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ESSAYS IN POPULAR & PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY.



JUSTICE IN THE
REVOLUTION AND IN
THE CHURCH

BY P.-J. PROUDHON.



PRELIMINARY
ADDRESS.



TRANSLATED BY SHAWN P. WILBUR

FROM THE NEW EDITION,
REVISED, CORRECTED AND EXPANDED, ORIGINALLY
PUBLISHED IN 1860.



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— WORKING DRAFTS —

The text presented here is a more or less unpolished draft, produced as part of the NEW PROUDHON LIBRARY project, an attempt to establish an English-language edition of the major works of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and a selection of related documents. There is a good deal here that is unfinished and some that will undoubtedly be subject to revision. It has seemed useful, however, to supplement the work of translation and revision with public discussion, so I am making relatively complete drafts available to readers while the project is in progress.

In the interest of minimizing the variants floating around on the internet, please don't archive these drafts in public depositories other than the Libertarian Labyrinth. The texts will eventually be available in archives like the Anarchist Library. In the meantime, I will be setting up a directory of the most recent drafts reachable at

proudhonlibrary.org.

— Shawn P. Wilbur

WORKING NOTES

— MARCH 3, 2023 —

This draft translation is still very much a *work in progress*, but I share it with a significant degree of confidence that, whatever defects there may still be in the adaptation of Proudhon's text to the needs of modern readers of English, the ideas are presented with a fairly high degree of accuracy.

An important element of Proudhon's JUSTICE is his search for a "science des mœurs" — a phrase that I am rendering as "science of mores." The term *mœurs / mores* may be a bit unfamiliar to some readers. It designates social customs, habits, traditions, etc., including those that we would group under the category of "morals." I've made some attempt to distinguish this comparatively neutral term from "morals" (Fr: *morale*) and "morality" (Fr: *moralité*), but some slippage is normal in both languages. What is important to recall is that, for Proudhon, there are two radically different possible origins for *mores*: the Church and the Revolution, *revelation* and *immanence*. The concept exists at the center of the conflicts with which Proudhon will occupy himself throughout the work and readers should be prepared to find the

development of religious conceptions pulled or pulling in the direction Revolution, while the development of immanent conceptions, in its still incomplete state, may drift back towards the realm of the Church.

Something similar should be assumed about the uses of the word "esprit," which I have most often rendered as "spirit," except where it is very clearly a reference to "mind." French allows both translations, but when Proudhon talks about "spirit" or "the spiritual" in this particular context, it is nearly always a case of, at the very least, intellectual, rational elements still not freed from religious presuppositions. We are once again, dealing with one of the prizes of the struggle Proudhon is describing.

Readers will find that at times the Revolution and the Church are personified, but that the draft translation is quite inconsistent in that regard. This is something I hope to work through in the *next* revision. For now, however, I've simply tried to keep things relatively consistent in particular sections.

I've formatted these draft pdfs with fairly large type, hoping that they will be readable on various devices.

And I am hoping to begin a group reading of these texts in late March. — SHAWN.

ESSAYS IN POPULAR PHILOSOPHY, No. 1

OF JUSTICE

IN THE REVOLUTION
AND IN THE CHURCH.

STUDIES IN PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

ADDRESSED TO HIS EMINENCE M. LE CARDINAL
MATTHIEU, ARCHBISHOP OF BESANÇON.



PRELIMINARY ADDRESS.

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

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

The work you are about to read having as its aim to recognize the reality and intensity of the evil, to assign its cause, to discover its remedy

and, above all, to demonstrate, from the point of view of justification, that is to say, of human perfectibility, the non-value of the ecclesiastical ministry, and to establish moral philosophy, apart from this influence, on its legitimate basis, the dedication belonged by right to the clergy.

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

§ 1. — State of mores in the nineteenth century. Invasion of moral skepticism: society in peril. Where is the remedy?

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

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

France has lost its mores.

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

When I say that France has lost her mores, I mean something very different, that it has ceased to believe in its principles. It no longer has either intelligence or moral conscience; it has even forgotten the very notion of *mores*.

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

To sum things up in one word, it is *skepticism* that, having devastated religion and politics, has descended on morals: this is what the modern dissolution consists of. The case is not

new in the history of civilization: it already presented itself in the times of Greek and Roman decadence; I dare say it won't present itself a third time. Let us therefore study it with all the attention of which we are capable; and since we could not escape this last invasion of the scourge, let us at least know what we should expect from it.

