be, appears as the first and last word of human destiny, individual and collective, the initial and final sanction of our beatitude.

Under these conditions is the science of morals, the science of a conscience governed by a double law, possible?

This amounts to saying: Is society possible? Is the individual himself possible, since he exists only in society? And is not the law that is supposed to govern this antagonism rather a pure fiction, suggested by necessity, and created against the rabble of imbeciles for the glorification of the strongest?

Such is the problem, the preliminary solution of which alone can open up a science of Justice or of imperative morality, founded, as already appears, either on subordination, or on the reconciliation or identity, there is no there is no room for a third hypothesis, of social dignity and individual dignity.

CHAPTER III.

Double hypothesis: Transcendence and Immanence. General exposition of the two systems.

VII

From the preceding there already results an essential point, which we can take for granted, namely:

That in order to regulate the relations of individuals among themselves, to make them live together and through each other, and thus to create society, a principle, a power — something like what we call Justice, having its own reality, its seat somewhere, from which it determines the will and imposes its rules on them — is necessary.

What is this principle? Where are we to grasp it? How are we to define it? That is now the question.

It has been claimed that Justice was only a relation of equilibrium, conceived by the understanding, but freely admitted by the will, like every other speculation of the mind, because of the utility it finds in it; that in this way Justice, reduced to its formula, being reduced to a measure of precaution and insurance, to an act of good pleasure, even of sympathy, but always with a view to self-love, is, apart from that, only an imagination, nothing.

But, without taking into account that this opinion is contradicted by the universal feeling, which recognizes and affirms in Justice something other than a calculation of probabilities and a measure of guarantee, I will observe, first of all, that in this system, which is none other than that of moral doubt, society is impossible: we experience it today, as the Greeks and Romans experienced it (see the *Prologue*); — secondly, that in the absence of a legal principle, force and fraud once again becoming the only law, liberty, despite all the policies and combinations of insurance, is suppressed, which renders the system contradictory.

So I come back to my subject, and I say:

Whatever Justice may be and by whatever name it is called, the necessity of a principle that acts on the will like a force, and determines it in the direction of right or of the reciprocity of interests, independent of any consideration of selfishness, this necessity is indisputable. Society cannot depend on the calculations and conveniences of selfishness; the acts of all humanity, in its ascents and in its regressions, bear witness to this.

It is a question of noting the existence of this principle, this force, of analyzing its nature, of giving its formula or definition. To find the reality of Justice and to define it, to indicate its general applications, is today the whole of ethics: moral philosophy, up to the fullest manifestation of conscience, cannot go beyond.

Now, there are two ways of conceiving the reality of Justice and then of determining it:

Either as a pressure of the collective being on the individual self, the first modifying the second in its image and making it an organ of itself;

Or else by a faculty of the individual self which, without departing from its innermost being, would feel its dignity in the person of its neighbor with the same vivacity as it feels it in its own person, and would thus find itself identical and adequate to the collective being itself, while preserving its individuality.

In the first case, Justice is external and superior to the individual, either because it resides in the social collectivity, considered as being *sui generis*, whose dignity takes precedence over that of all the members who compose it; or because we place it still higher, in the transcendent and absolute being which animates or inspires society, and which we call GOD.

In the second case, Justice is intimate to the individual, homogeneous with its dignity, equal to this same dignity multiplied by the sum of the relations that social life supposes.

Let us give an idea of the two systems.

VIII

System of Revelation.

The first and the oldest by date, the one that still rallies the mass of the populations of the globe, although it is losing ground every day among the civilized nations, is the system of TRANSCENDENCE, vulgarly of *Revelation*. All the religions and quasi-religions aim to inculcate it; Christianity has been its principal organ. To the theologians or theodiceans must be added the multitude of reformers who, while separating themselves from the Church and from theism itself, remain faithful to the principle of external subordination, putting Society, Humanity or any other Sovereignty, more or less visible and respectable, in the place of God.

According to the doctrine generally followed, of which the dissenting theories are nothing more than pointless plagiarisms, the moral principle, which forms the conscience, the plastic power that gives it virtue and dignity, is of an origin superior to man, on whom it acts as an influence from on high, gratuitous and mysterious.

