

# *Pensées*

Blaise Pascal

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every **four**-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Any **three**-point ellipsis . . . is in the original; there are many of these at the starts of sentences and in ones that tail off, uncompleted. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type.—The title means ‘Thoughts’; but English writers always use the French title. The division into Sections, and their titles, come from the 1897 edition by Léon Brunschvicg, which has been the basis for most editions in the past century. The 1976 edition by Philippe Sellier reflects, as Brunschvicg’s doesn’t, facts about the condition and order in which Pascal left the papers making up the *Pensées*; but Brunschvicg’s, followed here, is more likely to meet the philosophical needs of users of this website. There is a note on Sellier before item 196.—Roger Ariew has done, and Hackett has published, a good English translation based on Sellier, notes in which have been gratefully consulted in making the present version.—Each item (numbered in bold type) was in some way marked off as a unit in Pascal’s papers, but their numbers and order are Brunschvicg’s.—Passages left in French or Latin, and given slightly smaller type, are rather random notes and quotes that are obscure and/or have little chance of being philosophically instructive.—Many of the items have headings such as ‘Cause and effect’ (seven times), ‘Diversion’ (six times), and so on. This version omits those (the majority) that don’t give help in understanding the items in question.—Pascal presents many of his items as biblical quotations for which he gives references. Translations of these are based on what he wrote, not on what the King James version of the Bible has; there is often a considerable difference, notably in the quotations from the book of Isaiah in Section 11.

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## Glossary

**animal spirits:** This stuff was supposed to be super-fluid matter to which Descartes and others attributed work that is in fact done by nerves. In 368 Pascal is exclaiming at the idea that •pleasure might be thought to be nothing but •a process in the body.

**apathy:** Translates *paresse*; often translated as ‘laziness’ or ‘sloth’, But Ariew argues persuasively that ‘apathy’ is truer to Pascal’s thought.

**art:** Anything involving rules, techniques, skills of the sort that one might acquire through training.

**boredom:** This regularly translates *ennui*, a word that can also mean ‘weariness’, ‘fed-up-ness’, and so on.

**casuist:** A theologian who resolves cases of conscience, duty etc. (OED)

**cupidity:** Translates *cupidité*; ‘greed’ would do as well, but that has been reserved for *concupiscence*.

**curiosity:** In English and in French [*curiosité*] this tended to mean a general *desire to know*; the word didn’t have the mildly trivialising sense that it does today.

**diversion:** Pascal holds that we avoid thinking about our miserable selves by going in for **diversions**, entertainments, which do the work of **diverting** our minds from our condition. This semi-pun is also present in the French *divertissement* and *divertir*.

**Escobar:** Antonio Escobar y Mendoza was a Spanish Jesuit priest whose voluminous writings on morality were regarded by many, emphatically including Pascal, as far too lax.

**Eucharist:** ‘The Christian sacrament in which bread and wine are consecrated and consumed as Christ’s body and

blood, to be a memorial of his sacrifice on the cross.’ (OED) When on page ?? Pascal says that the Eucharist ‘isn’t seen’, he means that Christ’s body isn’t seen to be present when the ceremony is performed.

**evil:** This means merely ‘something bad’. In French the adjectives for ‘good’ and ‘bad’ can also be used as nouns; in English we can do this with ‘good’ (‘friendship is a good’), but not with bad (‘pain is a bad’), and it is customary in English to use ‘evil’ for this purpose (e.g. ‘pain is an evil’, and ‘the problem of evil’ meaning ‘the problem posed by the existence of bad states of affairs’). Don’t load the word with all the force it has in English when used as an adjective. For the cognate adjective, this version always uses ‘bad’.

**fancy:** This translates most occurrences of *fantaisie*, which usually means something *close to* ‘imagination’ (the faculty) or ‘imaginative episode’ (event). How close is not clear. On page ?? we find *fantaisie* in one item and *imagination* in the very next.

**greed:** This translates *concupiscence*—a word that can refer to sexual lust, but is mainly used by Pascal in its other dictionary sense of ‘avid desire for material possessions and sensual pleasures’. Starting at item 458, ‘lust’ is used instead, under pressure from quoted biblical passages that use that word.

**hateful:** In this version the word is used in its present English sense of ‘odious’, ‘worthy of being hated’, rather than its older English and present American sense of ‘full of hate’.

**honest:** In this work an ‘honest man’ (*honnête homme* is a solid reliable all-around good chap.

**infidel:** In this work, anyone who isn't a Christian is an 'infidel'.

**items of knowledge:** This clumsy phrase translates *connaissances*. English won't let us speak of 'knowledges', as French does.

**Jansenism:** A movement within the Roman catholic church, espoused by Pascal (despite item 865); it emphasized original sin, interpreted in a particularly dark manner; strenuously opposed by the Jesuits.

**Jesus-Christ:** Pascal always has the hyphen; this should be read as 'Jesus, the Christ', using 'Christ' not as a proper name of Jesus of Nazareth but as a general term that supposedly applies only to him. Note in item 573, and in several other places, 'the Christ' (*le Christ*).

**lust:** see entry for **greed**.

**machine:** Pascal uses *la machine* half a dozen times, usually (it seems) as a coded reference to the famous argument known as 'the wager'. For a possible explanation of *how* it could have that meaning, see the illuminating note by Ariew on pages ??-??. The notion of rock-bottom mechanical thinking that figures in Ariew's note is also at work in item 308.

**mercy:** Occurring first on page ?? and frequently thereafter. The French word is *miséricorde*, a relative of *misère* = 'misery'. It could be translated as 'compassion', but in the context of God it's a matter of what he does, not how he feels.

**mœurs:** The *mœurs* of a people include their morality, their basic customs, their attitudes and expectations about how people will behave, their ideas about what is decent... and so on. This word—rhyming approximately with 'worse'—is left untranslated because there's no English word equivalent

to it. Good English dictionaries include it, for the sort of reason they have for including *schadenfreude*.

**Moslem:** This replaces most occurrences of *Turc*. In early modern times, French and other languages often let the Turks stand in for Moslems generally.

**pagan:** Translates *païen*. The range of senses in French is about the same as in English: covering all the (ir)religious territory outside Christianity, Judaism and Islam, with special reference to the polytheistic religion of ancient Greece. On pages 97 and ?? *païen* is translated by 'Gentile'.

**populace:** Pascal often uses *peuple* = 'people' as a singular term. We can do that in English ('The French—what a strange people!'), but sometimes this sounds strained and peculiar, and this version takes refuge in 'populace'. On page 55, for example, Pascal writes about the *vanité* of *le peuple*, obviously thinking of this as a single collective entity.

**Port-Royal:** A convent in Paris that was unofficially the headquarters of **Jansenism**.

**Pyrrhonian:** The adjective from 'Pyrrho', the founder of ancient Greek scepticism, who held that nothing can be known.

**renown:** Translates *éclat*, for which there is no one adequate English word. It refers to the quality of being vividly grand, glittering, magnificent.

**sin:** Regularly used to translate *péché*. It is not clear how if at all Pascal differentiates this from *iniquité*, but 'iniquity' is used for the latter, to play safe.

**school:** By 'at the school' Pascal meant, roughly, 'at the Aristotelian philosophy department where you studied'.

**self:** When this word is italicised, it translates Pascal's *moi*. This word has no exact equivalent in English. It can mean

'I' as in *C'est moi qui l'a fait* = 'It is I who did it', and it can mean 'me' as in *cette partie de moi qui pense* = 'the part of me that thinks'. And then there's a use of it in which it is not a pronoun but a noun, as in *la nature de ce moi humain* = 'the nature of this human *self*'. Thus a specialised use of *self* is used to translate a specialised use of *moi*.

**she:** Item 123 speaks of a man's no longer loving the *personne* he used to love; that's a feminine noun, requiring the feminine pronoun *elle*. It is translated here by 'she', but the French does not imply that the person is female; the item could concern the man's feelings towards another man with whom he once had a deep friendship.

**soul:** The left-hand side of the mind/matter or spiritual/material distinction. It has no special religious significance.

**sound:** As an adjective this translates *droit(s)* = 'right', 'correct', etc.

**symbol(ic):** Translate *figure* and *figuratif*.

**temporal:** Translates *temporel*, and means 'pertaining to the world we live in'. This was often called 'temporal'—meaning 'in time'—to contrast it with our life after death, which was thought to be 'eternal' in some sense that involves not being in time at all.

**vain, vanity:** These translate *vain* and *vanité*. In some cases the words are used in an older sense in which the idea is that of emptiness or lack of solidity. In some cases where 'vain' and 'vanity' are used, the older sense may be at work.

**'we':** This often translates *nous*; but very often it translates *on*, a standard French pronoun for use in generalising about people.

**world:** Translates *le monde*, which Pascal uses, especially in 37, to refer to *people in general*, perhaps tacitly restricted to people who are literate or who have some opinions on some general matters.

**wrong:** Translates *faux*, which in some places is translated as 'false'. When 'wrong' is used, think of it as roughly equivalent to 'defective'.

## Section 5: Justice. The causes of effects

**291.** In the letter On Injustice can come: the absurdity of the law that the older son gets everything.

‘My friend, you were born on this side of the mountain, so it’s just that your older brother gets everything.’

*Pourquoi me tuez-vous?*

**292.** *Il demeure au-delà de l’eau.*

**293.** ‘Why are you killing me?’ ‘What! Don’t you live on the other side of the water? If you lived on this side, my friend, what I am doing would make me an assassin—it would be unjust to kill you like this. But since you live on the other side, I’m a warrior and what I’m doing is just.’

**294.** The world that man wants to govern—what will he base its organisation on? On the caprice of each individual? What confusion! On justice? He knows nothing about that.

If he *had* known about it, he wouldn’t have established the maxim—the most general of all the maxims that are at work among men—that each person should follow the *mœurs* [see Glossary] of his own country. True equity would have reigned, shining, over all nations, and legislators wouldn’t have taken as their model the whims and fancies of Persians and Germans instead of this unchanging justice. We would have seen justice rooted in all the States on earth at all times, rather than what we actually have—namely no justice or injustice that doesn’t change its nature with changes in the weather! Three degrees of latitude turn all jurisprudence upside-down; a meridian decides the truth. Basic laws change after a few years of holding sway; right has its epochs; the entry of Saturn into Leo marks for us the origin of such and such a crime. A funny kind of justice that is bounded by a river! Truth on this side of the Pyrenees, error on the other side.

Men admit that justice doesn’t consist in these customs, and that it resides in natural laws that are known in every country. They would certainly maintain this obstinately if chance—which recklessly scatters human laws (like scattering seed) around the planet—had brought their way even one law that was universally accepted; but the joke is that human whims are so various that there isn’t any law that everyone accepts. Theft, incest, infanticide, patricide, have all been counted as virtuous actions. A man has a right to kill me because he lives on the other side of the ocean and his ruler has a quarrel with mine, though I have none with him—could *anything* be more ridiculous than that? No doubt there *are* natural laws, but our wonderful *corrupt* reason has corrupted everything. ‘There’s nothing left that is ours; when we call things “ours”, that’s a mere construct.’ ‘It’s because of the actions of legislators that anything counts as a crime.’ ‘We used to suffer from our vices; now we suffer from our laws.’ [Quoted in Latin from Cicero, Seneca and Tacitus, respectively.]

This confusion brings it about that one scholar says that the essence of justice is the authority of the legislator; another that it’s the interests of the sovereign; a third that it’s the prevailing customs. This last is the view that is expressed with most confidence. It goes as follows (to the end of this paragraph). If we go purely by reason, nothing is intrinsically just; everything changes with time. Custom creates the whole system of rights and wrongs, simply because it is accepted. Acceptance is the magic basis of its authority; if you try to avoid that conclusion and trace the authority of custom back to first principles, you’ll destroy it. Nothing is so faulty as those laws that

correct faults. He who obeys them 'because they are just' is obeying •imaginary justice and not •the essence of the law. There the law sits, self-contained; it is just the law, and nothing more. If you examine what drives it, you'll find it to be so feeble and so trifling that—unless you're used to contemplating the feats of human imagination—you'll marvel that one century has given the law so much pomp and reverence. The art of opposition and of revolution is to shake up established customs, tracing them right back to their source, pointing out their lack of authority and justice. 'We must'—they say—'get back to the basic elemental laws of the State, which unjust custom has abolished.' If you make *that* bet, you'll certainly lose everything: nothing will be just when weighed on that balance. Yet people willingly listen to such arguments. They 'shake off the yoke' the moment they recognise it; and those at the top of the social heap profit by the ruin of ordinary people and of those who intrusively investigate accepted customs. That's why the wisest of legislators said that it was necessary to deceive men for their own good; and another, a good politician, said 'Since he doesn't know the truth that could free him, it's good that he should be lied to' [quoted in Latin from Augustine]. He—the man in the street—mustn't be made aware of the facts about the usurpation ·that led to the existence of the present government·. There was no reason for it back then when it happened, but it has become reasonable. It should be regarded as authoritative, eternal, and its origin should be hidden—that's if we want it to survive.

**295. Mine, yours.** 'This dog is *mine*', said those poor children; 'That's *my* place in the sun.' You see there the start of, the template for, the usurpation of all the earth.

**296.** When there's a question as to whether to make war and kill so many men—condemn so many Spaniards to

death—the decision is made by just one man, and his interests are involved in the question. There should be another decider who is disinterested.

**297.** 'True justice'—Cicero's phrase. We don't have it any longer; if we did, we wouldn't take the *mœurs* of our country to be the rule of justice.

Thus, not being able to find what is just, we have found what is powerful, etc.

**298.** Justice, power. It is *just* to follow what is just; it is *necessary* to follow what is the most powerful. Justice without power can't achieve anything; power without justice is tyrannical. Justice without power is challenged, because there are always bad people; power without justice is condemned. So we must combine justice with power, by making what is just powerful or making what is powerful just.

There can be disputes about *what* is just, whereas power is easily recognised and is not disputed. So it hasn't been possible to make justice powerful, because power has challenged justice, calling it unjust and saying that it—power—was just. So, not being able to make what is just powerful, we have made what is powerful just.

**299.** The only universal rules are the law of the land in ordinary affairs and ·the will of· the majority in other matters. How does that come about? Through the power that they have.

That's how it comes about that kings, who have another source of power, don't follow the majority of their ministers.

No doubt equality of goods is just; but men, not being able to bring it about that power enforces justice, have made it just to obey power; unable to empower justice, they have justified power, so that what's just and what's powerful should unite, bringing peace, the greatest good.

**300.** 'When a strong man armed keeps his goods, his goods

are in peace.’ [adapted from Luke 11:21]

**301.** Why do we follow the majority? Is it because they have more reason? No, more power.

Why do we follow the ancient laws and opinions? Is it because they’re the soundest? No, but they are unique, and deprive us of the root of diversity. [Perhaps he means: ‘but it’s quite clear *what* they are, so they leave us with nothing to quarrel about’.]

**302.** . . . It’s the effect of power, not of custom, for not many people are capable of originality. The numerically most powerful are mere followers, and refuse to celebrate the original people who seek glory through their feats. And if the original ones •persist in demanding recognition and •belittle those who aren’t original, the others will call them by ridiculous names and would physically beat them ·if they could get away with it·. So don’t be puffed up with pride over your subtlety, or at least keep your pride to yourself.

**303.** Power rules the world, not opinion. ‘But opinion *uses* power.’ And what *makes* opinion? Power does! Slackness is beautiful in our opinion. Why? Because someone who wants to dance on a tightrope will do it on his own, while I’ll get together a more powerful mob who will say that that’s no way to behave.

**304.** The bonds that hold in place the social relations men have to each other are mainly bonds of necessity; because there have to be different social ranks, and everyone wants to dominate but only some are able to.

Suppose we are watching social ranks in the process of formation. Men will certainly fight till the stronger party oppresses the weaker, and eventually a dominant faction is established. But once this is settled, those on top—not wanting to continue this war—decree that the power in their hands is to be passed on by some method chosen

by them—popular election, heredity, etc.

And that’s where imagination comes into play. Up to here, pure power has held the reins; but now power is held in place by the imagination of a certain group, in France the nobility, in Switzerland the commoners, etc.

So these bonds that hold in place men’s relations to such-and-such a particular ·ruling group· are bonds of imagination.

**305.** The Swiss object to being called ‘nobles’, and display their status as commoners so as to be thought worthy of high office.

**306.** As the ranks of duke, king and magistrate are real and necessary (because power rules over everything), they exist everywhere and always. But there’s nothing constant and unvarying in *who* occupies these ranks, because that depends on a fancy [see Glossary].

**307.** The chancellor is solemn, and ornately clothed, because his position is a false one. Not so the king: he has power, and has nothing to do with imagination. Judges, physicians, etc. have nothing but imagination.

**308.** The custom of seeing a king accompanied by guards, drummers, officers, and all the things that bend the machine [see Glossary] towards respect and fear, brings it about that when seen alone without this paraphernalia, his face still impresses respect and fear on his subjects; because they can’t mentally separate his person from the surroundings that they usually see him in. And the world, not realising that this effect is the result of custom, believes that some natural force is at work, and so people say things like ‘The character of Divinity is stamped on his face’.

**309.** Fashion settles the question of what is charming—and of what is just.



**310. King and tyrant.** I will also have thoughts at the back of my mind.

I will be wary whenever I am travelling.

*Grandeur d'établissement, respect d'établissement.*

The pleasure of the great is the ability to make people happy.

The proper function of riches is to be given liberally.

The proper function of each thing should be sought. The proper function of power [*puissance*] is to protect.

When power [*force*] attacks humbug, when a simple soldier takes a chief magistrate's square cap and whisks it out the window.

**311.** A government based on opinion and imagination is pleasant and voluntary, and it reigns for some time; a government based on power lasts for ever. Thus opinion is like the world's queen, but power is its tyrant.

**312.** Justice is what is established; so all our established laws will inevitably be regarded as just, without examination, since they are established.

**313. Normal healthy opinions of the populace.** Civil wars are the greatest of evils. They are inevitable if merit is to be rewarded, because everyone will say that *he* has merit. The evil to be feared from a fool who *inherits* the crown is less, and not as inevitable.

**314.** God created everything for himself.

He has bestowed upon himself the power of pain and pleasure.

You can apply it to God, or to yourself.

If to God, the Gospel is the rule.

If to yourself, you will take the place of God.

As God is surrounded by persons full of charity, who ask of him the blessings of charity that are in his power, so . . .

Recognise and learn, then, that you are only a king of greed [see Glossary], and take the ways of greed.

**315.** Cause and effect. It's amazing: I'm supposed not to honour a man clothed in brocade and followed by seven or eight lackeys! Well! he'll have me thrashed if I don't salute him. Those clothes are power. It's the same with a horse in fine harness compared with another! Montaigne is a fool not to see what a difference there is, to wonder at our finding any, and to ask why. . . .

**316. Normal healthy opinions of the populace.** Elegance isn't mere vanity; it shows that you have many people working for you. It shows •by your hair that you have a valet, a perfumer, etc., •by the decorative features of your clothing etc. It is not merely superficial—not a merely outward show—to have many hands •at your command•. The more hands you have, the greater your power. To be elegant is to show your power.

**317.** Deference means *putting yourself to some trouble*. This seems pointless, but it's quite right. It amounts to saying 'I would indeed put myself to some trouble if you needed me to, as witness the fact that I am now doing so when it doesn't do you any good.' Besides, deference is a way of marking off the great; and if you could show deference by sitting in an arm-chair you'd be showing deference to everybody, and thus not marking off anyone in particular. But by deference that involves taking trouble we very clearly distinguish the great from the rest.