Under the desiccating action of doubt, and without crime having perhaps become more frequent and virtue more rare, French morality, in its heart of hearts, is destroyed. There is nothing more that stands: the rout is complete. There is no thought of justice, no esteem for liberty, no solidarity between citizens. There is not an institution that we respect, not a principle that is not denied, flouted. There is no more authority, either in the spiritual or the temporal realms: everywhere souls are driven back into themselves, without a point of reference, without light. We no longer have anything to swear to or anything by which to swear. Our oaths are senseless. The suspicion that strikes principles attaching itself to men, we no longer believe in the integrity of justice, in the honesty of power. With the moral sense, the instinct of self-preservation itself seems

extinguished. General management given over to empiricism, a stock-market aristocracy hurling itself, in hatred of the *partageux*, on the public wealth; a middle class dying of cowardice and stupidity; a plebeian class sinking into poverty and bad advice; women feverish with luxury and lust, youth immodest, childhood outdated, the priesthood, finally, dishonored by scandal and vengeance, no longer having faith in itself and barely troubling the silence of public opinion with its stillborn dogmas: such is the profile of our century.

The less timorous sense it and worry about it:

“There is no respect any more,” said a businessman to me. “Like that emperor who felt he was becoming a god, I feel that I am becoming a rascal and I wonder what I believed in when I believed in honor?”

“I am overcome with *spleen*,” confessed a young priest. He who, by his functions, by his faith and by his age, should have been sheltered from this English evil, felt the moral life in his heart collapsing. Is that a life? Wouldn’t it rather be called an expiation? The bourgeois atones, the proletarian atones, the Power itself, reduced to governing only by force, atones.

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

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

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

However, as the doubt about Justice, and the demoralization that it brings with it, has not added appreciably to the sum of misdemeanors and crimes, the statesman, for whom external respect for the law suffices, would not need to worry about it until then. Statistics in hand, he would show that crime is proportional to pauperism, and he would demand this precious morality, which conscience no longer supports, of the combinations for financing and insurance. The religion of right and duty would thus be succeeded by the religion of interests, and all would be said and done. Order maintained in the street, force remaining in the

law, the statesman could rest on his laurels and we would only have to repeat the proverb: The world moves by itself.

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

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

Likewise, to form a society, to give the interests of individuals and families the security that is their first need — without which work is refused, the exchange of products and values becomes a fraud and wealth a trap for he who possesses it — requires what I shall call a *juridical faith*, which, raising souls above selfish

appetites, renders them happier in the respect of the rights of others than in the respect of their own fortunes. Without this, society becomes a free-for-all where the law of the strongest is replaced by the law of the most deceitful, where exploitation succeeds primitive theft, where the last word of war is servitude and the guarantee of servitude is tyranny.

Once again, to form a state, to confer support and stability to power, a *political faith* is needed, without which the citizens, given over to the pure attractions of individualism, cannot, whatever they do, be something other than an aggregate of incoherent and repulsive existences, which the first breath will disperse like dust. Haven't we seen, since the Revolution, enough defections and recantations? How could a power subsist when contempt has invaded souls, when ministers, senators, magistrates, generals, prelates and functionaries, the army, the bourgeoisie and the common people are as indifferent to the changing of their princes as to the furnishings of the crown?

Through skepticism, the purely moral appeal of marriage, of generation and the family, and the attractions of work and society being lost,

the social being dissolves and the population itself tends to die out. This is the serious side of the present immorality.

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

Is it not in fact decay, this ferocious sensualism, which makes us loathe marriage and generation, but drives us through love to the annihilation of the species? The number of abortions and infanticides doubled in 1856, according to the latest report on criminal justice. The height of pleasure is in sterility. We will have no children, these young spouses tell you, coldly!... In Paris, in 1858, the number of births, according to the statistics published by the newspapers, was 35,000: of this number, 11,000 were illegitimate. We will have children, if we can't prevent it, but not marriage. This is our century. Is it the wish of nature and of society? Is it even the wish of love?

Is it not also decay, this lack of faith in the virtue of our neighbor and in our own virtue, which, keeping us in a state of latent war, makes

us, whether we like it or not, indifferent to society and to the homeland, and careless regarding general interests and posterity?

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

Science and consciousness of Justice, as one learned professor said, that is what we lack, and the deprivation makes us die slowly, ignominiously. And that is what the Revolution had promised us, what it would have given us long ago, if the misfortune of the times and the weakness of souls had not delayed its glorious and definitive manifestation.