Justice, according to this genesis, is therefore supernatural and superhuman; its true subject is God, who communicates it and breathes it into the soul made in his image, that is to say made of the same substance as him, capable consequently of receiving the modes of its divine author.

In what manner, according to the Transcendentalists, this communication takes place is a question on which they are divided, as it happens with all things beyond experience. Depending on whether the writer attaches himself more or less closely to the mystical idea taken as his point of departure, or whether he gives way to the suggestions of empiricism, his doctrine can vary from Catholicism to pantheism, from the catechism of the Council of Trent to the Ethics of Spinoza.

But since in such a matter a system must be studied in its entire historical development, not in arbitrary dismemberments, and since we will have occasion to convince ourselves that the restrictions proposed by the moderates of transcendentalism are obvious inconsistencies, the effect of philosophical modesty, I will stick above all to the Catholic system, the most complete of all and the most rational in its unreason.

So it is enough to know, according to orthodox theology:

That the human soul, empty and dark, without any other morality than that of egoism, is incapable by itself of raising itself to the law that governs society, and of conforming its acts to it by its own strength alone; that it only possesses a certain aptitude for receiving the light, the transfusion of which is accomplished in it by the divine Revealer, otherwise known as the Word;

That this state of invincible darkness, which nevertheless, we are assured, could not have failed to be, is the effect of a diabolical corruption, which occurred in the soul in the first days of

creation, a corruption that causes it to fall to the rank of the brutes, and from which, on this earth, it cannot be completely cured;

That the revelation of the law took place a first time in Adam, then successively in Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets and Jesus Christ, who, through his Church, organized its propagation among men in perpetuity;

That in this way Justice, an essentially divine, hyperphysical, ultra-rational thing, above every observation and conclusion of the mind, that which is expressed by the word *transcendence*, which characterizes the system, cannot, as regards its determination, have anything in common with the other branches of knowledge, all of which depend *ex aequo* on understanding and experience; — as regards practice, that man is entirely incapable by nature of any obedience, virtue or sacrifice; that he essentially rejects it, especially since he cannot find in it, in himself and on this earth, any compensation;

That all that man has to do therefore is to follow the impulse of grace, which moreover never fails him, and to obey the law, as it is proposed to him by God through the Church, in which case he will be saved; otherwise, and in the event that he resists the divine order and proves refractory, he will be punished;

But there could be no serious question of philosophizing on the decrees of heaven, as on the phenomena of nature, of penetrating the motives, much less still of claiming to add to them or to subtract from them, since that would be to aspire to remake the work of God and to see beyond his providence, which, without impiety, cannot be admitted.

As a result, according to this theology, the principle of Justice is in God, who is both its subject and revealer; the power of realization, still in God; the sanction, always in God.

So that, without the divine manifestation, humanity after its fall would not have emerged from the condition of the beasts, and the first fruit of religion is this philosophical reason itself, which misunderstands it and insults it.

IX

In support of this summary, I will confine myself to quoting the following passages from the *Dictionary* of Bergier, edition of 1843, revised, enlarged and annotated by Messeigneurs Doney, Bishop of Montauban, and Thomas Gousset, Archbishop of Reims:

“According to theologians, the *Law* is the will of God intimated to intelligent creatures, by which he imposes an obligation on them; he imposes on them in the necessity of doing or avoiding certain actions, if they are not to be punished.

“Thus, according to this definition, without the notion of a God and a providence, there is no law and no moral obligation properly so called.

“It is by analogy that we call *laws* the wills of men who have the authority to reward and punish us; but if this authority did not come from God, it would be null and illegitimate.”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Kant, Spinoza himself, MM. Cousin, Jean Reynaud, Jules Simon, Pierre Leroux, all the eclectics, the spiritualists, and even Auguste Comte, who while denying God clings to the great Humanitary Being, do not speak differently.

Bergier grants that our reason can go so far as to discover the *utility* of the law, but he denies that it can make it a duty for us, in which opinion he is followed by the mass of philosophers:

“Reason or the faculty of reasoning can tell us what it is advantageous for us to do or to avoid, but it imposes no necessity on us to do what it dictates; it can *intimate* the law to us, but it does not by itself have the force of law. If God had not ordered us to follow it, we could resist it without being guilty. The torch that guides us, and the law that obliges us, are not the same thing.”