**318.** *Il a quatre laquais.*

**319.** How right we are to distinguish men by external appearances rather than by internal qualities! Of the two of us, which one will stand back and let the other go first? The less clever? But I'm as clever as he is; on this basis we would have to fight it out. He has four lackeys, and I have only one; this can be seen—we have only to count. It's for

me to stand back, and I'm a fool if I contest this. In this way we keep the peace, which is the greatest of all goods.

**320.** The most unreasonable things in the world become the most reasonable because of human unruliness. Choosing the eldest son of a queen to rule a State—what is less reasonable than that? We don't choose as captain of a ship the passenger who is of the best family. This law by which royal status is hereditary would be absurd and unjust; but because *men* are and always will be absurd and unjust, the law becomes reasonable and just. Whom are we to choose? The most virtuous and the cleverest? We at once come to blows, as each claims to be the most virtuous and the cleverest. So let's attach this position to something indisputable—being the king's eldest son. That is clear, and there is no dispute. Reason can do no better, for civil war is the greatest of evils.

**321.** Children astonished to see deference given to their friends.

**322.** Noble birth is a great advantage. It gets an eighteen-year-old well launched, known and deferred to, a situation that someone else might have earned by the age of fifty. That's a sheer gift of thirty years.

**323.** What is the *self*? [see Glossary]

A man stands at the window to see the passers-by. If I walk past, can I say that he went to the window to see me? No—he isn't thinking about me in particular. But a person who loves a man on account of his beauty—does he really love him? No; for the small-pox, which will kill beauty without killing the person, will cause him to love him no longer.

And if someone loves me for my judgement, for my memory, he doesn't love me, my self, for I can lose these qualities without losing myself. Then where is this *self* if it isn't in the body or in the soul? And how can anyone love

the body or the soul except for those qualities which aren't what constitute my *self*, because they are perishable? What about loving a person's soul in the abstract, independently of qualities it might have? You can't do that, and even if you could it would be wrong to do so. So we never love *anyone*, only qualities.

Let us then stop scoffing at those who are honoured for their rank and position; for we love people only on account of borrowed qualities.

**324.** The populace [see Glossary] has very healthy opinions, for example:

**(1)** Preferring diversion and hunting to poetry. The half-learned laugh at this, and boast of being above the folly of the world; but for a reason that *they* don't fathom, the choice is a good one.

**(2)** Distinguishing men by external marks, e.g. by birth or wealth. The world again boasts of showing how unreasonable this is; but in fact it is very reasonable. . . .

**(3a)** Being offended when one's face is slapped; a man who simply accepts a slap in the face is overwhelmed with taunts and indignities.

**(3b)** Desiring glory so much. Glory is very desirable because of other goods—essential ones—that come with it.

**(4)** Working at risky things—sea-travel, walking along a plank.

**325.** Montaigne is wrong. The only reason custom should be followed is that it is custom, not that it is reasonable or just. But the common people follow it solely because they think it is just. They wouldn't follow it simply because it is custom, for they'll only submit to reason or justice. Custom without reason or justice would be regarded as tyranny; but the sovereignty of reason and justice is no more tyrannical than that of pleasure. They are principles [see Glossary] natural to

man.

So it would be a good thing if laws and customs were obeyed *because they are laws*, and if it were realised that there are no *true and just* laws to be introduced—that we have no knowledge of any such, and must therefore follow the established laws, and thus never have any reason to depart from them. But the people aren't receptive to this doctrine. They believe that truth *can* be found, and that it exists in laws and customs; they believe the accepted laws, and take their antiquity as a proof of their truth (and not simply of their authority, leaving truth out of it). Thus they obey the laws, but they're liable to revolt when these are proved to be worthless; and for any given law there's always an angle from which that is how it looks.

**326.** It's dangerous to tell the people that the laws are unjust, because they obey them only because they think they are just. So if you tell them that the laws are unjust you ought to tell the people at the same time that they should obey them because they are laws; as they should obey their superiors not because they are just but because they are superiors. If this is grasped, and along with it the proper definition of justice, all sedition will be prevented.

**327.** The world judges things well, because it is in **natural ignorance**, which is man's true state. The sciences have two extremes which meet. The first is the pure natural ignorance that we have at birth. The other extreme is the one that great souls arrive at after working through everything that humans can know; what they learn from this is that they don't know anything, and so re-enter the ignorance from which they started. But this is a **learned man's ignorance** which is conscious of itself. Those who are caught in the middle—having left natural ignorance and not been able to reach the other—have some smattering of a pretentious kind

of knowledge, and preen themselves. They trouble the world, and get everything wrong. . . .

**328. Cause and effect.** Continual switching between pro and con.

We have shown, then, that man is vain [see Glossary], by the high value he sets on things that aren't essential; and all these opinions are refuted.

We showed next that all these opinions are very healthy; so the populace isn't as vain it's said to be. So we have refuted the opinion that contradicted the opinion of the populace.

But we must now refute this last proposition and show that it is still true that the populace is vain, although its opinions are healthy. That is because it doesn't detect truth where it is, and thinks it detects it where it isn't; so its opinions are always very false and very unhealthy.

**329.** *La faiblesse de l'homme est la cause de tant de beautés qu'on établit: comme de savoir bien jouer le luth n'est un mal qu'à cause de notre faiblesse.*[None of the repairs that have been suggested for this obviously defective passage turns it into good sense.]

**330.** The power of kings is based on reason and *especially* on the folly of the populace. Thus, the greatest and most important thing in the world is based on weakness.

And this is a wonderfully dependable foundation, because nothing is surer than the fact that the populace will always be weak. Anything based on healthy reason is very poorly founded—admiration of wisdom, for example, is a very unstable foundation because at any time people could stop having any respect for wisdom.

**331.** We always think of Plato and Aristotle in grand academic robes. But they were honest men [see Glossary] laughing with their friends as such men do. When they amused themselves by writing their *Laws* and their *Politics*,

they were just *playing*. That part of their life was the least philosophical and the least serious; the most philosophical part consisted in living simply and quietly.

When they wrote on politics, it was as though they were laying down rules for a lunatic asylum.

They gave the impression of speaking of something important, but that's because they knew that the madmen they were addressing thought themselves to be kings and emperors. Plato and Aristotle went along with their lunacy so as to get it to do as little damage as possible.

**332.** Tyranny consists in the desire to dominate *everywhere* and not merely in one's own proper sphere.

[When Pascal speaks of 'chambers' (*chambres*) he is likening these groups to parliaments, like the French 'chamber of deputies'.] There are different chambers—of the strong, the handsome, the sensible, the pious—each of which governs itself but nothing else. Sometimes they meet, and fights break out—e.g. between the strong and the handsome—over which will have mastery; but this is idiotic, because their mastery is of different kinds ·that can't be measured on a single scale·. They don't understand one another; and their mistake is to want to govern everywhere. *Nothing* can govern everywhere—not even power, which can't have any effect in the scientists' domain, and only governs external actions.

It would be false and tyrannical to say: 'I am handsome, so you should fear me', 'I am strong, so you should love me', 'I am. . .'

Tyranny is the wish to get by one means something that can only be had by another. Different kinds of merit call for different responses: charm calls for love, power calls for fear, scientific knowledge calls for belief. These calls must be answered: it is unjust to turn them down, and unjust to issue others—e.g. for charm to call for fear·. So it is false and tyrannical to say 'He isn't strong, so I won't admire him',

'He isn't able, so I won't fear him'.

**333.** Haven't you encountered people who protest that you are under-rating them by boasting of the distinguished men who rate them highly? ·If anyone tried that with me·, I would reply: 'Show me the merit by which you charmed these people and I'll rate you as highly as they do.'

**334.** Greed and power are the source of all our actions; greed causes voluntary actions, power involuntary ones.

**335.** So it's true to say that everyone is under a delusion; for although the opinions of the populace are healthy, they aren't healthy *as conceived by them*, because they don't *locate* the truth correctly. There is indeed truth •in their opinions, but not *where* they think it is. For example, it's true that we should honour the nobility, but not because noble birth has given them some real merit, etc.

**336.** We should keep our thoughts to ourselves, •judging everything in terms of them while •speaking like the populace.

**337.** Rankings. •The populace honours people of high birth. The •semi-clever despise them, saying that birth is a matter of chance and not personal merit. •Really clever people honour them, not for the same reason as the populace but for reasons they keep to themselves. •Devout persons who have more zeal than knowledge despise them, in spite of the facts that lead the clever people to honour them, because they judge them by a new light that piety gives them. But •perfect Christians honour them by another and higher light. So opinions swing for and against, according to people's lights.

**338.** But true Christians do go along with foolishness, not because they respect it but because God—punishing men ·for their sins·—has made them subject to these follies: 'The creature was made subject to vanity. He will be delivered' [quoted in Latin from Romans 8:20-21]. Thus Saint Thomas explains the

passage in Saint James [James 2:3] on giving preference to the rich, that if they don't do it in the sight of God they are

going against the command of their religion.

## Section 6: The philosophers

**339.** I can easily conceive a man without hands, feet, head (for it's only from experience that we know the head to be more necessary than the feet). But I can't conceive man without thought; that would be a stone or a lower animal.

**340.** The arithmetical machine produces results that come closer to thought than do any of the actions of animals; but it doesn't do anything that would let us credit it with having will, which we do attribute to animals.

**341.** *L'histoire du brochet et de la grenouille de Liancourt: ils le font toujours, et jamais autrement, ni autre chose de l'esprit.*

**342.** If an animal did by intellect what it does by instinct, and if it spoke by intellect what it 'speaks' by instinct—e.g. telling its mates (when they are hunting) that the prey is found or lost—it would surely also speak about the things that matter to it most, for example, 'Bite through this cord—it's hurting me and I can't reach it'.

**343.** *Le bec du perroquet qu'il essuie, quoiqu'il soit net.*

**344.** Instinct and reason, signs of two natures.

**345.** a Reason commands us far more imperiously than any b master; for in disobeying b one we're unhappy, and in disobeying a the other we are fools.

**346.** Thought is the greatness of man.

**347.** Man is only a reed, the weakest thing in nature; but he's a thinking reed. To wipe him out there's no need for the whole universe to take up arms against him—a vapour, a drop of water, is enough to kill him. But if the universe

did wipe him out, man would still be nobler than his killer; because he knows that he is dying and that the universe has the upper hand; the universe knows nothing of this.

So all our dignity consists in *thought*. That's what we must rely on—not on space and time, which are too big for us to fill. So let us work at *thinking well*; that's the driving force of morality.

**348.** For my own dignity I should look not to space but to thinking properly. It won't do me any good to own land: in terms of space, the universe grasps me and swallows me up like a speck; in terms of thought, I grasp it.

**349. Immateriality of the soul.** Philosophers who have mastered their passions—what *matter* could do that?

**350. Stoics.** If something can be done sometimes, they infer that it can be done always; and that because the desire for glory enables those who are gripped by it to do something well, others can also do that thing well. These are feverish inferences that health can't imitate.

From the fact that there are steadfast Christians, Epictetus infers that everyone can be like that.

**351.** Regarding the great mental efforts that the soul sometimes achieves: the soul doesn't get a permanent hold on them—it *jumps* to them for a moment; it doesn't *settle* on them permanently, as on a throne.

**352.** The strength of a man's virtue should be measured not by his efforts but by his ordinary life.

**353.** I don't admire the excess of any virtue (such as courage) unless it is accompanied by an excess of the opposite virtue—for example, Epaminondas, who was extremely brave and extremely kind. Someone who lacks the opposite virtue doesn't *rise* to great courage, he *falls* to it! To display greatness a man needs not to •go to one extreme but to •extend to both at once and •fill all the •moral• space between them.

'But perhaps his soul doesn't spread, but merely darts from one extreme to the other, without ever being at both of them at the same time, like a •whirling• firebrand.'

So be it. But even if he isn't showing the breadth of his soul, he is at least displaying its agility.

**354.** It's not in man's nature to keep *going*; he naturally has his goings and his comings.

Fever brings shivers and hot flashes. And the cold is as good a sign as the heat of how severe the fever is.

Human inventiveness comes and goes down the centuries. So does the world's over-all kindness and its over-all malice. 'Most of the changes are agreeable to the wishes of princes' [quoted in Latin from Horace]... .

**355.** Continuous eloquence is tedious.

Princes and kings sometimes play. They aren't always on their thrones—they get bored there. To appreciate grandeur you have to set it aside sometimes; continuity in *anything* is nasty. It's pleasant to be cold, so as to get warm.

Nature's progress is a back-and-forth affair. It goes and returns, then goes further and returns twice as far, then •advances• more than ever, etc.

The tides of the sea are like that—[and here Pascal drew an erratic zig-zagging line sloping down the page] and so it seems is the sun in its course.

**356.** The nourishment of the body is little by little. Not much

food, plenty of nourishment.

**357.** When we try to pursue virtues to their extremes, vices quietly work their way in from the direction of the infinitely small; and vices turn up in a crowd from the direction of the infinitely large, so that we get lost among them and no longer see virtues.

We find fault with perfection itself.

**358.** Man is neither angel nor beast; the sad thing is that anyone who tries to become an angel becomes a beast.

**359.** We don't hold ourselves upright in virtue by our own •moral• strength, but by the balancing of two opposed vices. It's like standing upright in winds blowing in opposite directions. Remove one of the vices, and we tumble into the other.

**360.** What the stoics propose is so difficult and so pointless!

The stoics claim that all those who aren't at the high level of wisdom are equally foolish and vicious, as those who are two inches under water •can't breathe any more than can those who are a hundred feet under•.

**361.** Dispute about the supreme good. 'So as to be satisfied with yourself and with the good things that you give rise to' [quoted in Latin from the stoic Seneca]. There is a contradiction, for they finally advise suicide. Oh! what a happy life that we free ourselves from, as from a plague!

**362.** *Ex senatus-consultis et plebiscitis...*

Demandeur des passages pareils.

[Pascal gives the quotations in 363 and 364 in their original Latin; he has taken them from writings of Montaigne.]

**363.** •'Crimes are committed by decrees of the Senate and the votes of the people.' (Seneca)

•'There's nothing so absurd that it hasn't been said by some philosopher.' (Cicero)

•‘Pledged to certain fixed opinions, they have to defend things that they don’t approve of.’ (Cicero)

•‘Too much learning is burdensome as is too much *anything*.’ (Seneca)

•‘What suits each man best is what is especially *his*.’ (Cicero)

•‘Nature first gave them these limits.’ (Virgil)

•‘You don’t need to be learned to have a good mind.’ (Seneca)

•‘Something that isn’t disgraceful becomes disgraceful when the mob applaud it.’ (Cicero)

•‘This is how I do it; you do as you wish.’ (Terence)

**364.** •‘People rarely pay enough respect to themselves.’ (Quintilian)

•‘So many gods rioting around in one head.’ (Seneca)

•‘Nothing is more disgraceful than asserting something before you know *whether it is true*.’ (Cicero)

•‘Unlike *them*, when I don’t know something I’m not ashamed to say so.’ (Cicero)

•‘They’d have done better not to begin.’ (Seneca)

**365.** All the dignity of man consists in thought.

So thought is by its very nature a wonderful and incomparable thing. It would have needed *strange* faults to be contemptible. But it does have them—to such an extent that nothing is more ridiculous. How great thought is in its nature! How vile in its defects!

Thought—*what* thought? That thought is stupid!

**366.** The mind of this sovereign judge of the world is not so self-sufficient that he isn’t apt to be disturbed by the first clatter going on around him. For his thoughts to be impeded, the roar of a cannon isn’t necessary—the job can be done by the creaking of a weather-vane or pulley.

Right now he isn’t reasoning well; that’s not surprising—he hears a fly buzzing, and that’s enough to make him incapable of *taking in* good advice. If you want him to be

able to reach the truth, drive away that *animal* that holds his reason in check and disturbs this powerful intellect that rules towns and kingdoms. What an absurd god this is! . . .

**367.** The power of flies: they win battles, prevent our soul from acting, eat our body. [Montaigne reports an event in which one side in a siege was helped by honey-bees (in early modern French *mouches à miel* = ‘honey-flies’.)]

**368.** When we’re told that **heat** is only the motions of certain particles, and that **light** is a centrifugal force that we feel, we are amazed. What! Is **pleasure** nothing but the dancing of our *animal* spirits? [see Glossary]. We have had a *very* different idea of these! These accounts imply that there are likenesses between sensations that strike us as being very different! The sensation from the fire—*warmth*—affects us in a quite different way from the sense of touch; our reception of sound and light appears to us to be mysterious, yet really it is crude physical event like being hit by a brick. It’s true that the incoming spirits are so fine that they can get in anywhere, but all they do is to affect *nerves*, *which* are strictly material things.

**369.** Memory is necessary for all the operations of reason.

**370.** What thoughts you have is a matter of chance; what thoughts you lose is also a matter of chance. There are no rules for getting or keeping thoughts.

A thought has escaped; I would like to write it down; I write instead that it has escaped me.

**371.** [Deleted by Pascal.]

**372.** Sometimes when I am writing down my thought it gets away from me; but this serves as a reminder—which I constantly need—of how weak I am. This is as good a lesson as the forgotten thought could give; for all I care about is knowing my nothingness.

**373. Pyrrhonism.** I'll write down my thoughts here without putting them in order, though there's a point to this confusion. It is in fact true order, which will always indicate my object by its very disorder.

I would be flattering my subject if I treated it with order, since I want to show that it is incapable of order.

**374.** What astonishes me most is to see that people are not all astonished by their own weakness. Men act seriously, each in accordance with his own social position—not for the right reason, namely that it's customary to do so, but on the assumption that he knows for sure where reason and justice are. They keep finding themselves deceived, and humbly believe—what a joke!—that it's the fault of •themselves and not of •the art they always boast of having. But it is well for the glory of pyrrhonism that there are so many of these people who are not pyrrhonians; it shows that man is quite capable of the most extravagant opinions, since he is capable of believing that he is in a state not of natural and inevitable weakness but of natural wisdom.

Nothing fortifies pyrrhonism more than that some people are not pyrrhonians; if all were so, they would be wrong.

**375.** I have passed a great part of my life believing that there was justice, and in this I was not mistaken; for there is justice according as God has willed to reveal it to us. But I did not understand it in that way, and this is where I made a mistake; for I believed that our justice was *essentially* just, and that I had what I needed to know and judge concerning it. But I have so often found my solid judgement at fault that eventually I have become distrustful of myself and then of others. I have seen changes in all nations and men, and thus, after many changes of judgement regarding true justice, I have recognised that continual change is our nature, and I haven't changed since; and if I did, that would confirm my

opinion.

The pyrrhonian Arcesilaus, who returned to being a dogmatist.

**376.** This sect derives more strength from its enemies than from its friends, because man's weakness is more evident in those who don't know they are weak than in those who do.

**377.** Discourses on humility are a source of pride in the self-satisfied and of humility in the humble. Similarly, those on pyrrhonism cause believers to believe. Few men speak humbly of humility, chastely of chastity, doubtingly of pyrrhonism. We are nothing but lying, duplicity, inconsistency; we both conceal and disguise ourselves from ourselves.

**378. Pyrrhonism.** Extreme intellect is accused of madness; so is extreme lack of intellect. Nothing is good but the middle. It's the majority who have settled that, and they deal fiercely with anyone who escapes the middle at either end. I won't oppose it. I quite consent to be put in the middle; I refuse to be at the lower end, not because it is low but because it is an end; for I would likewise refuse to be placed at the top. To leave the middle is to abandon humanity.

The greatness of the human soul consists in knowing how to stay there. Greatness is so far from consisting in leaving it that it consists in *not* leaving it.