Yes, this juridical, sacramental faith, this science of right and duty, which we seek everywhere in vain, which the Church never possessed and without which it is impossible for us to live, I say that the Revolution has produced all its principles; that these principles, without our knowledge, govern and sustain us, but that, while affirming them from the bottom of our hearts, we reject them

through prejudice, and that it is this infidelity to ourselves that creates our moral misery and our servitude.

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

§ II. — The Counter-Revolution everywhere: Its Powerlessness.

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

Everything that emerged from the Revolution, from its beginnings, successively turned against it and, by fighting the Revolution, served the dissolution: Democracy, Empire, Restoration, July Monarchy, Republic of 1848, Representative System, Centralization, Philosophy, Political Economy, Industrial Progress, Credit institutions, Socialism, Literature.

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

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

the Revolution, had to call itself — and calls itself every day — democratic.

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

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

Democracy, since it became a power, a fashion, has successively espoused all of the ideas most contrary to its nature. Faithful,

above all, to the religious principle, but feeling, there as elsewhere, the need to innovate, it has made itself by turns paleo-Christian and neo-Christian, Protestant, deist, pantheist, metempsychosist, druidic, magical, mystical, fanatical, incorporating every available material. In economics, it is whatever you like, communist and feudalist, anarchic, monopolist, philanthropist, free trader, anti-egalitarian; — in politics, governmental, dictatorial, imperial, centralizing, absolutist, chauvinistic, Machiavellian, doctrinaire, disdainful of law, sworn enemy of all local and individual liberty; — in philosophy and literature, after denying Voltaire and the classics, Condillac, Diderot, Volney, all the Fathers and Doctors of the revolution, it has made itself transcendentalist, eclectic, *apriorist*, fatalist, sentimentalist, idealist, romantic, gothic, whimsical, gossipy and bohemian. It has taken on all the systems, all the utopias, all the charlatanries, having been unable to discover anything in the thought that had produced it. February 1848 arrives. Democracy finds itself without genius, without virtue, without breath: tell me why?

Empire. — We have said it until we can say it no more; we have said it only too often among

a combative people: the empire was the sword of the Revolution, outstripping the work of the pen throughout Europe. That was its legitimacy and that will be its significance in the face of history. As a power, the empire remained without originality, because it was, like the democracy from which it had emerged, without an understanding of the Revolution. Was that the Emperor's fault? He had all the genius that the nation's thought contained, as much wit as everyone else and perhaps more virtue. What a fervor for royalty among the heroes emerging from Jacobinism! After the four Bonaparte brothers, who became kings, here is Bernadotte king, Murat king, Eugène Beauharnais viceroy, and Soult, and Masséna, and the insane Junot, who also wanted to be kings! Duke or prince was not enough for these sons of artisans, who had become haughtier than the Rohans. According to them, one *earns* a royal position just as one earns a pension. Speak then, after that, of universal suffrage! Say that the people have been deceived, that they have been frightened!... They had profited. *Vox populi*.

Restoration. — It rises at first, through the Charter, above even imperial glory. The Charter was the return to revolutionary life. But soon

the Crown believes it sees, it notices that the Revolution is leading it where it does not want to go; it conspires with the Church, the soul of the counter-revolution, and falls, after everything that the Revolution most abhors and detests, after the sword, had multiplied under its wing: Jesuitism, romanticism, Saint-Simonism, Malthusianism, etc.

July Monarchy. — It was the crowning glory of the bourgeoisie; it could be, precisely because of this, the most legitimate of powers. A mass of common people to be emancipated presupposes a class of instructors and innovators: this is the fundamental fact of the Revolution. Louis-Philippe rejected this program. As Napoleon had tried to remake the old regime with his soldiers, he conceived the idea of remaking it with his bourgeois. He governed neither by religion, nor by force, nor by instincts; he governed by interests. Under Louis-Philippe the industrial feudalism, which currently reigns, was formed. We can say of this prince what has been said of Voltaire: *He has not seen everything he made, but he made everything we see*. He himself boasted of it in his letters to the leaders of the Holy Alliance; and Napoleon III, who stripped the Orleans family of its

privileges, would not dare to revoke, without indemnity, the great concessions, the kind of fiefs with which his royal predecessor had flanked the System.

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

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

(*Guerres de religion*, p. 305.)

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

Do we at least possess this centralizing unit, the installation of which cost France fourteen months of terror and the Girondins their heads? Alas! No. Centralization presupposes parties grouping together under a law of series, but always to the benefit of their freedom and their initiative. Paris and its government, its administrations, its companies, its monopolies, its pleasures, its parasitism, Paris, which has become the inn of Europe, absorbs and devours France: that is centralization!