Monseigneur Gousset, in the notes he appended to the *Dictionary*, develops the idea of Bergier in this way:

“No purely philosophical reason can establish the distinction between good and evil. The philosopher who is fortunate enough to have just and precise ideas on such an important question nevertheless remains powerless to convince, by his own reason, the philosopher who has contrary ideas of his error.”

And below:

“One can ask whether consciousness naturally and of itself has the notion of good and evil. The observations we have made regarding the articles *Certainty, Evidence, Faith, Language, Reason, Revelation* and *Truth*, demonstrate that this notion is, like all the others, transmitted to man by tradition, and that he can only find it in society. Now, society itself has received from God the notions that it deposits in the conscience of each man: it is God who has taught them to society. So, once again, it is God who is the first author of these notions, and it is on God that their philosophical demonstration rests.

“So moral science must necessarily be attached to the idea of God, that is to say, to Revelation...”

And, as if to justify Bishop Gousset’s observation, we see the philosophers, those at least who admit a morality superior to egoism — J.-J. Rousseau, Kant, V. Cousin, J. Simon, J. Reynaud, J. Oudot — linking the laws of morals to God and to a revelation, historical or psychic.

As for the philosophers who deny any kind of revelation or take no account of it, such as Saint-Lambert, d’Holbach, Bentham, Hobbes, Hegel and the modern pantheists, they fall back, under the name of *Natural Law*, into egoism, utilitarianism, organicism and fatalism, which is to say that they deny, with liberty, Justice.

This, then, is the essence of Religion. It exists, it is given, not, as the ancient infidels said, with the intention and with the premeditated will to enslave the human species, although it has had this result, but in order to provide a reason, an authority and a basis for Justice, without which society cannot exist.

We can see from this how miserable it is to argue, as the Protestants do, about the legitimacy of the Roman Church, about the certainty of its tradition and the authenticity of its teaching, about the truth of its dogma, the purity of its discipline, the variations of its history, the uncertainties of its exegesis; — or else, following the example of the deists, to argue about the truth of prophecies and miracles, the mission of Moses, the quality of the Messiah, etc. It is like the Pharisees of the Gospel, whom Christ reproached for swallowing a camel and grimacing at a fly.

X

These principles established, theology thus explains the movement of history.

This movement, which some take for progress, while others see in it only an irrational and sterile agitation, is nothing else, assure the inspired, than the effect of the struggle that is established first of all between the selfish and recalcitrant nature of man and the stimulating and increasingly victorious action of the law, the revealed expression of society. Such is the basis of the philosophy of Bossuet, in his *Discourse on Universal History*. This is why the Church has taken

the name of *militant*: her enemy is the angel of darkness, personification of evil, principal author of our debasement, who, despite all the exorcisms, despite the blood of a God shed for the sins of the world, continues to possess the majority of souls.

But to suppose that, like the progress that manifests itself in science and industry, and which is the effect of our historical hoarding, there is a similar progress in Justice, independent of the effective action of Grace, — this is a proposition against which theology protests with all its might, which it declares destructive of religion and, consequently, of all morality, of all society.

And it must be said, not only does contemporary immorality seem to prove theology right, but on this point as well the deistic philosophy thinks at base like the Church. It believes and teaches that society is, like the human body, subject to corruption and decadence; that from time to time it needs to rekindle its morals; that this moral regeneration can be accomplished only on one condition, the renewal of dogma. What is dogma? The inner, divine and providential word, which issues forth in fateful epochs for the regeneration of societies. It is for this reason that today we see high intelligences, generous souls, convinced that corruption is at its height, that Christianity is worn out like paganism in the past, and that the time is near, addressing their request to the Divinity, implore with tears and compunction for a manifestation of dogma. The author of *France mystique* has counted more than thirty of these competitors of the Church, whose motto, in a decidedly reasoning century, but one that faith always agitates, seems to be this: *Revelation is necessary, but not too much of it!*...