**379.** It is not good to have too much liberty. It is not good to have none.

**380.** All the good maxims are in the world, •i.e. are available to us•. All that's missing is our applying them. For instance:

- We don't doubt that we ought to risk our lives in defence of the public good; but for religion, no.
- It is true there must be inequality among men; but conceding this is opening the door not only to extreme domination but to extreme tyranny.



- We must relax our minds a little; but this opens the door to the greatest debauchery. Limits should be set.
- There are no limits in things; laws try to put them there, and the mind can't endure it.

**381.** When we are too young, we don't judge well; too old, the same.

If we don't think enough about something, or if we think about it too much, we get obstinate and infatuated with it.

If we consider our work immediately after having done it, we're entirely prepossessed in its favour; if we delay too long, we can no longer enter into the spirit of it.

So with pictures seen from too far or too near; there's just one exact point which is the true place.

The rest are too near, too far, too high or too low. For the art of painting, perspective determines that point. But who will determine it for in truth and morality?

**382.** When everything is moving in the same way, nothing appears to be moving, as in a ship. When everyone is heading towards uproar, none appears to do so. Anyone who *stops* draws attention to the excess of others, like a fixed point.

**383.** Men who are living badly tell those who are living well 'You are straying from nature's path; I am following it'. Like people on a ship who think that it's the people on the shore who are moving. The language is the same from all directions. We must have a fixed point in order to judge. The harbour decides for those who are in a ship; but where will we find a harbour in morality?

**384.** Contradiction or the lack of it is a bad sign of truth; several things that are certain are contradicted; several things that are false pass without contradiction. Contradiction is not a sign of falsity; lack of contradiction is not a sign of truth.

**385. Pyrrhonism.** Each thing here [= 'in this world'] is partly

true and partly false. Essential truth is not so; it is wholly pure and wholly true. This admixture of falsity dishonours and annihilates it: nothing is purely true, so nothing is true—meaning by that *pure* truth. You will say it is *true* that homicide is wrong. Yes; for we know well the wrong and the false. But what will you say is good? Chastity? I say no; for the human world would come to an end. Marriage? No; continence is better. Not to kill? No; for without capital punishment lawlessness would be horrible, and the wicked would kill all the good. To kill? No; for that destroys nature. We possess truth and goodness only in part, and mingled with falsehood and evil.

**386.** If we dreamed the same thing every night, it would affect us as much as the objects we see every day. If a carpenter were sure of having every night a twelve-hour dream of being a king, I believe he would be almost as happy as a king who every night had a twelve-hour dream of being a carpenter.

If we dreamed every night that we were pursued by enemies and harassed by these painful phantoms, and that we passed every day in different occupations, as in making a voyage, we would suffer almost as much as if this were real; and we would be anxious about going to sleep, as we are anxious about waking up when we have fears of such miseries occurring in reality. And in fact the evils would be about the same either way.

But since dreams are all different, and each one is diversified, what is seen in them affects us much less than what we see when awake because of the continuity of waking experience. (The latter is not perfectly continuous and level; it changes too, though less abruptly except in special cases such as when we travel—and then we say 'This seems like a dream'.) For life is a slightly steadier dream.

**387.** It may be that there are true demonstrations; but this

is not certain. So all this proves is that it is not certain that everything is uncertain—to the glory of pyrrhonism.

**388.** They are reduced to saying ‘You are not acting in good faith; we are *not* asleep’ etc. How I love to see this arrogant reason humiliated and pleading! This isn’t the language of a man whose right is disputed, and who defends it with armed force. He doesn’t waste time saying that his opponents aren’t acting in good faith; he punishes this bad faith with force.

**389.** Ecclesiastes shows that man without God •knows nothing and •is inevitably miserable. For it is wretched to have the wish but not the power [the French is . . . *de vouloir et ne pouvoir*]. Well, he wants to be happy and assured of some truth; yet he can neither know nor stop desiring to know. He can’t even doubt.

**390.** My God! How foolish this talk is! ‘Would God have made the world to damn it? Would he ask so much from persons so weak? etc.’ Pyrrhonism is the cure for this evil, and will take down this vanity.

**391.** Great words: Religion, I deny it.

Pyrrhonism helps religion.

**392. Against pyrrhonism.** We assume that all conceive things in the same way; but we assume this quite gratuitously, for we have no proof of it. I see the same words being applied on the same occasions; whenever two men see a body change its place, they report what they see with the same word, both saying that it has *moved*; and from this •verbal agreement we derive a strong conviction of an agreement of •ideas. There’s a case to be made for this, but it’s not absolutely or finally convincing, because we know that we often draw the same conclusions from different premises—and so we might be using the same words to report different thoughts.

This is enough, at least, to obscure the •issue over the existence of the world of •matter, though it doesn’t

completely extinguish the natural light which assures us of these •material• things. . . . But it does tarnish the natural light, and troubles the dogmatists to the glory of the sect of pyrrhonism, which consists in this ambiguous ambiguity and in a certain doubtful dimness from which our doubts can’t take away all the clearness, nor our own natural lights chase away all the darkness.

**393.** There are people in the world (e.g. the soldiers of Mahomet, robbers, heretics, etc.) who have renounced all the laws of God and nature and then made laws for themselves which they strictly obey! It’s enough to make one laugh. It is the same with logicians.

It seems that what they permit themselves must be without any limits or barriers, seeing that they have broken through so many that are so just and sacred.

**394.** All the principles of pyrrhonians, stoics, atheists etc. are true. But their conclusions are false, because the opposite principles are also true.

**395. Instinct, reason.** We have an inability to prove anything, invulnerable to all dogmatism. We have an idea of truth, invulnerable to all pyrrhonism.

**396.** Two things instruct man about his whole nature: instinct and experience.

**397.** The greatness of man is great in that he knows himself to be miserable. A tree does not know itself to be miserable.

It is, then, being miserable to know oneself to be miserable; but it is also being great to know that one is miserable.

**398.** All these same miseries prove man’s greatness. They are the miseries of a great lord, of a deposed king.

**399.** We are not miserable without feeling it. A ruined house is not miserable. Only man is miserable. ‘I am the man that has seen •affliction by the rod of his wrath.’ (quoted in Latin from Lamentations 3:1)

**400.** We have so great an idea of the human soul that we can't endure being despised—or not being esteemed—by any soul; and all the happiness of men consists in this esteem.

**401.** The beasts don't admire each other. A horse doesn't admire his stable-mate. Not that they aren't rivals in a race, but that is of no consequence; for, back in the stable, the heavier and worst-formed of the two doesn't give up his oats to the other, as men would have others do to them. Their virtue is satisfied with itself.

**402.** The greatness of man even in his greed: to have been able to extract an admirable code from it, and to have made from it a picture of benevolence.

**403.** *Les raisons des effets marquent la grandeur de l'homme, d'avoir tiré de concupiscence un si bel ordre.*

**404.** Man's greatest baseness is the pursuit of glory; but that is also the greatest mark of his excellence; for whatever possessions he may have on earth, whatever health and basic comfort, he isn't satisfied unless he has the esteem of men. He values human reason so highly that, whatever advantages he may have on earth, he isn't content if he doesn't also have an advantageous place in the ranking of human reason. This is the finest place in the world. Nothing can turn him from that desire, which is the most indelible quality of the human heart.

And those who most despise men, and put them on a level with the beasts, still want to be admired and believed by men. They contradict themselves by their own feelings; their **strong** nature convinces them of the greatness of man more strongly than their **weak** reason convinces them of their baseness.

**405.** Pride outweighing all miseries. Man either hides his miseries, or discloses them and boasts of knowing them.

**406.** Pride outweighs and takes away all miseries. Look at

that strange monster who has obviously lost his way. Having fallen from his place he is anxiously trying to find it. This is what all men do. Let us see who will have found it.

**407.** When malice has reason on its side, it becomes proud and parades reason in all its splendour. When austerity or stern choice has not arrived at the true good, and people have to revert to following nature, it is made proud by this return.

**408.** Evil is easy, and has countless forms; good is almost unique. But a certain kind of evil is as hard to find as what we call 'good'; and often this fact leads to this evil's being passed off as good. An extraordinary greatness of soul is needed in order to attain to it as well as to good.

**409.** The greatness of man is so evident that it is proved even by his misery. For what in animals is *nature* we call *misery* in man. That is our recognition that while his nature now is on a par with that of animals, he has fallen from a better nature that was once his.

For who is unhappy at not being a king, except a deposed king? Was Paulus Aemilius unhappy at being no longer consul? On the contrary, everybody thought him happy to *have been* consul, because that office could be held only for a time. But men thought Perseus so unhappy in being no longer king—because kingship implies being always king—that they thought it strange that he endured life. Who is unhappy at only having one mouth? And who will not be unhappy at having only one eye? Probably no-one ever mourned not having three eyes; but anyone who has none is inconsolable.

**410.** *On reprochait à Persée de ce qu'il ne se tuait pas.*

**411.** Despite seeing all our miseries, which press upon us and take us by the throat, we are lifted up by an instinct that we can't repress.

**412.** There is internal war in man between reason and the passions.

If he had only reason without passions. . .

If he had only passions without reason. . .

But having both, he can't be without war, because he can't be at peace with one of the two without being at war with the other. Thus he is always divided and opposed to himself.

**413.** This internal war of reason against the passions has divided the would-be peacemakers into two sects. One would renounce their passions and become gods; the other would renounce reason and become brute beasts. . . . But neither has succeeded: •reason still remains, to condemn the vileness and injustice of the passions and to disturb the peace of those who abandon themselves to them; and •the passions always remain alive in those who want to renounce them.

**414.** Men are so *necessarily* mad that not being mad would be another sort of madness.

**415.** Man's nature can be viewed in two ways: one according to his end, ·his goal·, and then he is great and incomparable; the other according to what people in general attend to—as they evaluate the natures of horses and dogs by how well they run and how controlled they are—and then man is abject and vile. These are the two ways that make us judge man differently, and lead to such disputes among philosophers.

For one of them denies the assumption of the other. One says 'He isn't born for this end, for all his actions are repugnant to it'. The other says 'When he does these base actions he is steering away from his end'.

**416.** Misery being deduced from greatness, and greatness from misery: **(a)** some have inferred man's misery all the more because they have taken his greatness as proof of it,

and **(b)** others have inferred his greatness with all the more force because they have inferred it from his misery. All that **(b)** could say in proof of his greatness has only served **(a)** as evidence of his misery. On the side of **(a)**:

•the greater the height from which we have fallen, the more wretched we are;

and on the side of **(b)**:

•vice versa.

The battle continues in an endless circle, because it's certain that to the extent that men have insight, they discover both the greatness and the misery of man. In short, man knows that he is wretched. So he is wretched, because he is so; but he is great because he knows it.

**417.** This twofold nature of man is so evident that some have thought that we had two souls. It seemed to them that a single undivided subject couldn't undergo such variations—such *sudden* variations—from inordinate self-satisfaction to a dreadful dejection of heart.

**418.** It is dangerous to make man see too clearly how greatly he resembles the beasts without showing him his greatness. It is also dangerous to make him see his greatness too clearly, apart from his vileness. It is still more dangerous to leave him in ignorance of both. But it is very advantageous to show him both.

Man should not think that he is on a level either with the brutes or with the angels, nor must he be ignorant of both ·aspects of his nature·. He must know both.

**419.** I won't allow man to rest content with either one ·of the aspects of his nature·; I want him to be without a firm floor and without rest.

**420.** If he exalts himself, I humble him; if he humbles himself, I exalt him; and I always contradict him, till he understands that he is an incomprehensible monster.

**421.** I blame equally those who choose to praise man, those who choose to blame him, and those who choose to fool around; I can approve only of those who seek, lamenting.

**422.** It is good to be defeated and worn out by the useless search for the true good, so that we may stretch out our arms to the Redeemer.

**423. After showing man's vileness and his greatness.** Let man now know his value. Let him love himself, for there is in him a nature **capable** of good; but don't let this lead him to love the vileness that is in him. Let him despise himself, for this **capacity** is barren; but let him not therefore despise this natural capacity. Let him hate himself. Let him love himself:

he has within him the capacity for knowing the truth and being happy, but he doesn't have within him any constant or satisfying truth.

I would then lead man to the desire to find truth; to be free from passions, and ready to pursue truth wherever he may find it, knowing how much his knowledge is obscured by the passions. I want him to hate the greed that pushes his will around, so that it doesn't blind him in making his choice or block him after he has chosen.

**424.** All these contradictions, which seem most to keep me from the knowledge of religion, have led me most quickly to the true one.

## Section 7: Morality and doctrine

**425.** Second part. That man without faith can't know the true good, or justice. [For Pascal's introduction of 'First part', 'Second part', see **60** on page **??**. See also **242** on page **??**.]

All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions to this; they *all* work towards this goal, however differently they go about it. One man goes to war while another avoids it; but they are driven by the same desire, accompanied by different beliefs. The will never takes the least step towards anything but this object of happiness. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.

And yet, after so many years, no-one without faith has reached that point that everyone continually aims at. All complain—monarchs, subjects, noblemen, commoners, old, young; strong, weak, learned, ignorant; healthy, sick; of all

countries, all times, all ages, and all conditions.

Such a long, continuous, and uniform trial *should* convince us that we can't reach the good by our own efforts; but we don't learn much from this experience. There is always some slight difference between our present situation and any previous one; so we keep hoping that *this* time we'll have success. And thus with the present never satisfying us, experience dupes us and leads us—one misfortune at a time—to the culminating eternal misfortune, death.

This desire and this inability proclaim to us that there was once in man a true happiness of which he now has only the mark, only the empty trace that he in vain tries to fill from his environment, seeking from absent things the help he doesn't get from present ones. But these are all

inadequate, because the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and unchanging object, i.e. by God himself. [In the original, this paragraph is presented as a single rhetorical question.]

*He* only is our true good, and since we have forsaken him it's a strange thing that there is nothing in nature that has not been serviceable in taking his place: the stars, the heavens, earth, the elements, plants, cabbages, leeks, animals, insects, calves, serpents, fever, pestilence, war, famine, vices, adultery, incest. And since man has lost the true good, everything can appear equally good to him—even his own destruction, opposed though that is to God, to reason, and to the whole course of nature.

Some seek good in authority, others in collecting and in the sciences, others in pleasure. Others, who are in fact nearer true good, have held that the universal good that all men desire can't consist in any of the particular things that can •be possessed by only one man or •be divided so that someone's enjoyment of one part may be less than his suffering from not having the rest. They have understood that the true good should be something that

- everyone can possess at once, without diminution and without envy, and
- no-one need lose against his will.

Their reasoning goes as follows. This desire ·for the true good· is natural to man because necessarily all men have it and it's impossible not to have it; from which they infer. . .

**426.** True nature being lost, everything becomes man's nature; just as the true good being lost, everything becomes his true good.

**427.** Man doesn't know in what rank to place himself. He has plainly gone astray and fallen from his true place without being able to find it again. He searches everywhere through impenetrable darkness, looking for it anxiously and

unsuccessfully.

**428.** If it's a sign of weakness to prove God by nature, don't despise Scripture; if it is a sign of strength to have known these contradictions, esteem Scripture.

**429.** Man's *lowness* in submitting himself to the beasts—even worshipping them.

**430.** The greatness and the misery of man are so evident that the true religion *must* teach us both •that there is some great source of greatness in man and •that there is a great source of misery.

It must then give us a reason for these astonishing contradictions.

In order to make man happy, it—the true religion—must show him

- that there is a God;
- that we're obliged to love him;
- that our true happiness is to be in him, and
- that our one evil is to be separated from him.

It must recognise that we are full of darkness that hinders us from knowing and loving him; and that thus, as our duties oblige us to love God and our greeds [see Glossary] turn us away from him, we are full of unrighteousness. It must explain to us this opposition we have to God and to our own good. It must teach what the remedies are for these weaknesses, and how to obtain them. So let us examine all the world's religions to see if any other than the Christian religion meets these requirements.

Will it be •the philosophers who hold that *the good in ourselves* is the whole good? Is that the true good? Have they found the remedy for our ills? Is man's arrogance cured by placing him on an equality with God? Have •those who have made us equal to the beasts, or •the Moslems who have offered us earthly pleasures as the whole good even in

eternity, produced the remedy for our greeds? Well, then, what religion *will* teach us to cure pride and greed? What religion will teach us our good, our duties, the weaknesses that turn us from them, the cause of these, the remedies for them, and the means of obtaining these remedies?

No other religion has been able to do so. Let us see what the wisdom of God will do.

‘Don’t look to men for truth or consolation. I formed you, and only I can teach you what you are. But you are not now in the state in which I formed you. I created man holy, innocent, perfect, full of light and intelligence; I communicated to him my glory and my wonders. Back then, the eye of man saw the majesty of God. He wasn’t then in the darkness that blinds him, or subject to mortality and the miseries that afflict him. But he couldn’t sustain so much glory without falling into arrogance. He wanted to make himself his own centre and independent of my help. He withdrew himself from my rule; and when he put himself on a par with me by trying to find his happiness in himself, I left him to himself. And setting in revolt the creatures that had been subject to him, I made them his enemies; so that man is now become like the beasts and so estranged from me that in his faint or confused states of knowledge he hardly retains a dim vision of his author. His senses, independent of reason and often dominating it, have led him into the pursuit of pleasure. All created things either torment or tempt him, and they dominate him, either subduing him by their strength or—a more awful and harmful domination—fascinating him by their charms.

‘That is the state men are in today. They retain some feeble sense of the happiness of their previous state; and they are plunged in the miseries of their

blindness and of the greed that has become their second nature.

‘From what I am revealing to you now you can recognise the cause of those contradictions that have astonished all men and have divided them into parties holding such different views. Observe now all the feelings of greatness and glory that the experience of so many woes can’t stifle, and see if the cause of them mustn’t be in another nature.

‘Men, it’s no use seeking within yourselves the remedy for your miseries. All your insights can achieve only the knowledge that you won’t find truth or good in yourselves. The philosophers promised you that, and they couldn’t make good on their promise. They don’t know what your true good is, or what is your true state. How could they have given remedies for your ills, when they didn’t even know them? Your chief maladies are •pride which takes you away from God and •greed which binds you to the earth; and the philosophers have done nothing but keep one or both of these diseases going. If they told you to focus on God, it was only to administer to your pride; they made you think that you are by nature like him. And those who saw the absurdity of this claim •threw you down the other cliff by making you think that your nature was like that of the beasts, and •led you to seek your good in the low pleasures that are all the animals have.

‘This is not the way to cure you of your unrighteousness, which these wise men never knew. I alone can make you understand who you are. . . .’

Adam. Jesus-Christ.

If you are united to God, it is by grace, not by nature. If you are humbled, it is by penitence, not by nature.

Thus this double capacity. . .

You are not in the state of your creation.

As these two states are open, it is impossible for you not to recognise them.

Follow your own feelings, observe yourselves, and see if you don't find the living characteristics of these two natures. Would so many contradictions be found in a simple subject [i.e. in one that had no parts]?

Incomprehensible? Everything that is incomprehensible nevertheless exists. Infinite number. An infinite space equal to a finite one.

Incredible that God should unite himself to us? This thought comes only from the view of our vileness. But if you sincerely have that view, follow it as far as I have done and recognise that we are indeed so vile that we are can't, unaided, know whether his mercy can make us capable of him. I would like to know how this animal that knows itself to be so weak has the right to measure God's mercy and set limits to it suggested by his own fancy. He knows so little about what God is that he doesn't know what he himself is; and all upset by his view of his own state, he dares to say that God can't make him capable of communion with him.