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

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

Political Economy. — The creation of an economic science, based at once on the analysis of industrial phenomena and on justice, is the last word of revolutionary thought. Terrible to feudalism, hostile to the Emperor, surly with the Bourbons, haughty with the Orleans, enemies of all all governmental initiative and concentration, swearing only by liberty, the economists, much more than the Jacobins, could pass for the true representatives of the Social Republic. They were only asked one thing: to finally construct this science, the

shapeless and contradictory materials of which they had been collecting for a century. Instead of answering, they went on to boast about *free trade, moral restraint, laissez-faire laissez-passer* and all the juggling and turpitude to be found on both sides of the Channel. They preached the reason of chance, the sovereignty of antagonism, respect for parasitism, the necessity of poverty; they supported, with all their strength, against democracy and against the political powers, the prepotence of the big companies, and by their desperate defense of monopoly, served as godfathers to the new feudalism. Then, when they saw themselves denounced as schemers, hypocrites, enemies of the people and foreign agents, they cried “*Wolf!*” against the Revolution.

Literature. — As it had its metaphysics, its ethics, its economy, its jurisprudence, the Revolution should also have its literature. The movement begins with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, continues with Beaumarchais and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. The harangues of the Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, and the Convention raise it to the sublime. Its enemies themselves take up the same tune: the antithesis of the Revolution comprised all the

genius of De Maistre. Suddenly, by one of those reversals so frequent in the march of the human mind, the new muse abandoned her flag. To the harsh but misunderstood realities of a nascent world, she prefers, as the subject of her songs, the vanquished ideal, and we have *Romanticism*. Has it done us enough harm? It was romanticism that, in 1848, on the eve of the December elections, lamented that if the socialists became the masters they would demolish Notre-Dame and that pieces of the Column would bring big money... Now, romanticism, like economism, like philosophy, and everything that served the reaction is worn out, but the corruption they sowed, the servitude they prepared, the ruins they piled up, all this remains, and we have no more literature.

Isn't it a surprising thing: a Revolution opposed, abrogated by all those it carried in its bosom, and who received its baptism? For ten years, I have followed the current of history with all the attention of which I am capable. As far as I could, I took cognizance of ideas and acts. Apart from a few strong characters who are known, I found everyone hostile to the Revolution: people of letters, people of law,

business people people of the schools and people of the political parties; poets, historians, novelists, magistrates, speculators, shopkeepers, industrialists; academics, economists, eclectics, pantheists, constitutionalists, imperialists, democrats; Gallicans, Protestants, Jews, Neo-Christians; the youth, the women, the bourgeoisie, the multitude, the clerk, the soldier, the academician, the scholar, the peasant, the worker, like the priest.

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

Democracy, through the mouth of Robespierre, asks the Supreme Being again for the sanction of human rights. Immediately the notion of right is obscured, and corruption, suspended for a moment, resumes its course. The Empire, the Restoration, the bourgeois monarchy show themselves more and more unfaithful to their origin; and the corruption advances. Philosophy and literature deny the tradition of the eighteenth century; and Platonism, Romanticism serve as an illumination for corruption. Political economy

becomes Malthusian, and now women have a horror of housework and motherhood. The Church erects into an article of faith the pious legend of an immaculate conception, and never have such suspicions hovered over the morals of the Priesthood.

If any life remains to us, if all honor is not lost, we owe it to that sacred flame of the Revolution, which no deluge can extinguish. Her conquests, her establishments, her organs, her liberties, her rights, her guarantees, all have perished: there remains to her only the collective soul, more and more made in her image; and from this inaccessible temple, she imposes her terror on the world, which waits for her to impose her law on it again. The Counter-Revolution knows it: If, she says, I can be mistress for two generations, my reign is forever assured! Two generations would be enough for her to remake the conscience and the understanding to the people. But the generations flee her: never was the Revolution more alive than since the last triumph of the Counter-Revolution. All bruised and dislocated, the Revolution possesses us; it rallies us, governs us, assures us; through it we hope and act, and all that remains to us of

spontaneity and virtue belongs to it. Also the conscience of the people, long abused, turns with love towards this Grand Orient, and the day when a hundred men knowingly renew the oath of '93, LIBERTY — EQUALITY — FRATERNITY, the Revolution will be established: it will reign.

From what precedes we draw a double consequence.