So much has the system of transcendence — drawn from the fundamental concepts and the first hypotheses of reason, formulated in poetic legends and marvelous stories, maintained by the weakness of soul of the philosophers — entered the consciousness of men! We know by what gymnastics the incomparable Kant, having overturned all the alleged demonstrations of the existence of God with his *Critique of Pure Reason*, found him again in the *Practical Reason*. Descartes, before him, had arrived at the same result; and it is marvelous to see the last disciples of this acrobatic metaphysician reject the authority of the Church, the revelation of Jesus, those of Moses, the patriarchs, Zoroaster, the Brachmanes, the Druids, the whole system of religions, and then assert, as a fact of positive psychology, the immediate revelation of God in souls.

According to these gentlemen, God manifests himself directly to us through the conscience; what is called the moral sense is the impression of the Divinity itself. Simply because I recognize the obligation to obey Justice, I am, to hear them, a believer despite myself, a worshipper of the Supreme Being, and a partisan of natural religion. *Duty!* It is enough that I pronounce this word to attest, against my desire, that I am double: I, first of all, who am bound by duty; and the Other, that is to say, God, who has formed this bond, who has established himself in my soul, who possesses me completely, who, when I imagine myself following the moral law as an act of autonomy, leads me, without my realizing it, by his imperious suggestion.

In truth, these doctrinaires of the Faith must take us for big children, believing that we will laugh with them at the miracle of La Salette, and that we will accept that much more enormous miracle of their theodicy. Divine possession, imagined in desperation by a timid school, is the last gasp of transcendent superstition. What did I say? It is already the disguised formula of true philosophy, and pity for those who are mistaken in it!

XI

System of the Revolution.

The other system, radically opposed to the first, and whose triumph the Revolution aimed to ensure, is that of IMMANENCE, or the innateness of Justice in consciousness.

According to this theory, man, although starting from a complete savagery, incessantly produces, by the spontaneous development of his nature, society. It is only by abstraction that he can be considered in a state of isolation and without any other law than egoism. His consciousness is not double, as the transcendentalists teach: it does not depend, on the one hand, on animality, and on the other, on God; it is only polarized. An integral part of a collective existence, man feels his dignity both in himself and in others, and thus carries in his heart the principle of a morality superior to his individuality. And this principle he does not receive from elsewhere; it is intimate, *immanent* to him. It constitutes his essence, the essence of society itself. It is the proper form of the human soul, a form that is only becoming more and more precise and perfected by the relations that social life gives rise to every day.

Thus, when I use the word *immanence*, I do not take it in the sense of Spinoza, saying of God that he is the immanent cause of all things; nor that of Hegel, who, making God identical with the universal spirit, concludes that God is immanent in humanity.

I discard all theologism, every theory of the Absolute. I say simply that Justice is within us, like love, like the notions of the beautiful, the useful and the true, like all our powers and faculties. And I consequently deny that, while no one dreams of ascribing love, ambition, the spirit of speculation or enterprise to God, one should make an exception for Justice.

Justice is human, entirely human, nothing but human: it is to wrong to it to relate it, closely or distantly, directly or indirectly, to a principle superior or prior to humanity. Let philosophy occupy itself as much as it will with the nature of God and his attributes; this may be its right and its duty. I claim that this notion of God has no place in our legal constitutions, any more than it has a place in our treatises on political economy or algebra. The theory of *Practical Reason* subsists by itself; it neither supposes nor requires the existence of God and the immortality of souls, it would be a lie if it needed such props.

This is the precise sense in which I use the word *immanence*, purged of all theological and supernaturalist reminiscence. Justice has its seat in humanity; it is progressive and indestructible in humanity, because it is of humanity: such is my thought, itself drawn from the depths of conscience.

And when I add that the Revolution had the object of expressing this thought, I do not mean either that they were born suddenly, the Revolution and its idea, in a certain place, at a certain time: with regard to Justice, nothing is new under the sun. I mean only that it was from the French Revolution onwards that the theory of immanent Justice asserted itself consciously and fully, that it became preponderant, and that it definitively took possession of society. For, just as the notion of right is eternal and innate in humanity, so the Revolution is innate and eternal. It did not begin in the year of grace 1789, in a locality located between the Pyrenees, the Ocean, the Rhine and the Alps. It is of all times and all countries. It dates from the day when man, distrusting himself, made appeal, to his misfortune, to an invisible Authority, remunerative and vengeful; but

it was at the end of the last century, and on the glorious soil of France, that it made its most brilliant explosion.