But I'd like to ask him •if God asks from him anything but to know and love him, and •why—given that he is naturally capable of love and knowledge—he believes that God can't make himself knowable and lovable by him. He doesn't doubt that he at least knows that he exists, and that he loves something. Therefore, if he sees anything in the darkness that surrounds him, and if he finds some object of his love among the things on earth, why, if God imparts to him some ray of his essence, will he not be capable of knowing and of loving *him* in the manner in which it will please him to communicate himself to us? There must, then, be certainly an intolerable presumption in arguments of this

sort, although they seem to be based on an apparent humility, which is neither sincere nor reasonable if it does not make us admit that, not knowing of ourselves what we are, we can only learn it from God.

[The rest of this item is presented under quotation marks. Presumably it is God who speaks, despite the use of 'God' and 'he' rather than 'I'.]

'I don't want you to submit your belief to me without reason, and I don't aim to overcome you by tyranny. But nor do I aim to give you a reason for everything. And to reconcile these contradictions I aim to make you see—clearly, by convincing proofs—divine signs in me that convince you of what I am and gain authority for me by wonders and proofs that you can't reject; so that you may then believe the things I teach you, since you won't find any reason to reject them except that you can't know *unaided* whether they are true or not.

'God wanted to redeem men and to open salvation to those who seek it. But men render themselves so unworthy of it that it's right for God to •refuse to some because of their obstinacy what that he •grants others from a compassion that he doesn't *owe* them. If he had wanted to overcome the obstinacy of the most hardened, he could have done so by revealing himself to them so clearly that they couldn't have doubted of the truth of his essence—as it will appear at the last day with such upheavals and convulsions of nature that the dead will rise again and the blindest will see him.

'That is not how he wanted to appear in his gentle coming, because, with so many men making themselves unworthy of his mercy, he wanted to leave them without the good that they don't want. So it wouldn't have been right for him to appear in a manifestly divine manner that would completely convince all men; but nor would it have been right for him to come in such a hidden way that he couldn't be known •even•



by those who sincerely sought him. He wanted to make himself perfectly knowable by the latter. Thus, wanting to appear openly to those who seek him with all their heart, and to be hidden from those who flee from him with all their heart, he has regulated the knowledge of himself so as to give signs of himself that are visible to those who do seek him and not to those who don't.

'There is enough light for those who only want to see, and enough darkness for those who have a contrary disposition.'

**431.** No-one else has known that man is the most excellent creature. **(i)** Some have thoroughly recognised the reality of his excellence ·but· have considered as mean and ungrateful the low opinions men naturally have of themselves; and **(ii)** others have thoroughly recognised how real this vileness is and have treated with arrogant ridicule the feelings of greatness that are also natural to man.

'Lift your eyes to God', say **(i)**, 'see him whom you resemble and who has created you to worship him. You can make yourselves like him; wisdom will make you equal to him if you will follow it.' 'Raise your heads, free men', says Epictetus. And **(ii)** say 'Bend your eyes to the earth, wretched worm that you are, and consider the beasts whose companion you are.'

Then what will man become? Will he be equal to God or to the beasts? What a terrifying difference! What will we be, then? Who doesn't see from all this that man has gone astray, that he has fallen from his place which he anxiously seeks and can't find again? And who will direct him to it? The greatest men have failed.

**432.** Pyrrhonism is true; for men before Jesus-Christ didn't know where they were, or whether they were great or small. And those who have said 'great' or 'small' knew nothing about it and guessed without reason and by chance. They were

always wrong, also, in rejecting 'great' or 'small'.

'What you ignorantly seek, religion announces to you.'  
[Misquoted, in Latin, from Acts 17:23]

**433.** For a religion to be true it must know our nature, knowing its greatness and its littleness, and the reason for both. What religion but the Christian has known this?

**434.** The chief arguments of the pyrrhonians (I skip the lesser ones) are these. **(a)** We have no certainty of the truth of these principles apart from faith and revelation. It's true that we naturally perceive them in ourselves, but this is not a convincing proof of their truth because apart from faith we have no certainty whether man was created by •a good God, •a wicked demon, or •chance, so it is doubtful whether these principles we find in ourselves are •true, •false, or •uncertain.

**(b)** Apart from faith, no-one is certain whether he is awake or sleeping, given that during ·dreaming· sleep we believe that we're awake as firmly as we do when we are awake; we believe we see spaces, shapes, and motions; we're aware of the passage of time, and measure it; in short, we act as if we were awake. So that on our own admission, half of our life is passed in sleep, when we have no idea of the truth, however things may appear, because at those times all our states of mind are illusions. So who knows whether this other half of our life, in which we think we're awake, is not another slightly different kind of sleep?

And who doubts that if we dreamed in company and our dreams happened to fit together (which they quite often do), and if we were always alone when awake, we would believe that matters were reversed? In short, as we often dream that we dream, piling one dream on another, mightn't the following be the case?

Our ·supposedly waking· life is itself only a dream

on which the other dreams are grafted; a dream from which we wake at death, and during which we have as few principles of truth and goodness as during natural sleep, these different thoughts that disturb us being only illusions like the passage of time and the vain fancies of our ·actual· dreams.

I omit minor arguments, such as the pyrrhonian talk against the impressions of custom, education, *mœurs*, country and the like. Though these impressions influence the majority of common folk, who dogmatise only on shallow foundations, they are upset by the least breath of the pyrrhonians. If you aren't sufficiently convinced of this, see their books; you will very quickly become convinced, perhaps too much so.

On the dogmatist side I mention their one strong argument, namely that when speaking in good faith and sincerely we can't doubt natural principles.

Against this the pyrrhonians oppose the uncertainty of our origin, including uncertainty about our nature. The dogmatists have yet to reply to this objection. . .

These are the chief arguments on one side and on the other.

So there it is—open war among men, in which each must choose a side, either with dogmatism or pyrrhonism. Anyone planning to remain neutral is a paradigm pyrrhonian. This neutrality is the essence of the sect: he who is not against them is splendidly for them. They are not *for* themselves; they are neutral, indifferent, not committed to anything, even themselves.

So what is man to do in this state? Doubt everything? Doubt whether he is awake, whether he is being pinched, or whether he is being burned? will he doubt whether he doubts? whether he exists? We can't go so far as that; and I declare that in fact there never has been a completely

thorough pyrrhonian. Nature sustains our feeble reason and prevents it raving to this extent.

Then is man to say on the contrary that he certainly possesses truth? He who, when pressed ever so little, can show no title to it and is forced to let go his hold?

What a chimera, then, is man! What a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a freak! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the earth; depository of truth, sewer of uncertainty and error; the glory and garbage of the universe!

Who will unravel this tangle?

Nature confutes the pyrrhonians, and reason confutes the dogmatists. You men who try to find out by your natural reason what your true condition is, what will you become? You can't avoid both these sects, but you can't adhere to either one of them.

Know then, arrogant man, what a paradox you are to yourself. Weak reason, humble yourself! Foolish nature, be silent! Learn that man infinitely surpasses man, and learn from your master your true condition, of which you are ignorant. Hear God!

In short, if man had never been corrupted, he would in his innocence have an assured enjoyment of both truth and happiness; and if man had always been corrupt he would have no idea of truth or bliss. But, wretched as we are—and *more* wretched than if there were no greatness in our condition—we have an idea of happiness and can't reach it; we detect an image of truth and possess only a lie. We're incapable both of absolute ignorance and of certain knowledge, which makes it obvious that we used to have a level of perfection from which we have unhappily fallen.

It's an astonishing thing, though, that the mystery furthest removed from our knowledge should be something without which we can't have any knowledge of ourselves; I'm

talking about the transmission of sin.

It is quite certain that nothing shocks our reason more than the claim that the first man's sin has conferred guilt on those who are so distant from this source that they seem incapable of having any part in it. This transmission [*écoulement* = 'trickle-down'] doesn't only appear to us impossible; it also strikes us as very unjust. For what is more contrary to the rules of our miserable justice than to damn eternally an infant who is incapable of will, for a sin that he seems to have so little part in—a sin that he supposedly committed six thousand years before he was in existence? Certainly nothing jolts us more roughly than this doctrine; and yet without this mystery—the most incomprehensible of all—we are incomprehensible to ourselves. The knot of our condition takes its twists and turns in this abyss, so that this mystery is not as inconceivable to man as man is inconceivable without this mystery.

From this it appears that God wanted to make the difficulty of our existence unintelligible to us, and has therefore concealed the knot so high—or, better, so low—that we are quite incapable of reaching it; so that we can truly know ourselves only by the simple submission of our reason, not by its proud exertions.

These foundations, solidly established on the unshakable authority of religion, let us know that there are two equally certain truths of faith:

- (a) Man, in the state of creation or in the state of grace, is raised above all nature, made like God and sharing in his divinity;
- (b) Man, in the state of corruption and sin, has fallen from this state and been made like the beasts.

These two propositions are equally solid and certain.

Scripture plainly declares this to us when it says in some places: (a) 'And my delights were with the sons of men'

[Proverbs 8:31]; 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh' [Joel 2:28]; 'You are gods' [Psalm 82:6]. And in other places: (b) 'All flesh is grass' [Isaiah 40:6]; 'Man being in honour abideth not. He is like the beasts that perish' [Psalm 49:12]; 'I said in my heart concerning the sons of men that they might see that they themselves are beasts.' [Ecclesiastes 3:18—Pascal gives all these quotations in Latin].

From which it clearly appears that man by grace is made like God, sharing in his divinity, and that without grace he is like the brute beasts.

**435.** Without these divine items of knowledge, what could men do but become either elated by the inner sense they still have of their past greatness or despondent at the sight of their present weakness?

That is because they, not seeing the whole truth, haven't been able to achieve perfect virtue. So they couldn't escape both the sources of all vice,

- pride, for those who saw nature as uncorrupt, and
- apathy [see Glossary], for those who saw it as corrupt beyond repair,

leaving them with no option but to surrender through cowardice or escape through pride. If they knew man's excellence they were ignorant of his corruption; so that they easily avoided apathy but were swallowed up by arrogance. And if they recognised the infirmity of man's nature they were ignorant of its dignity; so that they could easily avoid vanity but were plunged in despair.

Thence arise the different schools of the stoics and epicureans, the dogmatists, platonic sceptics, etc.

The Christian religion alone has been able to cure these two vices, not

- in accordance with earthly 'wisdom', by using one to expel the other, but
- in accordance with the simplicity of the Gospel, by

expelling both.

For it teaches the righteous—whom it raises even to participation in divinity itself—that in this lofty state they still carry the source of all corruption, which makes them throughout their life subject to error, misery, death, and sin; and it calls out to the most ungodly that they are capable of their Redeemer’s grace. Thus, frightening those whom it justifies and consoling those whom it condemns, religion so justly tempers fear with hope, through the double capacity we all have for grace and for sin, that it

- humbles infinitely more than reason alone can do, but without creating despair; and
- exalts infinitely more than natural pride can do, but without puffing men up;

thus making it evident that it—the Christian religion—the only source that is free from error and vice, is the only thing whose role is to instruct men and correct them.

Who then can refuse to believe and worship this heavenly light? Isn’t it crystal clear that we sense within ourselves indelible marks of excellence? And isn’t it also true that we experience *hourly* the results of our deplorable condition?

What does this chaos and monstrous confusion proclaim to us—with an irresistibly powerful voice—but the reality of these two states?

**436.** All men’s occupations aim at the acquisition of some good; and they can’t have a title to show that they possess it justly (for *ownership* is a product of human whims, not justice), nor do they have strength to hold it securely. It is the same with knowledge, for disease takes it away. We are incapable of truth and of goodness.

**437.** We hope for truth, and find within ourselves only uncertainty.

We seek happiness, and find only misery and death.

We can’t *not hope for* truth and happiness, and we can’t *have* certainty or happiness.

We are left with this desire as much to punish us as to give us a sense of the height from which we have fallen.

**438.** If man isn’t made for God, why is he happy only in God?

If man is made for God, why is he so opposed to God?

**439.** Man does not act by reason, which constitutes his being.

**440.** The corruption of reason is shown by the existence of so many different and extravagant *mœurs*. For man to stop living within himself, the truth had to come.

**441.** As for me, I declare that as soon as the Christian religion reveals the principle that *human nature is corrupt and has fallen away from God*, that opens my eyes to see signs of this truth everywhere; for nature testifies everywhere—both within man and outside him—to a lost God and a corrupt nature.

**442.** There is no way of separating the knowledge of man’s true nature, of his true good, of true virtue, and of true religion.

**443.** The more light we have, the more greatness we discover in man, and the more baseness. Ordinary men. Those who are more educated. Philosophers. They astonish ordinary men. Christians astonish the philosophers.

So who will be surprised to see that religion only makes us know in depth things that we already recognise as far as our enlightenment takes us?

**444.** What men have been able to discover through the utmost stretch of their knowledge are things that this religion taught to her *children*.

**445.** Original sin is foolishness to men, but it is offered as such. You mustn’t reproach me for the lack of reason in

this doctrine, because I present it as being without reason. 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men' [1 Corinthians 1:25]. For without this doctrine, what shall we say that man is? His whole state depends on this elusive point. And how would it be perceived by his reason, since it is contrary to reason and his reason, far from discovering it, *pushes it away* when it is presented?

**446.** Ample tradition of original sin according to the Jews.

Genesis 8:21: 'The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.'

Moses Haddarschan: 'This evil leaven is placed in man at the moment he is formed.'

Massechet Succa: 'This evil leaven has seven names in Scripture. It is called "evil", "foreskin", "uncleanness", "enemy", "scandal", "heart of stone", "north wind"; all this signifies the wickedness concealed and impressed in the heart of man.'

Midrash Tehillim says the same thing, and says that God will rescue man's good nature from the evil.

This wickedness is renewed every day against man, as it is written in Psalm 37:32: 'The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him; but God will not abandon him.' This wickedness tempts the heart of man in this life and will accuse him in the next.

All this is found in the Talmud.

Midrash Tehillim, writing on Psalm 4:4 'Stand in awe and sin not', says 'Stand in awe and terrify your greed, and it won't lead you into sin'. And writing on Psalm 36:1 'The wicked has said in his heart "These is no fear of God before me", Midrash Tehillim says 'That is to say that the wickedness natural to man has said that to the wicked.'

Midrash el Kohelet: 'A child who is poor and wise is better than an old and foolish king who can't foresee the future.'

The child is man's virtue, and the king is his wickedness. It is called 'king' because all the members obey it, and 'old' because it is in the human heart from infancy to old age, and 'foolish' because it leads man on the road to perdition, which he does not foresee.

The same thing is in Midrash Tehillim.

Bereshith Rabbah, on Psalm 35:10 'Lord, all my bones will bless you, who deliverest the poor from the tyrant', writes: 'And is there a greater tyrant than the evil leaven?' And on Proverbs 25:21 'If your enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink', he writes: 'That is to say, if the evil leaven is hungry give him the bread of wisdom that it is spoken of in Proverbs 9, and if he is thirsty give him the water that it is spoken in Isaiah 55.'

Midrash Tehillim says the same thing, and says that when Scripture in that passage speaks of the 'enemy' it means the evil leaven; and that in giving it that bread and water we are heaping coals of fire on its head.

Midrash el Kohelet on Ecclesiastes 9:14 'A great king besieged a little city' writes 'This great king is the evil leaven; the great siege-engines he built against it are temptations; and the poor wise man who delivered it is virtue.' [This is actually a commentary on verses 14–15: 'There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. . .']

And on Psalm 41:1: 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor.'

And on Psalm 78:39 'The spirit passeth away, and cometh not again', el Kohelet writes ' . . . from which some have erroneously argued against the immortality of the soul. But the sense is that this spirit is the evil leaven, which accompanies man till death and will not return at the resurrection.' And on Psalm 103: the same thing. And on Psalm 16.

Principles of the rabbis: two Messiahs.

**447.** Men have declared that righteousness has departed the earth—‘No-one is happy before death’ [quoted in Latin from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*]. Will it be said that this shows that they knew of original sin? Does that mean that they knew death to be the beginning of eternal and essential happiness?

**448.** Miton sees well that nature is corrupt and that men are opposed to honesty; but he doesn’t know why they can’t fly higher.

**449.** After the treatment of Corruption, add this: ‘It is just that all those who are in that state should know it, both those who are content with it and those who aren’t; but it isn’t just that all should see redemption.’

**450.** Anyone who doesn’t know himself to be full of arrogance, ambition, greed, weakness, misery, and injustice is indeed blind. What can we say of a man who knows this and doesn’t want to be delivered from it?

So what can we have but •esteem for a religion that knows man’s defects so well, and •desire for the truth of a religion that promises such desirable remedies?

**451.** All men naturally hate one another. They employ greed as far as possible in the service of public good; but this is only pretence, a false image of love, because basically it is only hate.

**452.** Pitying the unfortunate is not contrary to greed. On the contrary, we like to be able to provide such evidence of friendship and to acquire a reputation for kindly feeling, without *giving* anything.

**453.** Excellent rules of policy, morality, and justice have been based on—extracted from—greed.

But basically this vile basis of man, this *figmentum malum*, is only covered over, not taken away. [The Latin phrase

is from Genesis 8:21: ‘the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth’.]

**454. Injustice.** They haven’t found any other way of satisfying their greed without harming others.

**455.** The *self* [see Glossary] is hateful [see Glossary]. That doesn’t lead you, Miton, to take it away; rather, you cover it up. So you are still hateful.

‘No; for in acting as we do to oblige everybody, we give no more cause for hatred of us.’

That is true, if what we hate in the *self* is only the vexation that comes to us from it.

But if I hate it because it is unjust, and because it makes itself the centre of everything, I will always hate it.

In short, the *self* has two qualities:

- it is unjust in itself, since it makes itself the centre of everything;
- it is annoying to others, because it wants to enslave them; for each *self* is the enemy of all others and would like to be their tyrant.

You take away the annoyance but not the injustice; so you don’t make the *self* lovable to those who hate injustice. You make it lovable only to the unjust, who don’t any longer see it as an enemy. So *you* remain unjust and can please only the unjust.

**456.** What a perverted judgement it is that makes everyone place himself above the rest of the world, and prefer his own good—and the continuance of his own good fortune and life—to that of the entire rest of the world!

**457.** Each person is an *everything* to himself; for when he dies, everything dies for him. That leads to each person’s thinking that he is everything to everyone. We shouldn’t judge nature according to ourselves, but according to nature.

**458.** ‘All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, or the

lust of the eyes, or the pride of life' [1 John 2:16]. Wretched is the cursed land that these three rivers of fire enclose rather than irrigate! Happy are those who—

- on these rivers but not *in* them,
- not carried along by them but unmoving, fixed,
- not standing but seated on a low and secure base

—don't stand up before the light [of the day of judgment?] but, after resting in peace, stretch out their hands to him who will lift them up and make them stand firmly upright in the porches of holy Jerusalem! Their pride will no longer be able to attack them and beat them down; yet they will weep, not at the sight of all the perishable things swept away by the torrents, but in the remembrance of their beloved country, heavenly Jerusalem, which they never stop remembering during their long exile. [Re 'lust', see Glossary.]

**459.** The rivers of Babylon rush and fall and sweep away. O holy Zion, where all is firm and nothing falls!

We must sit on the waters: not under them or in them but *on* them; and not standing but seated. Seated to be humble, and *on* them to be secure. But in the porches of Jerusalem we will stand.

Let us see if this pleasure is stable or transitory; if it passes away, it is a river of Babylon.

**460. Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride, etc.**

There are three orders of things: the flesh, the mind, and the will. The carnal [= 'flesh-oriented'] are the rich, the kings; their concern is with the body. Inquirers and scientists; their concern is with the mind. The wise are concerned with justice.