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

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

What makes the Revolution suspect can only be a negative element: it is the negation of the principle on which Justice, which must exist by itself, has relied until this day, a principle

incompatible with the revolutionary element, but still living in souls, of which the Church is the organ.

Thus, two powers fight for the world: one born yesterday, which has all the harshness of green fruit, and only asks to grow; the other, having reached maturity, which only stirs to die. What checks life in the first is the same as what suspends death in the other: what is this thing? To understand this, let us first know by what incident the Church, mother and rival of the Revolution, arrived there.

§ III — The Church: why, despite its perpetual defeats, does it still exist?

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

It is a surprising thing, which no one seems to have noted, that the Church, which loves to talk so much about its triumphs, has in reality never triumphed over anyone. It is a storm-tossed ship, which from time to time picks up a soul fallen overboard, but which has never sunk nor forced to surrender, by the power of its doctrine, another church. Between religious societies, such a victory is impossible.

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

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

Formed by a combination of circumstances

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

Thus the Church, formed from the dismemberment of Judaism, could not manage to incorporate it: the book of *Acts* contains the formal admission.

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

A church that crucifies, as false christ and false prophet, the founder of the rival church; that hunts, stones, casts down the apostles of this one; who, rather than accepting the messianic interpretation of the Nazarenes, is being exterminated en masse and dying heroically for their faith, has this church been

defeated? Titus, and after him Adrian, destroyed Judaic nationality. Many defectors, despairing of Jehovah and Moses, went to swell the Christian ranks; others rallied, some to the Egyptians, some to the Magi: the Synagogue always protested, and still protests.

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

The Church has not conquered paganism any more than it had conquered Judaism. According to a statistical calculation quoted by Matter, the Christians, at the accession of Constantine, formed about one-twentieth of the population of the empire. At all points, their brotherhoods were made up of what the general dissolution caused the local religions to lose every day, struck in principle by the progress of ideas, and especially by imperial domination. Those who converted to Christianity were

already lost to paganism. Far from the Church having conquered paganism, it gradually took from it, as it did from Judaism, all that it could; it has adopted pagan codes, hierarchy, institutions, rites. It was in order to appeal to paganism and to lead the masses dispossessed of their gods, as much as to obey the logic of its own movement, that the Church posited, in the fourth century, the divinity of its Christ, and that later it consecrated the worship of images.

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

Now, as the vitality of a Church is directly proportional to the intensity and homogeneity of its faith, which in its turn is inversely proportional to the intellectual activity that it arouses; the Gnostic sects, too given up to

dialectics, too metaphysical, too idealistic, too liberal in their government, some too suspect in their morality, died out little by little for lack of recruits, and their remnants, keeping their speculations *in petto*, came together in the Orthodox group. Strength helped: were they defeated? Certainly not. They presented, from the beginning, the spectacle of what awaited the great Church herself, once she found herself coming to grips with reason, taste, liberty, nationality and Justice.

What are, in fact, Arianism, Manichaeism, Mohammedanism, the Greek schism and the Reformation, apart from questions of doctrine always foreign to the masses, if not declarations of incompatibility between Catholic unity and the autonomy of nations and intelligences?

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

In Persia, the orthodoxy retreated before the Zoroastrian dualism, awakened by Manes. And what demonstrates the truth of this physiology

is that the same thing will happen in Persia to Islamism, when it has replaced the religion of Christ. In politics, a government recognizes another government; a state triumphs over another state and incorporates it; a race interbreeds and merges into another race. In religion, it is not the same: cult refuses to recognize cult; the church does not incorporate the church, and fails to overcome it. Reason can agree with reason, force can conquer force; whereas faith can do nothing about faith: the Absolute and the Absolute do not make a dent in one another.

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

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

What is the empire of Charlemagne, setting itself up in the Middle Ages opposite the papacy, too fortunate to be its client? — It is the political church, which constitutes, together with the spiritual church, the feudal synthesis. The papacy and the empire have not ceased to battle: which of these two churches has vanquished the other? They have both just sunk, at the peace of Villafranca.

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

What is the institution of parliaments? — The church of right formed for the administration of Justice, having its jurisdiction outside the episcopal jurisdiction, its schools outside the seminaries, its law distinct from

canon law. The Revolution transformed the parliaments: would the Church claim that this transformation was its own work?

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

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

the spontaneity of conscience, the independence of the mind, the sovereignty of nations, the power of emperors and kings could achieve? She has lost everything, and this miserable domain that she once held though the devotion of a princess, this poor heritage of Saint Peter, is still taken from her.