That explained, the theory of Justice, innate and progressive, deduces itself.

Without doubt, before his immersion in society or, to put it better, before society began to be born from him, through generation, labor and ideas, man, circumscribed in his egoism, limited to animal life, knows nothing of the moral law. Just as his intelligence, before the excitation of sensibility, is empty, without any notion of space or time, so his conscience, before the excitation of society, is also empty, without knowledge of good or of evil. The experience of things, necessary for the production of the idea, is no less so for the unfolding of conscience.

But just as no external communication could by itself create intelligence and cause myriad winged ideas to spring forth without an intellectual preformation that makes the concept possible, so too the facts of social life will be produced in vain and, the intellect grasping their relation, this relation will never be translated into an obligatory law for the will, without a preformation of the heart that makes the subject perceive, in the social relations that embrace it, not only a natural harmony, but a sort of secret command from himself to himself.

Thus, according to the theory of immanence, even if Revelation were proven, it would still serve, as the instruction of the master serves the disciple, only insofar as the soul possessed in itself the faculty of recognizing the law and of making it its own: which radically and irrevocably excludes the transcendental hypothesis.

It follows from this that conscience, as it is given by nature, is complete and healthy: everything that happens in it is of it. It is self-sufficient; it needs neither a doctor nor a revelator. Moreover, this celestial helper, on whom we want it to lean, can only present an obstacle to its dignity, can only be a hindrance and a stumbling block for it.

So not only is the science of Justice and mores possible, since it rests, on the one hand, on a special faculty of the soul, having, like the understanding, its fundamental notions, its innate forms, its anticipations, its prejudices; and, on the other, on daily experience, with its inductions and its analogies, with its joys and its sorrows. It must also be said that this science is only possible on the condition of separating itself entirely from Faith, which, far from serving it, destroys it.

In the system of Revelation, the science of Justice and mores is necessarily based, *a priori*, on the word of God, explained and commented on by the priesthood. It expects nothing from the adhesion of conscience, nor from the confirmations of experience. Its formulas, absolute, are freed from any purely human consideration; they are made for man, not after man, decreed in advance and in perpetuity. It would imply [contradiction]* if a sacred doctrine should receive the slightest light from the incidents of social life and the variability of its phenomena, since that would be submitting the order of God to the appreciation of man, *de facto* abjuring revelation, and recognizing the autonomy of conscience, something incompatible with Faith.

Such is the DIVINE RIGHT, having *Authority* as its maxim: hence a whole system of administration for the States, of policing for mores, of economy for goods, of education for youth, of restriction for ideas, of discipline for men.

In the theory of Immanence, on the contrary, the knowledge of the just and the unjust results from the exercise of a special faculty and from the judgment that Reason then passes on its acts. So that, in order to determine the rule of mores, it suffices to observe juridical phenomenality as it is produced in the facts of social life.

From which it follows that, Justice being a product of the conscience, each finds himself judge, in the last instance, of good and evil, and constituted as an authority with regard to himself and others. If I do not pronounce myself that such a thing is just, it is in vain that the prince and the priest will affirm its justice to me and order me to do it: it remains unjust and immoral, and the power that claims to oblige me is tyrannical. And, reciprocally, if I do not pronounce in my heart of hearts that such a thing is unjust, it is in vain that the prince and the priest will claim to forbid it to me: it remains just and moral, and the authority that forbids it to me is illegitimate and odious.

D'où il suit que, la Justice étant le produit de la conscience, chacun se trouve juge, en dernier ressort, du bien et du mal, et constitué en autorité vis-à-vis de lui-même et des autres. Si je ne prononce moi-même que telle chose est juste, c'est en vain que le prince ou le prêtre m'en affirmeront la justice, et m'ordonneront de la faire : elle reste injuste et immorale, et le pouvoir qui prétend m'obliger est tyrannique, infâme. Et réciproquement, si je ne prononce dans mon for intérieur que telle chose est injuste, c'est en vain que le prince et le prêtre prétendront me la défendre : elle reste juste et morale, et l'autorité qui me l'interdit est illégitime et odieuse.

Such is HUMAN RIGHT, having *Liberty* as its maxim: hence also a whole system of coordinations, of reciprocal guarantees, of mutual services, which is the inverse of the system of authority.