God must reign over all, and everything must be related to him. In things of the flesh, lust reigns specially. In intellectual matters, inquiry *reigns* specially. In wisdom, pride specially. It's not that a man can't boast of wealth

or knowledge, but in those cases pride is not appropriate; granting to a man that he is scientifically learned, one can still convince him that he is wrong to be proud. The proper place for pride is in wisdom, for you cannot grant to a man that he has made himself wise and tell him that that he is wrong to be proud; for it is not wrong. God alone gives wisdom, and that is why 'he that glories, let him glory in the Lord' [1 Corinthians 1:31].

**461.** The three lusts have made three sects; and the philosophers have done nothing but follow one of the three lusts.

**462. Search for the true good.** Ordinary men place the good in fortune and external goods, or at least in diversion. Philosophers have shown the vanity of all that, and have placed it where they could.

**463.** Against philosophers who have God without Jesus-Christ.

Philosophers believe that only God is worthy to be loved and admired; and they have wanted to be loved and admired by men; and they don't know their *own* corruption. If they feel that they are suffused by feelings of love and admiration, and find their chief delight in that—fine! let them think themselves good! But if they dislike having no inclination but the desire to establish themselves in the esteem of men; if their whole perfection consists only in getting (not forcing) men find their happiness in loving *them*, I declare that this 'perfection' is horrible. What! they have known God and have not wanted solely that men should love him but that they should stop short at *them*! They have wanted to be the object of the happiness that men seek.

**464.** We are full of things that take us out of ourselves.

Our instinct makes us feel that we'll have to seek our happiness outside ourselves. Our passions impel us outside, even when there's nothing there to arouse them. External

objects tempt us of themselves, and call to us, even when we're not thinking of them. So it has been no use for the philosophers to say: 'Retire within yourselves, you will find your good there.' We don't believe them, and those who do believe them are the most empty and the most stupid.

**465.** The stoics say: 'Retire within yourselves; that is where you will find your rest.' And that is not true.

Others say: 'Go out of yourselves; seek happiness in diversion.' And that is not true. Illnesses come.

Happiness is neither outside us nor in us. It is in God, both outside us and in us.

**466.** Even if Epictetus saw the way perfectly, he only says to men 'You are following a wrong road'; he shows that there is another way, but he doesn't lead to it. It is the way of *wanting* what God *wants*. Jesus-Christ alone leads to it: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' [John 14:6].

The vices of Zeno himself.

**467.** [This item is perfectly inscrutable. It concerns the stoic philosopher Epictetus, and a side-swipe he once made against the Christians.]

**468.** No other religion has proposed to men to hate themselves. So no other religion can please those who hate themselves and seek a being who is truly lovable. . . . [The rest of the item doesn't make sense. Evidently some kind of mishap in the original.]

**469.** I sense that I might not have existed; for the *self* [*moi*] consists in my thought; so I [*moi*] who think would not have existed if my mother had been killed before I was born. So I am not a necessary being, nor am I eternal or infinite; but I see very well that there exists in nature a being that is necessary, eternal and infinite.

**470.** 'If I had seen a miracle,' they say, 'I would have been converted.' How can they be sure they would do something

that they know nothing about? They have a *picture* of this conversion as consisting in a socially familiar kind of looking-up to God and being in conversation with him. Genuine conversion consists in •annihilating oneself before the universal being whom one has so often provoked, and who can justly destroy one at any time, and in •recognising that we can do nothing without him, and have deserved from him nothing but his displeasure. It consists in •knowing that there is an unconquerable opposition between us and God, and that without a mediator there can be no communion with him.

**471.** It's not right that men should attach themselves to me, even if they do it with pleasure and voluntarily. I would be deceiving anyone in whom I had created this desire, because I am not anyone's goal and I don't have what is needed to satisfy them. Aren't I about to die? So the object of their attachment will die. Thus, just as •I would be to blame if I caused people to believe a falsehood—even if I did this with gentle persuasion, and even if their having this belief gave pleasure to them, which gave pleasure to me—so also •I am to blame for getting anyone to love me. If people are on the brink of accepting a lie, I ought to warn them not to believe it, whatever advantage I might get from their doing so; and in the same way if I attract persons to attach themselves to me, I ought to warn them not to do so; for they ought to spend their life and their care in pleasing God or in seeking him.

**472.** Self-will won't ever bring satisfaction, and wouldn't do so even if it could achieve everything it wanted; but from the moment we renounce it we are satisfied. Without it we can't be discontented; with it we can't be content.

**473.** Let us imagine a body full of thinking members.

**474.** To regulate the love we owe ourselves, we must •imagine a body full of thinking members, for we are members of the



whole, and must •see how each member should love itself, etc... .

**475.** If the feet and the hands had a will of their own, they wouldn't be in good order unless they submitted this particular will to the primary will that governs the entire body. If they didn't do that, they would be in disorder and misery; but in willing only the good of the body, they would achieve their own good.

**476.** We must love only God and hate only ourselves.

Suppose that

- the foot has never known that it belongs to the body—that there's a body on which it depends—and that
- the only thing it knows of or loves is itself; and that then
- it discovers that it belongs to a body on which it depends.

What regret, what shame for its past life, for having been useless to the body that brought it life, the body which would have annihilated it if it had rejected and pulled apart from the foot, as it—the foot—had kept itself apart from the body! What prayers for its preservation in the body! And with what submission would it let itself be governed by the will that rules the body, even as far as consenting to be amputated if that were necessary. Without that last point it would lose its character as a member, because every member must be quite willing to perish for the body, for which every member exists.

**477.** It is false that we are worthy of the love of others; it is wrong of us to want them to love us. If we had been born reasonable and impartial, knowing ourselves and others, we wouldn't have given this bias to our will. However, we *are* born with it; so we are born in the wrong, for everything inclines to itself. This is contrary to all order. We should

incline to the general good; and the inclination to oneself is the beginning of all disorder, in war, in politics, in economy, and in the individual human body. So the will is depraved.

If the members of natural and civil communities are inclined to the welfare of the body, ·i.e. of the community they belong to·, the communities themselves ought to incline to another more general body of which *they* are members. So we ought to incline to the whole. So we are born unjust and depraved.

**478.** When we want to think of God, is there nothing that turns us away and tempts us to think of something else? All this is bad, and is born in us.

**479.** If there is a God, we should love only him and not transitory creatures. The reasoning of the ungodly in the Book of Wisdom is based on there being no God. 'On that supposition', they say, 'let us take delight in creatures' [Wisdom of Solomon 2:6]. That is a last resort. But if there were a God to love, they would have reached not that conclusion but its opposite. That is what the wise conclude: 'There is a God, so let us not take delight in creatures.'

So everything that incites us to attach ourselves to creatures is bad, because it prevents us from •serving God if we know him or •seeking him if we don't. Well, we are full of greed; so we are full of evil; so we ought to hate ourselves and everything that arouses us to attach ourselves to anything but God.

**480.** For the members to be happy, they must have a will and must conform it to the body.

**481.** The examples of the noble deaths of Spartans and others scarcely touch us, for what do they matter to us? But the example of the death of the martyrs does touch us, because they are 'our members'. We have a common tie with them. Their resolution can make us resolute, not only by

example but also, perhaps, because this is something we owe them. There is nothing of this in the examples of the pagans. We have no tie with them; just as you aren't enriched by seeing a wealthy foreigner, but are enriched by seeing your father or husband wealthy.

**482.** Having made heaven and earth, which don't know the happiness of their being, God wanted to make beings who *would* know it and who would constitute a body of thinking members. For our members—our hands, feet, etc.—don't have the experience of being happy that they are united, that they are wonderfully adaptable, and that nature takes care to send to them the animal spirits that make them grow and endure. How happy they would be if they saw and felt this! But for this they would need to have •intelligence to know it, and •good-will to consent to the will of the universal soul. But if after getting such intelligence each member used it to keep nourishment for itself without letting it pass to the other members, it would be not only unjust but also miserable, and would hate rather than love itself. The blessedness of the members, as well as their duty, consists in their consent to the guidance of the whole soul to which they belong, which loves them better than they love themselves.

**483.** To be a member is to have neither life, being, nor movement except •through the spirit of the body and •for the body.

The separate member, seeing no longer the body to which it belongs, has only a perishing and dying existence. Yet it believes it is a whole, and since it can't see the body on which it depends, it thinks it depends only on itself and wants to make *itself* the centre and the body. But not having in itself a source of life, it can only wander around, stunned in the uncertainty of its being; because it sees that it is not a body but doesn't see that it is a member of a body. Finally, when

it comes to know itself, it comes back home, as it were, and no longer loves itself except for the body. It deplores its past wanderings.

It can't by its nature love anything else except *for* itself and as subject *to* itself, because each thing loves itself more than all. But in loving the body it does love itself, because the member exists only in the body, by it, and for it. 'He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit' [1 Corinthians 6:17].

The body loves the hand; and if the hand had a will, it ought to love itself in the same way that the soul loves it. All love that goes beyond that is wrong.

We love ourselves because we are members of Jesus-Christ. We love Jesus-Christ, because he is the body of which we are members. All is one, one is in the other, like the Three Persons ·of the Trinity·.

**484.** Two laws suffice to rule the whole Christian Republic better than all the political laws.

**485.** So the true and only virtue is •to hate oneself (for greed makes one hateful [see Glossary]) and •to seek a truly lovable being to love. But we can't love what is outside ourselves, so we must love a being who is *in* us without *being* us; and that is true of every single man. Now, only the universal Being answers to this description. The kingdom of God is within us; the universal good is within us, is ourselves, and is not us. [That's what he wrote: *le bien universel est en nous, est nous-même, et n'est pas nous.*]

**486.** The dignity of man in his innocence consisted in using and having dominion over creatures, but now ·it consists· in separating himself from them and subjecting himself to them.

**487.** Every religion which  
•in its faith: doesn't worship one God as the source of everything, and

•in its morality: doesn't love a single God as the object of everything  
is false.

**488.** . . . But it is impossible that God should ever be the goal if he is not the driving force. We lift our eyes on high, but are standing on sand; and the ground will melt and we'll fall while looking at the heavens.

**489.** If there is one source of everything, one goal of everything, everything by him, everything for him, then the true religion will have to be one that teaches us to worship only him and to love only him. But as we find ourselves unable to •worship what we don't know, and unable to •love anything but ourselves, the religion that instructs us in these duties must also instruct us concerning these •two• inabilities, and teach us the remedies for them. It teaches us that •by one man all was lost and the bond between God and us broken, and that •by one man the bond is renewed.

We are born so opposed to this love of God, and it is so necessary, that we must be born guilty—otherwise God would be unjust.

**490.** Men, not being accustomed to create merit, but only to reward it where they find it already created, base their thoughts about God on themselves.

**491.** The true religion must have as a characteristic the obligation to love its God. This is very just, yet no •other• religion has commanded this; ours has done so. It must also recognise •human• greed and weakness; ours has done so. It must have provided remedies for these; one is prayer. . . .

**492.** Someone must be really blind if he doesn't hate •his own self-love and •the instinct that leads him to make himself God. Who doesn't see that there is nothing so opposed to justice and truth? For it is false that we deserve this, and it is unjust and impossible to achieve it, because everyone is

asking for the same thing. So it is a manifest injustice that is innate in us: we can't get rid of it, and we must get rid of it.

Yet no •other• religion has •indicated that this was a sin, or that we were born in it, or that we were obliged to resist it; or has •thought of giving us remedies for it.

**493.** The true religion teaches our duties, our weaknesses (pride and greed), and the remedies (humility and mortification).

**494.** The true religion must be one that teaches greatness and misery, that leads to self-esteem and self-contempt, to love and to hate.

**495.** If it is an extraordinary blindness to live without investigating what we are, it is a terrible one to live an evil life while believing in God.

**496.** Experience shows us an enormous difference between piety and goodness.

**497. Against those who, trusting to God's mercy, live heedlessly without doing good works.** Just as the two sources of our sins are pride and apathy, God has revealed to us two of his attributes to cure them, his mercy and his justice.

The distinctive role of justice is to humble pride, however holy our works may be, 'And enter not into judgment with your servant: for in your sight will no man living be justified' [Psalm 143:2]; and the distinctive role of mercy is to combat apathy by urging good works, according to this: 'The goodness of God leads to repentance' [Romans 2:4], and this, said by the Ninevites: 'Let us do penance to see if perhaps he will have mercy on us' [roughly quoted from Jonah 3:9]. And thus mercy is so far from authorising slackness that it is on the contrary the quality that outright attacks it; so that instead of saying 'If God weren't merciful, we would have to make every kind of effort after virtue', we should say on the contrary that it's

just because God is merciful that we must make every kind of effort.

**498.** It is true there is difficulty in entering into piety. But this difficulty comes not from piety's coming into us, but from the impiety that is still there. If our senses weren't opposed to penitence, and if our corruption weren't opposed to God's purity, we wouldn't have any difficulty about this. We suffer only in proportion as the vice that is natural to us resists supernatural grace; our heart feels torn apart by these opposed efforts; but it would be very unfair to impute this violence to God's drawing us on rather than to the world's holding us back. Comparably: a child in pain from being torn from the arms of robbers by its mother should love the loving and legitimate violence of her who procures its liberty, and hate only the impetuous and tyrannical violence of those who detain it unjustly. The most cruel war that God could make with men in this life would be to leave them without the war that he came to bring. 'I came not to send peace, but a sword' [Matthew 10:34], and 'I am come to send fire on the earth' [Luke 12:49]. Before him the world lived in this false peace.

**499. Outward acts.** There nothing so perilous as what pleases God and men, because the states that please God and men have one property that pleases God and another that pleases men. Take the case of the great Saint Teresa: what pleased God was her deep humility in her revelations; what pleased men was their content. So we strain every nerve and muscle trying to imitate her discourses, thinking that this is the way to imitate her state, whereas actually the way to do that is to love what God loves and to put ourselves in the state that God loves.

It is better not to fast and be humble about this than to fast and be self-satisfied.

Pharisee, Publican. [This refers to the parable in Luke 18:9–14.]

What good will it do me to remember it [perhaps meaning 'to remember the rules laying down my duties'] if that can hurt me as much as help me, and everything depends on the blessing of God, who blesses only things done for him, according to his rules and along his paths, the *how* being thus as important as the *what*—and perhaps *more* important, because God can bring forth good out of evil, and without God we bring forth evil out of good?

**500.** Understanding the words 'good' and 'evil'.

**501.** First level: being blamed for doing evil and praised for doing good. Second level: being neither praised nor blamed.

**502.** Abraham took nothing for himself, but only for **his servants**. So the righteous man takes for himself nothing of the world (not even its applause), but only for **his passions**, which he treats as servants, telling one to go and another to come. [This is an echo of Matthew 8:9.] 'Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him' [Genesis 4:7]. His passions thus mastered are virtues: avarice, jealousy, anger. Even God attributes these to himself, and they are as much virtues as kindness, pity, constancy, which are also passions. We must use them as slaves, leaving them their food and preventing the soul from taking any of it; for when the passions are in charge they are vices; and then they give some of their food to the soul, which takes it in and is poisoned by it.

**503.** Philosophers have consecrated the vices by placing them in God himself. Christians have consecrated the virtues.

**504.** The just man acts by faith in the least things; when he reproves his servants, he wants them to be corrected by the spirit of God, and prays to God to correct them; he expects as much from God as from his own reproofs, and prays to

God to bless his corrections. And so in his other actions.

**505.** All things can be fatal to us, even the things made to serve us; as in nature walls can kill us, stairs can kill us if we don't walk carefully.

The least movement affects all nature; throw a rock into the water and the entire ocean changes. Thus, in grace, the least action affects everything by its consequences; so everything is important.

In each action we must look beyond the action at our past, present, and future states, and at others whom the action affects, and see the relations of all those things. And then we will be very cautious.

**506.** May God not impute to us our sins, i.e. all the consequences and upshots of our sins, which are dreadful, even those of the smallest faults if we follow them out coldly!

**507.** The movements of grace, hardness of the heart, external circumstances.

**508.** Grace is needed to turn a man into a saint; and anyone who doubts this doesn't know what a saint is or what a man is.

**509. Philosophers.** A fine thing to tell a man who doesn't know himself that he should, unaided, come to God! And a fine thing to say this to a man who *does* know himself!

**510.** Man is not worthy of God, but he is not incapable of being made worthy.

It is [would be?] unworthy of God to unite himself to wretched man; but it is not unworthy of God to pull him out of his misery.

**511.** Someone who says that man is too insignificant to deserve communion with God must be very great to make a judgment on such a matter.

**512.** All of it is the body of Jesus-Christ, but it can't be said to be all of the body of Jesus-Christ. [The 'it' in question is

the bread used in the eucharist [see Glossary].] If two things unite without either of them changing, that doesn't entitle us to say that one becomes the other. Thus the soul being united to the body. The fire to the timber, without change. But change is needed for the form of the one become the form of the other. Thus the union of the Word [i.e. of God] to man.

Because my body without my soul would not constitute the body of a man, my soul united to any matter whatsoever will constitute my body. This doesn't distinguish the necessary condition from the sufficient condition; the union is necessary but not sufficient. The left arm is not the right. Impenetrability is a property of body.

Individual identity in regard to the same time requires identity of matter. Thus if God united my soul to a body in China, that very body would be in China. . . .

**513.** Why God has established prayer.

(1) To give his creatures the dignity of causality.

(2) To teach us from whom our virtue comes.

(3) To make us deserve other virtues by work.

But to keep his own pre-eminence, he grants prayer to whom he pleases.

Objection: But they will believe that they are drawing the prayer out of themselves.

That is absurd: for since without faith they cannot have the virtues, how are they going to have faith? Isn't there more distance from infidelity to faith than from faith to virtue?

[In the rest of this item, 'worthy' translates *mérite* once, then *Meruit* (Latin) twice, then relatives of *dignus* (Latin) four times.]

'Worthy' - this word is ambiguous.

' . . . which made us worthy of such a redeemer' [ceremony for Holy Saturday]

' . . . which made us worthy to touch the holy limbs' [ceremony for Good Friday]

' . . . I am not worthy' [Luke 7:6]

'... who eats unworthily' [1 Corinthians 11:29]  
 '... worthy to receive' [Revelation 4:11]  
 '... find me worthy' [ceremony of the Holy Virgin]. . . .

Saint Augustine said openly that strength would be taken away from the righteous. But it is by chance that he said it; for the occasion for saying it might never have occurred. But his principles show us that when the occasion for it did occur, he couldn't possibly not say it or say anything contradicting it. So what is necessarily true is that

when the occasion presented itself he was forced to say it;

what is true only by chance is that

he said it when an occasion presented itself.

But the two are all that we can ask.

**514.** [This long item concerns prayer. It is astonishingly obscure, and some of the original text seems to be corrupt.]

**515.** The elect don't know their virtues, and the damned don't know how great their sins are. 'Lord, when have we seen you thirsty, hungry, etc?'

**516.** 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith' [Romans 3:27]. Then faith is not within our power like the works of the law, and is given to us in another way.

**517.** Comfort yourselves! It is not from yourselves that you should expect it [= grace?]; on the contrary you have to expect it by expecting nothing from yourselves.

**518.** Every kind of person, even the martyrs, have something to fear, according to Scripture.

The greatest pain of purgatory is the uncertainty of the judgement.

'a God that hidest thyself' [Isaiah 45:15]

**519.** 'Many believed on him. Then Jesus said: "If you continue. . . then you are my disciples indeed, and the truth

will make you free." They answered him: "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou 'You will be made free?'".' [John 8:30-33]

There is a great difference between disciples and true disciples. The test for this is to tell them that the truth will make them free: if they answer that they *are* free and that it's in their power to come out of enslavement to the devil, they are indeed disciples, but not true disciples.