XII

Is it necessary to add that, in this theory, man having to arrive by himself and by himself alone at the knowledge of Justice, his science is necessarily progressive, that it is revealed to him progressively by experience, unlike revealed science, which is given all at once, and to which we cannot add or subtract a letter?

This, moreover, is what the history of legislation demonstrates; and it was not a small cause of embarrassment, when it was necessary to harmonize the conditions of this progress with the idea of a simultaneous, definitive and immutable Revelation.

That is not all. As the apprehension of the law is progressive, the justification is also progressive: something to which history still attests, but which is again irreconcilable with the theory of a thoughtful, concomitant grace, and with every kind of help, providence and service from heaven...

Now, progress being given, first as a condition of knowledge, then as a synonym of justification, the history of humanity, of its oscillations, its aberrations, its falls, its recoveries, everything is explained, even the negation of human potential that is the basis of the religious idea, even that despair of Justice that is its consequence, which, under the pretext of rallying us to God, completes the ruin of our morality.

Thus, from *practical philosophy*, or the search for the laws of human actions, is deduced the *philosophy of history*, or the search for the laws of history, which could just as well be called *historiology*, and which is to *historiography*, the description of the facts of history, what anthropology is to ethnography, arithmology to arithmography, etc.

A society in which the knowledge of right would be complete and the respect for justice inviolable would be perfect. Its movement, obeying only a *constant* and no longer depending on

variables, would be uniform and rectilinear; history in that society would be reduced to a history of labor and studies; to put it better, there would be no more history.

Such is not the condition of life in humanity, and such it cannot be. Progress in Justice, theoretical and practical, is a state from which it is not given to us to emerge and see the end. We know how to discern good from evil; we will never know the end of Right, because we will never stop creating new relationships among ourselves. We are born perfectible; we will never be perfect: perfection, immobility, would be death.

Such is not the condition of life in humanity, and such it cannot be. Progress in Justice, theoretical and practical, is a state from which it is not given to us to emerge and to see the end. We are born perfectible; we will never be perfect: perfection, like the *status quo*, would be our death.

Moreover, the annals of nations are full of monuments to this justification of humanity by itself. There is no precept, not even the most elementary, that has not been the occasion for doubt and the pretext for terrible struggle; but the final triumph of Justice over egoism is the most certain and admirable phenomenon of psychology, and, as it demonstrates the efficacy of conscience, it proves at the same time its high guarantee.

The first individuals who, under the influence of this radiant illumination of the moral sense, organized themselves into societies, were so delighted that they took the emotion of their hearts for a supernatural inspiration, the testimony of a divine will, before which they knew only how to bow their heads and strike their breasts. Hence those marvelous legends, which Christianity has claimed to raise to the height of scientific theories, which form the basis of its discipline.

The theory of Immanence, while resolving the apparent contradictions of morality, still explains all the fictions of the allegedly revealed system. It gives, so to speak, the natural history of theology and worship, the reason for the mysteries, the biography of the gods. It shows us how religion was born from the preponderance given in society to one of the essential elements of the soul, an element that, sovereign in metaphysics, must remain secondary in practice, the IDEAL. It is only of yesterday, and we already owe to it that spark which makes the lights of the old faith pale; slandered excessively, it will save us from the corruptions *in extremis* of a reaction to despair and a religiosity that is dying out.

VI

I have summarized the two hypotheses regarding the science of mores that divide the world. Their verification will be the subject of these studies, of which you can boast, Monsignor, of having been the inspiration. My intention is not to write a moral treatise, any more than a philosophy of history. My task is more modest: it is a question of orienting ourselves first; the rest will take care of itself.

By virtue of what are we honest people, when we are honest, and do we cease to be so when egoism gets the upper hand in our hearts? What is Justice? Is there one? Does it have its source in man or in Divinity? Can we recognize it, certify it, follow it? What guarantees to us its reality, its necessity and its supreme beneficence? Can we sacrifice ourselves, even without hope of compensation, and remain happy and free?

Which amounts to saying, according to the succinct exposition that I have just made of the two theories that occur:

Is Justice with the Church or with the Revolution?