**520.** The law didn't destroy nature; it instructed it. Grace didn't destroy the law; it caused it to be obeyed.

Faith received at baptism is the source of the whole life of Christians and of the converted.

**521.** Grace will always be in the world, and nature also; so that grace is in way natural. And thus there will always be **a** Pelagians, and always **b** Catholics, and always strife; because the first birth makes **a** one lot and the grace of being born-again makes **b** the other. [Pelagians denied the doctrine of original sin, and held that a person's salvation depends partly on a free act of his own rather than solely on God's grace.]

**522.** The law required what it did not give. Grace gives what it requires.

**523.** All faith consists in Jesus-Christ and in Adam, and all morality consists in greed [see Glossary] and in grace.

**524.** There's no doctrine more appropriate to man than this one that teaches him **•**his double capacity for receiving and losing grace, because of **•**the double peril to which he is exposed, of despair or of pride.

**525.** The philosophers did not prescribe states of mind suitable to the two states.

They inspired feelings of pure greatness, and that is not man's state.

They inspired feelings of pure lowness, and that is not man's state.

There should be feelings of lowness,

- not from nature but from penitence,
- not to stay in them but to go on to greatness.

There should be feelings of greatness,

- not from merit, but from grace,

and after having passed through lowness.

**526.** Misery induces despair, pride induces presumption.

The incarnation shows man how great his misery is by how great a remedy he required for it.

**527.** Knowledge of God without knowledge of man's misery causes pride. Knowledge of man's misery without knowledge of God causes despair. Knowledge of Jesus-Christ constitutes the middle course, because in him we find both God and our misery.

**528.** Jesus-Christ is a God whom we approach without pride, and before whom we humble ourselves without despair.

**529.** . . . Not a degradation that makes us incapable of good, nor a holiness exempt from evil.

**530.** Someone told me once that on coming from confession he felt great joy and confidence. Someone else told me that he remained in fear. That prompted the thought that these two together would make one good man, and that each was defective in lacking the feeling that the other had. It's often like that with other things.

**531.** He who knows the will of his master will be beaten with more blows [Luke 12:47], because of the power he has by his knowledge. 'He that is righteous, let him be righteous still' [Revelation 22:11], because of the power he has by justice. From him who has received most the most will be demanded [cf. Luke 12:48], because of the power this help has given him.

**532.** Scripture has provided passages of consolation for all conditions and of intimidation for all conditions.

Nature seems to have done the same thing by its two infinities, natural and moral; for we'll always have higher and the lower, more and less clever, the most exalted and the meanest, in order to humble our pride and exalt our humility.

**533.** [A small obscure passage involving Paul's letter to the Romans, a play by Corneille, and circumcision.]

**534.** There are only two kinds of men: righteous ones who believe they are sinners, and sinners who believe they are righteous.

**535.** We owe a great debt to those who point out faults, because they mortify us. They let us know that we have been despised. They don't prevent our being so in the future, for we have plenty of other faults to be despised for. They prepare us for the exercise of correction and freedom from fault.

**536.** Man is so made that when he is told he is a fool he believes it, even if it is him telling himself that he is a fool. 'Telling himself? Yes', because man does have internal conversations with himself, and it's important that he should conduct these well: 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.' [1 Corinthians 15:33] We should keep silent as much as we can, and talk with ourselves only about God, whom we know to be the truth; and in this way we convince ourselves of it.

**537.** Christianity is strange. It orders man to recognise that he is vile, even abominable, and orders him to want to be like God. Without such a balance, this dignity would make him horribly vain or this humiliation would make him terribly abject.

**538.** How little pride goes with a Christian's belief that he is united to God! How little humiliation goes with his placing himself on a level with earthworms!

The good way to welcome life and death, good and evil!

**539.** How, so far as obedience is concerned, does a soldier differ from a Carthusian monk? For they are equally obedient and dependent, and engaged in equally laborious exercises. But the soldier always hopes to command, and

—though he never attains this, for even captains and princes are always slaves and dependants—

he always hopes for it and always works to attain it. Whereas the monk makes a vow never to be anything but dependent. So they don't differ in the perpetual servitude in which they both always exist, but in the hope that one has always and the other never.

**540.** Christians' hope of possessing an infinite good is mingled with real enjoyment as well as with fear; it's not like hoping for a kingdom that they'll have no part of because they'll be subjects of it; they are hoping for holiness, for freedom from injustice, and they do have something of this.

**541.** No-one is happy like a true Christian, or reasonable, virtuous, or lovable.

**542.** The only thing that makes man lovable *and* happy is the Christian religion. Merely being an honest man [see Glossary] can't make one both lovable and happy.

**543.** The metaphysical proofs of God's existence are so remote from human reasoning, and so long-drawn-out, that they make little impression; and if anyone was convinced by one of them, that would last only for the moment in which he saw the demonstration; an hour later he would fear he had been deceived.

'What they have found by their curiosity, they have lost by their pride.' [quoted in Latin from Augustine]. That's the result of the knowledge of God obtained without Jesus-Christ—communion without a mediator with the God whom they have known without a mediator. Whereas those who have

known God by a mediator are not proud; they know their own misery.

**544.** The God of the Christians is a God who •makes the soul feel that he is its only good, that its only rest is in him, that its only delight is in loving him; and who at the same time •makes it detest the obstacles that pull it back and prevent it from loving God with all its strength. Self-love and greed, which hold the soul back, are unbearable to it. This God makes it feel that it has this root of self-love that destroys it and that he alone can cure.

**545.** Jesus-Christ did nothing but teach men

- that they loved themselves,
- that they were slaves, blind, sick, wretched, and sinners;
- that he must deliver, enlighten, bless, and heal them;
- that this would be brought about by their hating themselves and by following him through suffering and the death on the cross.

**546.** Without Jesus-Christ man must be in vice and misery; with Jesus-Christ he is free from both. In him is all our virtue and all our happiness. Apart from him there is only vice, misery, errors, darkness, death, despair.

**547.** We know God only through Jesus-Christ. Without this mediator, all communion with God is taken away. All those who have claimed to know God, and to prove him without Jesus-Christ, have had only weak proofs. But to prove Jesus-Christ we have the prophecies, which are solid and palpable proofs. And these prophecies—being accomplished and proved true by the outcome—mark the certainty of these truths and thus prove the divinity of Jesus-Christ. So in him and through him we know God. Apart from that, and without Scripture, without original sin, without a necessary mediator promised and arrived, we can't absolutely prove



God or teach either good doctrine or good morality. But through Jesus-Christ, and in Jesus-Christ, God is proved and morality and doctrine are taught. Jesus-Christ is, then, the true God of men.

But we know at the same time our misery; for this God is none other than the Redeemer of our misery. So we can know God well only by knowing our iniquities.

Therefore those who have known God without knowing their misery have not glorified him but have glorified themselves. 'For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' [1 Corinthians, 1:21]

**548.** Not only do we know God only through Jesus-Christ, but we know ourselves only through Jesus-Christ. Apart from Jesus-Christ we don't know what our life is, what our death is, what God is, or what we are.

Thus without the Scripture—which is about Jesus-Christ and nothing else—we don't know anything, and when we try to look into the nature of God and our own nature, we see only darkness and confusion.

**549.** It is not only impossible but useless to know God without Jesus-Christ. They have not departed from him, but approached; they have not humbled themselves, but. . .

'The better one is, the worse one becomes, if one attributes the cause of this goodness to oneself.' [Saint Bernard]

**550.** I love poverty because He loved it. I love riches because they give me the means of helping the very poor. I keep faith with everybody; I don't harm those who harm me, but I wish them a condition like mine, in which they will receive neither harm nor help from men. I try to be just, true, sincere, and faithful to all men; I have a tender heart for those to whom God has more closely united me; and whether I am alone or seen by men, I perform all my actions in the sight of God,

who must judge them and to whom I have consecrated them.

These are my sentiments; and every day of my life I bless my Redeemer, who has implanted them in me and who has used the power of his grace to turn a man full of weakness, miseries, greed, pride and ambition into one who is free from all these evils; all the glory of this is due to his grace, because all I have to contribute is misery and error.

**551.** 'Although I deserve blows rather than kisses, I am not afraid—because I love.' [quoted in Latin from Saint Bernard]

**552. The Sepulchre of Jesus-Christ.** Jesus-Christ was dead, but seen on the Cross. He is dead and hidden in the sepulchre.

Jesus-Christ was buried by the saints alone.

Jesus-Christ did no miracles in the sepulchre.

Only saints entered it.

That is where Jesus-Christ takes a new life, not on the cross

It is the last mystery of the Passion and of the Redemption.

Jesus-Christ had nowhere to rest on earth but in the Sepulchre. Only there did his enemies stop persecuting him.

**553. The Mystery of Jesus.** Jesus suffers in his passion the torments that men inflict on him; but in his agony he suffers torments that he inflicts on himself: 'And he troubled himself.' [John 11:33] This is torture from a hand that isn't human but almighty, and only someone almighty could bear it.

Jesus seeks some comfort at least in his three dearest friends, and they are asleep. He asks them to watch with him for a little, and they leave him with entire indifference, not having enough compassion to keep them awake for a while. And thus Jesus was left alone with God's anger.

Jesus is alone on the earth, with no-one to feel and share

his suffering or even to know of it; he and heaven were alone in that knowledge.

Jesus is in a garden, not like the garden of delights where the first Adam lost himself and the whole human race, but a garden of tortures where Jesus saved himself and the whole human race.

He suffers this affliction and this desertion in the horror of night.

I believe that Jesus never complained except on this one occasion; but then he complained as if he could no longer bear his extreme suffering. 'My soul is sorrowful, even unto death.' [Matthew 26:38]

Jesus seeks companionship and comfort from men. This is the only time in all his life, it seems to me. But he doesn't get it, because his disciples are asleep.

Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world. We should not sleep during that time.

Jesus, deserted by everyone including the friends he chose to watch with him, finds them asleep and is vexed by this because of the danger they are exposing themselves to—not *him*, but themselves. He cautions them for their own salvation and their own good, with a heartfelt tenderness for them during their ingratitude, and warns them that the spirit is willing and the flesh weak. [Matthew 26:41]

Finding them still asleep, not having been kept awake by any concern for themselves or for him, Jesus has the kindness not to waken them and leaves them in repose.

Jesus prays, uncertain of •the Father's will, and fears death; but when he knows •it, he goes forward to offer himself to death. 'Let us be going.' [Matthew 26:46] 'He went forth.' [John 18:2]

Jesus asked of men, and they did not fulfill his requests.

While his disciples slept, Jesus brought about their salvation. He did this for each of the righteous while they

slept, both in their nothingness before their birth and in their sins after birth.

He prays only once that the cup pass away, and then with submission; and twice that it come if necessary.

Jesus is distressed.

Seeing all his friends asleep and all his enemies on the alert, Jesus commits himself entirely to his Father.

What Jesus sees in Judas is not •his enmity, but •God's order, which he loves and admits; so he calls him 'friend'.

Jesus tears himself away from his disciples to enter into his agony; we must tear ourselves away from our nearest and dearest to imitate him.

With Jesus in agony and in the greatest affliction, let us pray longer.

We beg for God's mercy, not for him to leave us at peace in our vices but for him to deliver us from them. . . .

'Console yourself; you wouldn't seek me if you hadn't found me.'

'I thought of you in my agony, I have spilled such drops of blood for you.'

'When you wonder whether you would do such-and-such if the occasion arose, what is at issue is not your conduct but mine; I will act in you if the occasion arises.'

'Let yourself be guided by my rules; see how well I have led the Virgin and the saints who have let me act in them.'

'The Father loves all that I do.'

'Do you want it always to cost me the blood of my humanity without yourself giving tears?'

'Your conversion is my affair; fear not, and pray with confidence as •though you were praying• for me.'

'I am present to you by my word in Scripture, by my spirit in the Church and by inspiration, by my power in the priests, by my prayer in the faithful.'

'Physicians won't heal you, for you *will* eventually die. I am the one who heals you and makes the body immortal.'

'Endure chains and bodily servitude; at present I deliver you only from spiritual servitude.'

'I am more a friend to you than this or that person, for I have done for you more than they have; they would not have suffered what I have suffered from [*de*] you, and they would not have died for [*pour*] you at a time when you were unfaithful and cruel, as I have done and as I am ready to do, and *do* indeed do among my chosen and at the Holy Sacrament.' [This refers to the Eucharist—see Glossary.]

'If you knew your sins you would lose heart.' Then I will lose heart, Lord, for on your assurance I believe their malice. 'No, because I from whom you learn about your sins can cure you of them, and what I say to you is a sign that I want to cure you. You will know them in proportion as you expiate them, and you will be told "Behold, your sins are forgiven you".'

'Repent, then, for your hidden sins and for the secret malice of those you know.'

'Lord, I give you all.'

'I love you more ardently than you have loved your abominations.' [Isaiah 45:15]

'When my own words are to you an occasion of evil or of vanity or curiosity, ask your confessor about this.'

I see my depths of pride, curiosity and greed. There is no relation between myself and God, or myself and Jesus-Christ the righteous. But he has been made sin by me; all your lashes have fallen on him. He is more abominable than I am, and far from detesting me he holds himself honoured that I go to him and support him.

But he has cured himself, and even more surely will cure me.

I should add my wounds to his, and join myself to him; and he will save me in saving himself. But this should not

be postponed.

'You will be like gods, knowing good and evil' [Genesis 3:5]. Everyone acts as his own god when judging 'This is good or bad', and when mourning or rejoicing too much at events.

Do small things as though they were great, because of the majesty of Jesus-Christ who does them in us and who lives our life; and do great things as though they were small and easy, because of his omnipotence.

Pilate's false justice serves only to make Jesus-Christ suffer, for he has him whipped and then he kills him. That's how it is with those who are falsely just: they do good works and bad ones to please the world and to show that they are not entirely on the side of Jesus-Christ, for they are ashamed of him. And finally, given great occasions and temptations, they kill him.

**554.** It seems to me that after his resurrection Jesus-Christ allowed only his wounds to be touched: 'Do not touch me' [John 20:17]. We should unite ourselves only to his sufferings.

At the Last Supper he presented himself as mortal; to the disciples at Emmaus as risen from the dead; to the whole Church as ascended into heaven.

**555.** 'Don't compare yourself with others, but with me. If you don't find me in those you compare yourself with then you are comparing yourself with someone abominable. If you do find me in them, compare yourself to me. But will you be comparing •yourself or •me in you? If it is yourself, it is one who is abominable. If it is me, you are comparing me to myself. Now, I am God in all.

'I speak to you, and often counsel you, because your guide can't speak to you, for I don't want you to lack a guide.

'And perhaps I do so at his prayers, and thus he guides you without your seeing it.

'You wouldn't seek me if you didn't already have me.

'Therefore be not troubled.'

## Section 8: The fundamentals of the Christian religion

**556** Men blaspheme what they don't know. The Christian religion consists in two points. They are on a par in how important it is for men to know them, and how dangerous it is not to—and in how merciful it is of God to give pointers to them.

Yet men take occasion to conclude that one of these points doesn't exist, their reason for this being something that should have led them to infer the other.

The sages who have said there is only one God have been persecuted—the Jewish ones hated and the Christians ones even more so.

They have seen by the natural light that if there is a true religion on earth, the course of all things must tend towards it as to a centre. The whole course of things should have for its object the establishment and the greatness of the *·one true·* religion; men's states of mind should conform to what the religion teaches us; and, finally, the religion should be the object and the centre to which all things tend, in such a way that anyone who knows its principles can explain the whole nature of man in particular and the whole course of the world in general.

And on this ground they take occasion to blaspheme against the Christian religion because they know so little about what it is. They imagine that it consists simply in the worship of a God considered as great, powerful, and eternal; and that is strictly *deism*, which is almost as far removed from the Christian religion as is *atheism*, Christianity's total opposite. And from this *·understanding of what Christianity is·* they conclude that this religion is not true, because they don't see that all things come together to point to the conclusion that God does not manifest himself to men with

all the evidence that he could show.

Let them conclude what they will against deism! They won't conclude anything against the Christian religion, which (properly understood) consists in the mystery of the Redeemer who unites in himself the two natures, human and divine, redeeming men from the corruption of sin in order to reconcile them, in his divine person, to God.

So the Christian religion teaches men these two truths:

- a** there is a God whom men can receive, and
- b** there is a corruption in *·their·* nature that makes them unworthy of him.

It is equally important to men to know *both* these truths; and it is equally dangerous for man **a** to know God without **b** knowing his own misery, or to **b** know his own misery without **a** knowing the Redeemer who can cure him of it. Knowing only one of them gives rise either to the **a** arrogance of philosophers, who have known God but not their own misery, or to the **b** despair of atheists, who know their own misery but not the Redeemer.

Thus, just as it is necessary for man to know these two truths, so is it merciful of God to have made us know them. The Christian religion does this; that's what it is.

In the light of that, let us examine the order of the world and see whether all things tend to establish these two chief points of this religion: *•*Jesus-Christ is end of all, and the centre to which everything tends; *•*whoever knows him knows the reason for everything.

Those who go astray do so only through failure to see one of those two things. Someone can know God without knowing his own misery, or know his own misery without knowing God. But no-one can know Jesus-Christ without at

the same time knowing both God and his own misery.

That's why I shan't try here to use natural reasons to show the existence of God, or the doctrine of the Trinity, or the immortality of the soul, or anything else of that kind; not only because I wouldn't feel able to find in nature arguments to convince hardened atheists, but also because without Jesus-Christ this knowledge is useless and barren. If a man became convinced of this:

Propositions about numbers are immaterial truths that are eternal and depend on a first truth in which they subsist and which is called *God*,

I wouldn't think that this had brought him much closer to his own salvation!

The God of Christians is not a God who is simply the author of mathematical truths and the order of the elements; that's the view of pagans and Epicureans. He is not merely a God who exercises his providence over the life and fortunes of men, to give a long and happy life to those who worship him; that's the view of the Jews. But the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Christians, is a God of love and of comfort; a God who fills the soul and heart of those whom he possesses; who makes them conscious of their misery and his infinite mercy; who unites himself to their inmost soul; who fills that soul with humility, joy, confidence and love; who makes them incapable of any goal other than himself.

All who seek God without Jesus-Christ and who stay within nature either **a** find no light to satisfy them or **b** invent a way of knowing and serving God without a mediator. Thereby they fall either into **a** atheism or into **b** deism—two things that the Christian religion abhors almost equally.

Without Jesus-Christ the world would not exist; for either it would have to be destroyed or it would be like a hell.

If the world existed to instruct man about God, his divinity

would indisputably shine through every part of it; but as it exists only by Jesus-Christ and for Jesus-Christ, and to instruct men about their corruption and their redemption, everything in the world proclaims proofs of these two truths.

What appears to us doesn't indicate a total exclusion of divinity or a manifest presence of it, but rather the presence of a God who hides himself. Everything bears this character.

Will the only one who knows nature know it only to be miserable? Will the only one who knows it be the only one to be unhappy?

He shouldn't see nothing at all, nor should he see so much of God that he thinks he possesses him. He should see enough of him to know that he has lost him. For to know of your loss, you must see and not see; and that is exactly the state that nature is in.

Whatever side he takes, I shan't leave him at rest in it. . .

**557** So it's true that everything teaches man his condition, but don't misunderstand this; for it isn't true that everything reveals God, nor is it true that everything conceals God. But is true **both** that he hides himself from those *qui le tentent* [meaning, roughly 'those who try to show his reality by signs and proofs'] and reveals himself to those who seek him, because men are **both** unworthy of God and capable of relating to God; unworthy by their corruption, capable by their original nature.

**558.** What will we conclude from all our darkness, but our unworthiness?

**559.** If there never had been any appearance of God, this eternal deprivation would have been ambiguous: it might have gone with there not being a God, or with men being unworthy to know him. But his appearing sometimes but not always removes the ambiguity. If he appeared once, he exists always; and we would have to conclude from this that

there is a God and that men are unworthy of him.

**560.** We have no conception of Adam's glorious state, or of the nature of his sin, or of how it was transmitted to us. These are events that occurred under conditions of a nature altogether different from our own, and that are beyond the reach of our present understanding.

Knowing all this is useless as a means of escaping from it. What it's important for us to know is that we are miserable, corrupt, separated from God, but ransomed by Jesus-Christ; and of this we have wonderful proofs on earth.

So the two proofs of corruption and redemption are drawn from the ungodly, who live in indifference to the ·Christian· religion, and from the Jews who are its irreconcilable enemies.

**561.** There are two ways of proving the truths of our religion; one by the power of reason, the other by the authority of him who speaks. We don't use the latter, but the former. We don't say 'This should be believed because Scripture, which says it, is divine'. Rather, we say that it should be believed for such and such a reason; but those are feeble arguments because reason can be bent in any direction.

**562.** There's nothing on earth that doesn't show either man's misery or God's mercy, either man's weakness without God or man's strength with God.

**563.** It will be one of the confusions of the damned to see that they're condemned by their own reason, by which they claimed to condemn the Christian religion.

**564.** The prophecies, the very miracles and proofs of our religion, can't be said to be absolutely convincing; but it can't be said, either, that it is unreasonable to believe them. Thus there is both evidence to enlighten some and obscurity to confuse others. But the evidence for our religion is at least as strong as the evidence against it; so that men who

don't follow it can't be led by reason, and thus can be led only by greed and malice of heart. In this way, there is enough evidence to condemn ·the impious· and not enough to convince ·them·. So it seems that those who follow our religion are led by grace, not reason, while those who turn away from it are led by greed, not reason.

True disciple; a true Israelite; truly free; true bread. [John 8:31, 1:47, 8:36, 6:32]

**565.** Recognise, then, the truth of the religion in the very obscurity of the religion, in the little light we have of it, and in our indifference about knowing it.

**566.** If you don't start from the thesis that God has willed to blind some and enlighten others, you understand *nothing* about his works.

**567.** The two contrary reasons. That's the place to begin; without it we understand nothing, and everything is heretical; and we should even add at the end of each truth that we haven't forgotten the opposite truth.

**568.** Objection: the Scripture is plainly full of things not dictated by the Holy Spirit. Reply: then they don't harm the faith. Objection: but the Church has decided that all ·of Scripture· is from the Holy Spirit. Two-part reply: •the Church never so decided; and •if it had so decided, it could have been maintained.

Do you think that the prophecies cited in the Gospel are reported to make you believe? No, it is to keep you from believing.

**569.** The heretical books at the beginning of the Church serve to prove the canonical ones.

**570.** I should put into the chapter on Fundamentals what I now have on the chapter on Symbolism [see Glossary] concerning why it was prophesied that Jesus-Christ would come; why it was *obscurely* prophesied *how* he would come.

**571. The reason for symbols.** They had to deal with a •carnal people and to make them the depositary of the •spiritual covenant. To produce faith in the Messiah there had to be previous prophecies, which had to be made by people who were above suspicion, diligent, faithful, unusually zealous, and known to all the world.

To accomplish all this, God chose this carnal people, to whom he entrusted the prophecies that predict the Messiah as a deliverer and as a dispenser of the carnal goods that this people loved. And thus they've had an extraordinary passion for their prophets, and have in plain sight had charge of these books that predict *their* Messiah, assuring all nations that he would come, doing so in the way predicted in the books that they held open to everyone. Yet this people, deceived by the poor and ignominious manner of the ·real· Messiah's coming, have been his cruelest enemies. So that they, the people least open to suspicion of favouring us, the strictest and most zealous for their law and their prophets, have kept the books intact. So those who •rejected and crucified Jesus-Christ, who was to them •an offence, are the very ones who have charge of the books that testify concerning him and *say that* he will be •rejected and •an offence. Therefore they have shown him to be the Messiah; and he has been proved both by the righteous Jews who received him and by the unrighteous ones who rejected him, both facts having been predicted.

That is why the prophecies have a hidden meaning, a spiritual one, to which this people were hostile, hidden under the carnal meaning that they loved. If the spiritual meaning had been revealed, they couldn't have loved it, and, unable to bear it, they would not have been zealous in preserving their books and their ceremonies; and if they *had* loved these spiritual promises and had preserved them intact till the time of the Messiah, their testimony would have had no force

because they had been his friends.

That is why it was good for the spiritual meaning to be concealed; but if it had been so well hidden that nobody found it, it couldn't have served as a proof of the Messiah. What then was done? In a host of passages it was hidden under the temporal [see Glossary] meaning, and in a few it was clearly revealed. Besides which, both •the time of the coming and •the state of the world at that time were predicted with the clarity of noon-day sun. In some places this spiritual meaning is so clearly expressed that you would have to be blind not to see it.

See then how God handled this matter. In countless places the spiritual meaning is concealed under another, and in a few it is revealed; but this is done in such a way that the passages in which it is concealed are ambiguous and could express either meaning, whereas the passages where it is disclosed are unambiguous and can only express the spiritual meaning.

So this couldn't lead anyone into error, and could be misunderstood only by a people as carnal as those.

For when good things are promised in abundance, what prevented them from understanding *true* goods but their cupidity [see Glossary], which pinned the meaning down to worldly goods? But those whose only good was in God related the good things to God alone. For there are two drives that divide the wills of men—cupidity and charity. It's not that cupidity can't exist along with faith in God, or charity along with worldly riches; but cupidity uses God and enjoys the world, and charity is the opposite [i.e. enjoys God and uses the world].

Now the ultimate goal is what fixes the names things are given: anything that prevents us from attaining the goal is called our 'enemy'. Thus creatures, however good they are, who turn the righteous away from God, are their enemies;

and God himself is the enemy of those whose covetousness he confounds.

Thus as the meaning of 'enemy' depends on the ultimate goal, the righteous took their passions to be the enemy, and the carnal took the Babylonians for their enemy; so these terms were obscure only for the unrighteous.

And this is what Isaiah says: 'Seal the law among my disciples', and that Jesus-Christ 'will be a stone of stumbling' [Isaiah 8:16,14]. But 'Blessed are they who will not be offended in him' [Matthew 11:6]. Hosea 14:9 says excellently 'Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? The just will understand them, for the ways of the lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.'

**572.** Hypothesis that the apostles were impostors. The time clearly, the manner obscurely. Five proofs of the symbolic meanings of the Scriptures. . . .

**573.** 'The Scripture', said the Jews, 'says that we will not know whence the Christ will come' [John 7:27, and 12:34]. 'The Scripture says that the Christ abides for ever, and this man said that he would die.' Therefore, says John, they didn't believe, although he had done so many miracles, so that the word of Isaiah—'he has blinded them' etc.—might be fulfilled.

**574.** The religion is such a great thing that it's right that those who won't take the trouble to seek it, if it is obscure, should be deprived of it. What are they complaining of, if it is such that they could find it by seeking?

**575.** Everything works for good to the chosen, even the obscurities of Scripture; for the chosen honour those obscurities because of what is divinely clear. And everything works for evil for the others, even the clarities of Scripture; because they revile them on account of the obscurities that they don't understand.

**576. The general conduct of the world towards the Church: God wanting to blind and to enlighten.** The divinity of *these* prophecies was shown by what subsequently happened; so the rest ought to be believed. That shows us the order of the world in matters of this kind.

The miracles of the creation and the flood being forgotten, God sent the law and the miracles of Moses, the prophets who prophesied particular things; and to prepare a lasting miracle, he prepares prophecies and their fulfilment; but the prophecies could be suspected, so he wants to make them above suspicion, etc.

**577.** God made this people's blindness subservient to the good of the chosen.

**578.** There's enough clarity to enlighten the chosen, and enough obscurity to humble them. There's enough obscurity to blind the reprobate, and enough clarity to condemn them and make them inexcusable. Saint Augustine, Montaigne, Sebond.

The genealogy of Jesus-Christ in the Old Testament is intermingled with so many other useless ones that it can't be picked out from among them. If Moses had kept *only* the record of the ancestors of Jesus-Christ, that would have made his lineage too visible. If he hadn't noted the lineage of Jesus-Christ, it wouldn't have been visible enough. But, after all, if you look closely you'll see Jesus-Christ's genealogy clearly traced through Tamar, Ruth, etc.

Those who ordered these sacrifices knew their uselessness; those who declared their uselessness nevertheless practised them.

If God had permitted only one religion, it would have been too easily recognisable; but if you look closely at the confusion of religions, you'll clearly pick out the true one amongst them.



Moses was a clever man. So if he was governed by his intellect, he can't have said anything that was directly against intellect.

Thus all the very apparent weaknesses are strengths. Example; the two genealogies in Saint Matthew and Saint Luke. What can be clearer than that this was not a collaboration?

**579.** God (and the apostles), foreseeing that the seeds of pride would sprout into heresies, and not wanting them to do this with help from correct expressions, put into Scripture and the Church's prayers contrary [here = 'anti-heretical'] words and phrases to produce their fruit in time.

So in morals he gives charity, which produces fruit contrary to greed.

**580.** Nature has some perfections to show that it is the image of *God*, and some defects to show that it is only the *image* of God.

**581.** God would rather incline the will than the intellect. Perfect clarity would help the intellect and harm the will. To humble pride.

**582.** We make an idol of truth itself; for truth apart from charity is not God but his image, and an idol which we should not love or worship. Still less should we love or worship its opposite, namely lies.

I can easily love total darkness; but if God keeps me in a state of semi-darkness, this partial darkness displeases me because it doesn't show me the advantages of total darkness. This is a fault ·in me·, and a sign that I'm making an idol of darkness, apart from the order of God. His order is the only thing we should worship.

**583.** Villains are people who know the truth but uphold it only so far as it serves their interests to do so. When it doesn't, they abandon it.

**584.** The world exists for the exercise of mercy and judgment, not as if men were placed in it by God's hands, but as hostile to God; and by grace he grants them enough light •for them to return to him, if they are willing to seek and follow him, but •for them to be punished if they refuse to seek or follow him.

**585. That God has willed to hide himself.** If there were only one religion, God would be thoroughly manifest in it. If there were no martyrs except in our religion, same thing.

God being thus hidden, any religion that doesn't say that God is hidden is not genuine; and any religion that doesn't explain why he is hidden is not instructive. Our religion does both: 'Indeed, you are a God that hides yourself.' [Isaiah 45:15]

**586.** If there were no obscurity, man would have no sense of his corruption; if there were no light, man would have no hope of a remedy. So God's being partly hidden and partly revealed is not only •right but also •advantageous to us; because it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own misery and to know his own misery without knowing God.

**587.** This religion, so great in

- miracles and pure blameless saints,
- learned and great witnesses,
- martyrs,
- established kings (David) and Isaiah, a prince of the blood,

and so great in science, after having displayed all its miracles and all its wisdom, throws all that aside and declares that it has neither wisdom nor signs, but only the cross and foolishness. [1 Corinthians 1:18]

For those who by signs and wisdom have deserved your belief, and who have proved to you their character—*they*

declare that in all this nothing can *change* you and make you capable of knowing and loving God except •the power of the foolishness of the cross without wisdom and signs, and not •the signs without this power.

Thus our religion is foolish in respect to the effective cause and wise in respect to the wisdom that prepares it.

**588.** Our religion is wise and foolish. Wise, because it is the most learned and the most solidly based on miracles, prophecies, etc. Foolish, because it's not because of all this

that we have it as *our* religion. It makes us condemn those who don't have it as their religion, but it doesn't cause belief in those who do. What makes them believe is the cross, 'Lest the cross of Christ should be made to have no effect' [1 Corinthians 1:17]. And so Saint Paul, who came with wisdom and signs, says that he has come neither with wisdom nor with signs, for he came to *convert*. Those who come only to *convince* can say that they come with wisdom and with signs.

## Section 9: Perpetuity

**589. On Christianity's not being the only religion.** Far from being a reason to believe that it is not the true one, on the contrary it makes us see that it *is* so.

**590.** In all religions one should be sincere: true pagans, true Jews, true Christians.

**591.** [This item is an obscure diagram showing (left to right) 'Pagans', 'Jesus-Christ', 'Mahomet', with a curved line under all three, and below that 'Ignorance of God'.]

**592. Falseness of other religions.** They have no witnesses. These ones do. God challenges other religions to produce such signs: Isaiah 43:9–44:8.

**593. History of China.** I believe only the histories whose witnesses were to be slaughtered.

Which of the two is more credible, Moses or China?

It is not a question of taking an over-all view of this. I tell you there is in it something to blind, and something to

enlighten.

By this one word I destroy all your reasoning. 'But China obscures', you say; and I answer 'China obscures, but there is clarity to be found; seek it.'

Thus all that you say helps one of the designs and •does• nothing against the other. So this serves, and does no harm.

So we must see this in detail; we must put the documents on the table.

**594. Against the history of China.** The historians of Mexico, of five suns, of which the last is only eight hundred years old.

The difference between a book accepted by a nation and one that makes a nation.

**595.** Mahomet had no authority.

So his reasons needed to be very strong, having only their own force.

What does he say, then? That he should be believed.

**596.** The psalms chanted throughout the whole world.

Who testifies to Mahomet? Himself. Jesus-Christ wants his own testimony to count for nothing.

The quality of witnesses requires them to be always and everywhere, and he—miserable—is alone.

**597. Against Mahomet.** The Koran is no more *of* Mahomet than the Gospel is *of* Saint Matthew, for it is cited by many authors down the centuries; even its enemies, Celsus and Porphyry, never disavowed it [i.e. never denies Matthew's gospel].

The Koran says Saint Matthew was a good man. So Mahomet was a false prophet for calling good men wicked, or for disagreeing with what they said about Jesus-Christ.

**598.** I would have Mahomet judged not by what is •obscure in his writings and may be thought to have a mysterious meaning, but by what is •clear—his 'paradise' and all that. That's where he is ridiculous. And since his clarities are ridiculous, it's not right to take his obscurities to be mysteries.

It is not the same with the Scripture. I accept that it contains obscurities as weird as Mahomet's; but it also contains admirably clear passages and outright prophecies that have come true. So the two are not on a par. We mustn't run together and put on one level things that are alike only in their obscurity, and not in the clarity that requires us to revere the obscurities.

**599.** The difference between Jesus-Christ and Mahomet.

Mahomet not predicted; Jesus-Christ predicted.

Mahomet killing; Jesus-Christ having his followers killed.

Mahomet forbidding reading; the apostles ordering reading.

The two are in fact so opposed that •if Mahomet took the way to success from a worldly point of view, Jesus-Christ from the same point of view took the way to death; and

that •instead of arguing that since Mahomet succeeded Jesus-Christ might well have succeeded too, we ought to say that since Mahomet succeeded Jesus-Christ had to die.

**600.** Any man can do what Mahomet did, for he performed no miracles, he wasn't predicted. No man can do what Jesus-Christ has done.

**601. The basis of our faith.** The pagan religion has no foundation now. They say that it used to have a foundation in the oracles that spoke. But what are the books that assure us of this? Does the virtue of their authors make them worthy of belief? Have they been preserved so carefully that we can be sure that they aren't corrupted?

The Mahometan religion is founded on the Koran and Mahomet. But this prophet who was to be what the world was ultimately waiting for—was he predicted? What mark •of his authenticity• does he have that couldn't be had by any man who chooses to call himself a prophet? What miracles does he himself say that he has done? What mysteries has he taught, even according to his own tradition? what morality? what happiness?

The Jewish religion seen in the context of the Holy Bible looks different from how it does in the tradition of the •Jewish• people. In the tradition of the people its morality and happiness are absurd, but they are admirable in the tradition of the Holy Bible. (The same thing holds for all religions: •even• the christian religion in the Holy Bible is very different from the christian religion of the casuists [see Glossary].) Its foundation is admirable: it is the most ancient book in the world, and the most authentic. And whereas Mahomet in order to keep his own book in existence forbade men to read it, Moses to keep *his* in existence ordered everyone to read it.

Our religion is so divine that another divine religion has only been the foundation of it.

**602.** To see what is clear and indisputable in the whole state of the Jews.

**603.** The Jewish religion is wholly divine in its authority, its duration, its perpetuity, its morality, its doctrine, and its effects.

**604.** The only knowledge contrary to common sense and human nature is the only one that has always existed among men.

**605.** The only religion contrary to nature, contrary to common sense, to our pleasure, is the only one that has always existed.

**606.** No religion but ours has taught that man is born in sin. No philosophical sect has said this; so none have spoken the truth.

No sect or religion has always existed on earth except the Christian religion.

**607.** Anyone whose view of the Jewish religion is coarse and superficial will misunderstand it. It is to be seen in the Holy Bible and in the tradition of the prophets, who have made it plain enough that they were not to be understood in a strictly literal way. So our religion is divine in the Gospel, in the apostles, and in tradition; but it's absurd in the hands of those who mangle it.

The Messiah, according to the carnal Jews, was to be a great temporal [see Glossary] prince. Jesus-Christ, according to carnal Christians, came •to free us from the obligation to love God and •to give us sacraments that will do their work without any contribution from us. This is all wrong about both religions.

True Jews and true Christians have always expected a Messiah who would make them love God and through that love triumph over their enemies.

**608.** The carnal Jews have a middle position between

Christians and pagans. The pagans don't know God and love only the world. The Jews know the true God and love only the world. The Christians know the true God and don't love the world. Jews and pagans love the same goods. Jews and Christians know the same God.

There were two sorts of Jews—ones with only pagan affections, and ones with Christian affections.

**609.** There are two kinds of men in each religion. Among the pagans,

•worshippers of beasts and •worshippers of one God in natural religion;

among the Jews,

•the carnal and •the spiritual, the latter being the Christians of the old law;

among Christians,

•the coarser-minded •and others who are the Jews of the new law.

The carnal Jews looked for a carnal Messiah; the coarser Christians believe that the Messiah released them from the obligation to love God; true Jews and true Christians worship a Messiah who makes them love God.

**610. To show that the true Jews and the true Christians have the same religion.** The religion of the Jews *seemed* to consist essentially in the fatherhood of Abraham, in circumcision, in sacrifices, in ceremonies, in the ark of the covenant, in the temple, in Jerusalem, and finally in the law and in the covenant with Moses. I say:

—that it consisted in none of those things but only in the love of God, and that God condemned all the other things;

—that God did not accept the posterity of Abraham;

—that the Jews, if they offend against God, will be punished like foreigners. 'If you at all forget the Lord your God and walk after other gods, I testify against you this day that you

will surely perish, like the nations which the Lord destroys before your face.’ Deuteronomy 8:19.

—that foreigners who love God will be received by him as the Jews are. ‘Let not the stranger say “The Lord will not receive me.” The strangers who join themselves to the Lord to serve him and love him I will bring to my holy mountain and accept sacrifices there, for my house is a house of prayer.’ [adapted from Isaiah 56:6–7.]

—that the true Jews considered their merit to be from God only, and not from Abraham. ‘Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou, O lord, art our father, our redeemer.’ [Isaiah 63:16]

—that Moses himself told them that God would not accept persons. ‘God’, he said, ‘does not regard persons or sacrifices.’ Deuteronomy 10:17.