On the one hand, what has been the teaching of the Church up to now? What is its doctrine worth? How does it ensure the virtue and freedom of man? Who agitates it at this hour, and against what does it show itself so full of hatred and menace?

On the other: What is the moral and legal significance of the Revolution? What is its perfecting power? Is it not a paradox, after having accused Christian morality of insufficiency, of nullity, of corruption, to claim to substitute for it another more rational, more liberal, and forever inviolable?

Never, I dare to say, will the religious thought that gave birth to the Church, and which outside of it animates all the mystical sects, find itself at such a feast; for never have such strong words been spoken about it. Let man think of God and of the other life what he will: above all, he was born for Justice and his happiness, his reward, is in his fidelity to the law. Within him is the principle of his morals, their reason, their virtue, their sanction. Justice is the efflorescence of our soul; morals is the omnibus of humanity. The intervention of a supernatural authority in the prescriptions of the conscience, far from adding to virtue, only consecrates immorality. O priests, you will not always say that the Revolution is a negative force, that it only produces ruins, that it is powerless to create anything. Man's life is short, and the Revolution does not yet date from a man's life. Your book of the Gospels was made clear only a century after the death of Jesus Christ; and yet, at the beginning of the fourth century, the Christian sect still passed for the enemy of the human race. We have marched faster, because now, on the dust of past beliefs, humanity is already swearing by itself; she exclaims, her left hand on her heart, her right extended towards infinity: It is I who am the queen of the universe; everything that is outside of me is inferior to me, and I do not belong to any majesty.

Do not cross yourself, Monsignor; do not cry blasphemy; do not say that the one who argues with you insults you. It is an old tactic of the Church to treat free thought as sacrilege, and to burn instead of responding. Didn't your M. de Mirecourt make me say already that Christianity was an *old thing*, a *rag, falling to pieces*? So he concludes:

"God alone can answer him with his thunderbolt, unless he leaves it up to men to send him to Bicêtre."

No, Monsignor, and I want you to take note of it, I have never expressed myself regarding the Christian religion, which was that of my fathers, *Deus patris mei*, nor regarding any religion, with this indecency, which would have only dishonored my pen. I have always respected humanity, in its institutions, in its prejudices, in its idolatry and even in its gods. How could I fail to respect it in Christianity, the most grandiose monument of its virtue and its genius, and the most formidable phenomenon in history? To insult, in words or gestures, a religion! Only a man brought up on the principles of Catholic intolerance could come up with this stupid idea.

Religion is the mystical lover of the Mind, the companion of its young and free loves. Similar to Homer's warriors, the Mind does not dwell alone in his tent: a lover, a Psyche, is needed for this Cupid. Jesus, who forgave the Magdalen, taught us indulgence towards courtesans. But the day comes when the Mind, tired of its own exuberance, thinks of uniting itself, by an indissoluble marriage, to Science, the severe matron, that which the Gnostics, those socialists of the second century, called *Sophia*, wisdom. Then, for a few moments, the Mind seems to be separated from itself; there are ineffable returns and tender reproaches. More than once the two lovers believed

themselves reconciled: I will be a *Sophia* for you, says Religion; I will also become learned, and I will be even more beautiful. Vain hope! Inexorable fate! The nature of ideas, any more than that of things, cannot thus be adulterated. Like the abandoned nymph of Narcissus, who by dint of languor ends up vanishing into thin air, Religion changes little by little into an impalpable phantom: it is no more than a sound, a memory, which remains in the most profound depths of the Mind, and never quite perishes in the heart of man.

May those who read these writings forgive me! I will have, in these studies, to speak sometimes about myself: they will see that I do not give in to a vain self-esteem. I hate autobiographies like death, and have no desire to give mine here. *Know thyself*, said the Oracle of Delphi; *and never speak of it*, adds the Modesty of Nations. I have observed this maxim as long as I could during my life; and if I happen to depart from it, I hope to bring to that departure such discretion that the reader will not be angry.

Is it my fault if an implacable reaction, which does not seem ready to end, after having slandered our persons by our ideas, begins to slander our ideas by our persons? Having to avenge the mores of the Revolution, I wanted, through examples, to show what the revolutionary race promises to be one day. I am like the physician who, defending a principle, is obliged to speak of his own experiments.