—That the sabbath was only a sign (Exodus 31:13), and in memory of the escape from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:19). So it is no longer necessary, because Egypt should be forgotten. Circumcision was only a sign (Genesis 17:11). (That is why they were not circumcised when they were in the desert, because they couldn’t be confounded with other peoples.) And after Jesus-Christ came it was no longer necessary.

—that the circumcision of the heart is commanded. Deuteronomy 10:16. ‘Be circumcised in heart; take away the superfluities of your heart, and do not harden yourselves. For your God is a mighty God, strong and terrible, who does not accept persons’ [adapted from Jeremiah 4:4].

—that God said he would one day do it. ‘God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, so that you will love him with all your heart.’ Deuteronomy 30:6.

—that the uncircumcised in heart will be judged. Jeremiah 9:26. For God will judge the uncircumcised peoples, and all the people of Israel because they are ‘uncircumcised in

heart’.

—that the external is useless apart from the internal. Joel 2:13: ‘Rend your heart’ etc.; Isaiah 58:3, 4, etc. The love of God is enjoined throughout Deuteronomy. ‘I call heaven and earth to record that I have set before you life and death, that you should choose life and love God and obey him, for God is your life.’ Deuteronomy 30:19.

—that the Jews, for lack of that love, would be condemned for their offences and the pagans chosen instead. Hosea 1:10. ‘I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be, for they are a very perverse generation, children in whom is no faith’... (Deuteronomy 32:20; also Isaiah 65:1.)

—that temporal goods are false, and that the true good is to be united to God. Psalm 143:15.

—that their feasts are displeasing to God. Amos 5:21.

—that the sacrifices of the Jews displease God. Isaiah 66:1–3. . . .

—that he has established them only for their hardness. Micah 6:6–8, an admirable passage; 1 Kings 15:22; Hosea 6:6.

—that the sacrifices of the Gentiles will be accepted by God, and that God will take no pleasure in the sacrifices of the Jews. Malachi 1:11.

—that God will make a new covenant through the Messiah, and the old one will be annulled. Jeremiah 31:31. ‘Statutes that were not good.’ Ezekiel 20:25.

—that the old things will be forgotten. Isaiah 43:18–19; 65:17–18.

—that the ark will no longer be remembered. Jeremiah 3:15–16.

—that the temple would be rejected. Jeremiah 7:12–14.

—that the sacrifices would be rejected, and other pure sacrifices established. Malachi 1:11.

—that the order of Aaron’s priesthood would be condemned, and that of Melchizedek introduced by the Messiah. Psalm

110.

- that this priesthood would be eternal. *ibid.*
- that Jerusalem would be rejected, and Rome admitted. *ibid.*
- that the name of the Jews would be rejected, and a new name given. Isaiah 65:15.
- that the latter name should be more excellent than that of the Jews, and eternal. Isaiah 56:5.
- that the Jews should have no prophets, no king, no princes, no sacrifice, no idol. Amos 7:9.
- that the Jews should nevertheless always remain a people. Jeremiah 31:36.

**611.** The Christian republic—and even the Jewish republic—has had only God as its ruler, as Philo Judaeus notes in his *On Monarchy*.

When they fought, it was only for God; their chief hope was only in God; they considered their towns only as to God, and kept them for God. 1 Chronicles 19:13.

**612.** ‘I will establish my covenant between me and you for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you.’ (Genesis 17:7) ‘You will keep my covenant therefore’ (Genesis 17:9).

**613. Perpetuity.** The religion that consists in the belief that man has fallen from a state of glory and of communion with God into a state of sorrow, penitence and estrangement from God, but after this life we will be restored by a Messiah who is bound to come has always existed on earth. All things have passed away, and what has endured is this, which all things are *for*.

In the first age of the world men were carried away into every kind of debauchery, yet there were also saints such as Enoch, Lamech and others, who waited patiently for the Christ who had been promised from the beginning of the world. Noah saw the wickedness of men at its height; and he was worthy to save the world in his person through the

hope of the Messiah of whom he was the symbol. Abraham was surrounded by idolaters when God revealed to him the mystery of the Messiah, whom he welcomed from afar. In the time of Isaac and Jacob, abomination was spread over all the earth; but those saints lived in faith; and Jacob, dying, interrupted his blessing on his children with an outburst: ‘I await your salvation, O Lord!’ (Genesis 49:18)

The Egyptians were infected with both idolatry and magic; even the people of God were led astray by their example. Yet Moses and others believed someone whom they didn’t see, and worshipped him, looking to the eternal gifts he was preparing for them.

Later, the Greeks and Romans set up false deities; the poets made a hundred different theologies, the philosophers broke up into a thousand different sects; and yet in the heart of Judaea there were always chosen men predicting the coming of this Messiah whom only they knew.

He came at last in the fullness of time; and since then there have been so many schisms and heresies, so many political revolutions, so many changes in everything; yet this Church, which worships him who has always been worshipped, has survived throughout. It is a wonderful, incomparable, and altogether divine fact that this religion, which has always endured, has always been attacked. A thousand times it has been on the brink of total destruction, and each time God has rescued it by extraordinary exercises of his power. Astonishingly, it has preserved itself without yielding to the will of tyrants. . . .

**614.** States would perish if they didn’t often make their laws yield to necessity. But religion has never allowed this, or practised it. Indeed, there must be these compromises—or miracles. It is not strange to be saved by yielding, and this isn’t strictly self-preservation; besides, in the end states perish entirely: none has lasted a thousand years. But the

fact that this religion has always preserved itself without yielding—that is divine!

**615.** It must be admitted that the Christian religion has something astonishing in it. Some will say ‘You think this because you were born in it.’ Far from it; I brace myself *against* it for this very reason, for fear that this prejudice will bias me. But although I am born in it, I still find it astonishing.

**616.** The Messiah has always been believed in. The tradition of Adam was still fresh in the times of Noah and Moses. Since then the prophets have predicted him, while also predicting other things which eventually happened, showing the truth of their mission and thus the truth of their promises concerning the Messiah. Jesus-Christ performed miracles, and so did the apostles, who converted all the pagans; and all the prophecies being fulfilled, the Messiah is for ever proved.

**617.** Consider these facts: •that men have been awaiting or worshipping the Messiah uninterruptedly since the beginning of the world; •that there have been men who said that God had revealed to them that a Redeemer was to be born who would save his people; •that later on Abraham said that he’d had a revelation that the Messiah was to be a descendant of one of his sons; •that Jacob declared that, of his twelve sons, the Messiah would descend from Judah; •that Moses and the prophets then came to declare the time and the manner of his coming; •that they said

- that their law was only temporary till that of the Messiah;
- that it would last until then, but that the other would last for ever;
- that thus either their law or the Messiah’s (of which theirs was the promise) would always be upon the

earth;

- that, in fact, it has always endured; and finally
- that Jesus-Christ came with all the circumstances predicted.

That is wonderful.

**618.** This is a matter of *fact*: While all the philosophers break up into different sects, there’s one corner of the world containing the world’s most ancient people declaring •that all the world is in error, •that God has revealed the truth to them, •that it—this truth— will always exist on the earth. In fact, all other sects come to an end; this one still endures and has for four thousand years.

They declare that they hold from their ancestors •that man has fallen from communion with God, and is entirely estranged from God, but that he has promised to redeem them; •that this doctrine will always exist on the earth; •that their law has a double meaning;

•that through sixteen hundred years they have had people whom they believed to be prophets, who predicted both the time and the manner of the Messiah’s coming;

•that four hundred years later they were scattered everywhere, because Jesus-Christ was to be announced everywhere;

•that Jesus-Christ came in the predicted manner and at the predicted time;

•that since then the Jews have been scattered abroad, under a curse yet still surviving.

**619.** I see the Christian religion founded upon a preceding religion, and here’s what I find the facts to be.

I don’t here speak of the miracles of Moses, of Jesus-Christ, and of the apostles, because they don’t at first seem convincing, and I want to put in evidence here only the foundations of tis Christian religion that are beyond doubt

and can't be called in question by *anyone*.

It is certain that we see in many parts of the world a unique people, separated from all other peoples of the world and called the Jewish people.

I see then a crowd of religions in many parts of the world and at all times; but they don't have a morality that can please me or proofs that can convince me. Thus I would equally have rejected the religion of Mahomet, of China, of the ancient Romans, and of the Egyptians, all for the same reason: none has more marks of truth than any other, or anything that would compel my belief, so reason can't incline to any one as against the others.

But in considering this changeable and weird variety of *mœurs* [see Glossary] and beliefs at different times, I find in one corner of the world a unique people, separated from all other peoples on earth, the most ancient of all, with stories that go back many centuries further than any other history.

I find, then, this great and numerous people, descended from one man, who worship one God and guide themselves by a law that they say they received from his hand. They maintain that •they are the only people in the world to whom God has revealed his mysteries; that •all men are corrupt and in disgrace with God; that •they have all allowed their senses and their own thoughts to take over, which is why they have been subject to strange wanderings and continual changes in religions and in customs; whereas they themselves—the people who say all this—remain firm in their conduct; but that •God will not leave other nations in this darkness for ever; that •a saviour will come for all; that •they are in the world to announce him to men; that •they were formed for just this role of forerunners and heralds of this great event, and to summon all nations to join with them waiting for this saviour.

To meet with this people is astonishing to me, and seems

to me worthy of attention.

I look at the law that they boast of receiving from God, and I find it admirable. It is the first law of all; it was uninterruptedly accepted and observed by the Jews for nearly a thousand years before the Greeks even had a word for *law*. I find it remarkable that this *first* law of the world happens to be the *most perfect*; so that the greatest legislators have borrowed their laws from it, as is apparent from the law of the Twelve Tables at Athens, afterwards taken over by the Romans; I could easily prove this, but Josephus and others have already dealt with this adequately.

**620. Advantages of the Jewish people.** In this inquiry the Jewish people at once attracts my attention by how many wonderful and singular facts there are about them.

I first see that they are a people wholly composed of brethren; whereas every other people is formed by the assemblage of countless families, this one, though so amazingly large, has all descended from one man and—being thus all one flesh and members one of another—they are one family constituting a powerful State. This is unique.

This family, or people, is the most ancient within human knowledge; and that seems to me to entitle it to a special veneration, especially in our present inquiry; because if God has from all time communicated with men, these are the people we must turn to for an account of what he has said.

This people is remarkable not solely for its antiquity but also for its having been in existence continuously from its origin until now. Whereas the peoples of Greece and Italy—Sparta, Athens, Rome and others who came long after—have long since perished, the Jewish people still remain. Despite the attempts of so many powerful kings who have countless times tried to destroy them—

as their historians testify, and as is only to be expected from the natural order of things during such a long



stretch of time

—they have nevertheless been preserved (and this preservation was predicted); and their history, extending from the earliest times to the latest, includes in its duration all our histories that it preceded by a long time.

The law by which this people is governed is at once

- the most ancient law in the world,
- the most perfect, and
- the only one that has always, without interruption, been observed in a State.

This is what Josephus admirably proves in his *Against Apion*, and also Philo the Jew in various places; they point out that it is so ancient that no word for *law* was known in the older nations until more than a thousand years later; so that Homer, who has written the history of so many States, never used it. And it's easy to judge its perfection by simply reading it; for we see that it has provided for all things with such great wisdom, fairness and judgement that the most ancient Greek and Roman legislators, having an inkling of it, borrowed from it their principal laws. This is evident from the so-called Twelve Tables, and from the other proofs that Josephus gives.

But this law is at the same time the severest and strictest of all in regard to religious worship, imposing on this people, in order to keep them to their duty, a thousand peculiar and troublesome observances, on pain of death. This makes it *astonishing* that it has been constantly preserved through so many centuries by a rebellious and impatient people like this one; while all other States have changed their laws from time to time, although these were far more lenient.

The book that contains this first of all laws is itself the oldest book in the world, those of Homer, Hesiod and others being six or seven centuries later.

**621.** The creation and the flood being past, God no longer

needed to destroy the world or create it anew or give such great signs of himself; so he began to establish a people on the earth, formed for a purpose, who were to last until the coming of the people whom the Messiah would form by his spirit.

**622.** With the creation of the world receding into the past, God provided a single contemporary historian, and appointed a whole people as guardians of this book ·that he wrote·, so that this history would be the most authentic in the world, and all men might learn from it something they absolutely needed to know and couldn't learn otherwise.

**623.** *Japhet commence la généalogie.*

*Joseph croise ses bras et préfère le jeune.*

**624.** Why does Moses give men such long lives and so few generations?

Because what makes things obscure is not the length of years but the multitude of generations. For truth is perverted only by the change of men. He puts the two most memorable things that were ever imagined—the creation and the flood—so near that we reach from one to the other.

**625.** Shem, who saw Lamech, who saw Adam, also saw Jacob, who saw those who saw Moses; therefore the flood and the creation are true. People who understand this rightly find it conclusive.

**626.** The longevity of the patriarchs, rather than causing the loss of past history, conduced to its preservation. Why are we sometimes insufficiently instructed in the history of our ancestors? It's because we have hardly ever lived with them—in many cases they are dead before we have reached the age of reason. Well, back when men lived so long, offspring lived long with their parents, having conversations along the way. What could they talk about except the history of their ancestors, since that's what all history came down

to, and men didn't study the sciences or the arts which now form a large part of daily conversation? We see also that in those days the peoples took particular care to preserve their genealogies.

**627.** I believe that Joshua was the first of God's people to have this name, as Jesus-Christ was the last of God's people. ['Joshua' is a variant of 'Jesus'.]

**628. Antiquity of the Jews.** What a difference there is between one book and another! I'm not astonished that the Greeks made the *Iliad*, or that the Egyptians and the Chinese made their histories. We have only to see how this originates. These fabulous historians aren't contemporaneous with the things they write about. Homer wrote a romance, which he presented as such and was received as such, for nobody thought that Troy and Agamemnon existed any more than the golden apple did! He didn't think he was making a history but only an entertainment. He was the only writer of his time; the beauty of the work made the thing [i.e. the Trojan war] last. Everyone learned the work, talked about it, had to know it, and knew it by heart. Four hundred years after it was written, there were no living witnesses of these events; no-one knew, of his own knowledge, whether Homer's work was fable or history; it was simply something passed down from their ancestors and taken to be true.

Every history that isn't contemporaneous is suspect; thus the books of the sibyls and of Trismegistus and so many others that have been believed by the world are false, and have turned out to be false in the course of time. It is not so with contemporaneous writers.

There is a great difference between •a book that an individual writes and publishes to a people and •a book that itself *makes* a people. We can't doubt that the book is as old as the people.

**629.** Josephus hides the shame of his nation.

Moses doesn't hide his own shame or. . .

'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets.'  
(Numbers 11:29)

He was weary of the multitude.

**630. *La sincérité des Juifs.*** *Depuis qu'ils n'ont plus de prophètes, Machab.*

*Depuis Jésus-Christ, Massorett.*

*'Ce livre vous sera un témoignage.'*

*Les lettres défectueuses et finales.*

*Sincères contre leur honneur, et mourant pour cela; cela n'a point d'exemple dans le monde, ni sa racine dans la nature.*

**631. Sincerity of the Jews.** They preserve lovingly and faithfully the book in which Moses declares that they have been ungrateful to God through all their life, and that he knows they will be still more so after his death; but that he calls heaven and earth to witness against them, and that he has taught them enough.

He declares that •God, being angry with them, will eventually scatter them among all the nations of the earth; that •just as they have angered him by worshipping gods who were not their God, so he will provoke them by calling a people who are not his people; that •he wants all his words to be preserved for ever, and his book to be placed in the ark of the covenant to serve for ever as a witness against them.

Isaiah says the same thing, 30:8.

**632. Ezra.** The fable that the books were burnt with the temple proved false by Maccabees: 'Jeremiah gave them the law.'

The fable that he recited the whole thing by heart. Josephus and Ezra point out that he *read* the book. . . .

The fable that he changed the letters.

Philo in his *Life of Moses*: 'The language and characters in which the law was originally written remained unchanged

until the Seventy.’

Josephus says that the law was in Hebrew when it was translated by the Seventy.

Under Antiochus and Vespasian, when they wanted to abolish the books and when there was no prophet, they couldn’t do so. And under the Babylonians, when there had been no persecution and there were so many prophets, would they have let them be burned?

Josephus laughs at the Greeks who would not suffer. . .

Tertullian: ‘He could just as well have restored it from memory after it had been destroyed by the violence of the flood, just as every document of the Jewish literature was restored through Ezra after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian attack on it.’ (*The Cult of Women* 1:3)

He says that Noah could have restored from memory the book of Enoch’s that was destroyed by the flood, as easily as Ezra was able to restore the Scriptures lost during the captivity.

[Then a passage in Greek, meaning the same as the passage ‘when the Scriptures had been destroyed’ to the end of the next long paragraph.]

He takes this to show that it isn’t incredible that the Seventy should have explained the Holy Scriptures with that uniformity which we admire in them. And he took that from Saint Irenaeus.

Saint Hilary, in his preface to the Psalms, says that Ezra arranged the Psalms in order.

The origin of this tradition comes from the 14th chapter of the fourth book of Ezra. ‘God was glorified, and the Scriptures were recognised as truly divine, for they all rendered the same things in the same words and the same names, from beginning to end, so that even the heathen who were present knew that the Scriptures had been translated by the inspiration of God. And it is no marvel that God did this,

for when the Scriptures had been destroyed in the captivity of the people in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, and the Jews had gone back to their country after seventy years, then in the times of Artaxerxes, the king of the Persians, he inspired Ezra, the priest of the tribe of Levi, to restore all the sayings of the prophets who had gone before, and to restore to the people the law given by Moses.’

**633.** Cyrus took occasion from the prophecy of Isaiah to release the people. The Jews held their property in peace under Cyrus in Babylon; hence they could well have the law.

Josephus, in the whole history of Ezra, doesn’t say a word about this restoration.

**634.** If the story in Ezra is credible, then we should believe that the Scripture is Holy Scripture; for this story is based only on the authority of those who assert that of the Seventy, which shows that the Scripture is holy.

So if this story is true, it gives us our account; if not, we get it elsewhere. So those who would destroy the truth of our Moses-based religion *establish* it by the same authority by which they attack it. Thus, by this providence, it still exists.

**635.** Chronology of Rabbinism. [ This item is a fragmentary bibliography.]

**636.** [Two fragmentary references to Isaiah.]

**637. Prophecies.** The sceptre was not interrupted by the captivity in Babylon, because the return came quickly and was predicted.

**638. Proofs of Jesus-Christ.** Captivity with the assurance of deliverance within seventy years—that wasn’t real captivity. But now they are captives without any hope.

God has promised them that even if he scattered them to the ends of the earth, if they were faithful to his law he would bring them together again. They are very faithful to it, and remain oppressed.

**639.** When Nebuchadnezzar carried away the people, for fear they should believe that the sceptre had departed from Judah, he told them beforehand that they would be there for a short time and would be restored.

They were always consoled by the prophets; their kings continued. But the second destruction is without promise of restoration, without prophets, without kings, without consolation, without hope, because the sceptre is taken away for ever.

**640.** It's an amazing thing, and worth special attention, to

see this Jewish people existing so many years in perpetual misery, it being necessary for them •to exist as a proof of Jesus-Christ and •to be miserable because they crucified him; and although misery and existence are opposites, they nevertheless still exist in spite of their misery.

**641.** They are visibly a people created specifically to serve as a witness to the Messiah (Isaiah 43:9, 44:8). They keep the books, and love them, and don't understand them. And all this was predicted: that God's judgments are entrusted to them, but as a sealed book.