And yet the Church resists all attacks; she survives all schisms, all heresies, all dismemberments, the institutions of Saint Louis as well as the Gallican liberties, Pothier as well as Descartes, Luther as well as Voltaire. She survived her own immoralities; she had her reforming pontiffs long before the Reformation; and now that the Reformation is but a word, the Council of Trent unquestionably governs the Orthodox universe. What did I say? As the churches more advanced than her in philosophy and liberty fall into dissolution, she picks up their shreds and is constantly reformed by her very immobility. It is in this way that, before losing her temporal sovereignty, she enriched herself from the debris of the Gallican church, which will not now come back to life at the voice of the emperor, which will not rise again even at the voice of the king of France. This is how she will succeed all the so-called reformed

Churches, unless the reason of humanity does not conclude definitively against the reason of these Churches, against theology. The Church has nothing but the breath, and this breath is more vivacious than all the energies that she has seen born, stronger than all the institutions that have been formed outside of her by imitating her.

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

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

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

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

Navis Petri non quassatur,
Contra fluctus obfirmatur,
Frustra ventis agitatur,
Non timet naufragium.

says the *reading* for the feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. And the reading is correct: as long as a glimmer of religious faith remains in society, the ship of Peter can consider itself guaranteed against shipwreck.

In all eras of history, prior to the promulgation of Christianity and since its propagation, mankind has believed, with unanimous consent, that religion was a

necessary basis for society; that theological faith was the *sine qua non* of virtue, and that all justice had its source and its sanction in divinity.

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

Now, the analysis of religious ideas and the logic of their development demonstrate that, notwithstanding the diversity of myths and rites, all cults are basically identical, that consequently there is and can only be one religion, one theology, one Church; finally, that the Catholic Church is the one whose dogmatism, discipline, hierarchy and progress best realize the principle and the theoretical type of religious society, that consequently which has the most right to the government of souls, to speak first only of that right.

To any objection of free examination, to any outfight dismissal of secular authority, the Church can eternally answer, without the believing soul being able to say anything in

reply:

“Do you believe in God?

“Do you believe in the necessity of religion?

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

“If so, you are Christian, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman; you confess Christ and all His doctrine; you receive the priesthood He established; you recognize the infallibility of the councils and of the sovereign pontiff; you place the pulpit of Saint Peter above all the tribunes and all the thrones: you are, in a word, orthodox. — If not, dare to say so: for then it is not only against the Church that you are declaring war, it is against the faith of the human race.”

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

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

The argument therefore remains; and as,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ IV. — The issue is between the Revolution and the Church.

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

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

Or must one be subordinated to the other?

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

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

Now, if we found that the last of these hypotheses was the true one, it would become useless to dwell any longer on the other two. So there is every advantage in asking ourselves at first glance if theological reason is not the very negation of juridical reason, and *vice versa*; and

if, consequently, while the Church accuses the Revolution of modern skepticism and immorality, it is not she who, through her theology, having confounded intelligences for a long time, has altered the sense of right in them and produced the dissolution that kills us.

What is Religion, and what is Justice? What are they to one another, and what are their respective functions in the life of peoples? This is the problem. It is important to grasp it in its universality, lest we fall into new and more deplorable illusions.

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

Isn't this all common sense? Is revelation and all that follows not implied in the spiritualist hypothesis, the theology

determined *a priori* by the notion of God and his relations with man; and can this theology or theodicy be anything other than Catholicism?

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

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

A number of these mystics, apparently incapable of analyzing the principle of their faith and following its consequences, declared themselves against divine right, affirmed the Revolution, calling themselves at the same time followers of a *Natural Religion*, which, according to them, would be known only through the light of the reason, and would not require external worship or priesthood.

But do not all these ideas of God, of Heaven

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

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

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

We grant that Justice is obligatory, even without hope of remuneration here below. But

we do not give up the hope of an indemnity in a *better world*; so that this so-called *Duty* is basically only a credit that we give to the Sovereign Distributor: what hypocrisy!

We advocate reason, but maintain an even higher esteem for faith, provided, of course, that this faith has nothing in common with that of the priests. We praise Justice, but we put love above it. Our people of letters, women and men, summarize the social philosophy in three words: *Believe, Love, Labor*. As for me, I affirm labor. But I have all sorts of reservations about love and I reject faith. Love, when it is not a slave to right, is the poison of souls and the devastator of society. As for faith, I repeat, there is none other than that which engendered the Church.

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

Good for them! I like this talk, and I draw an excellent omen from it. But then tell us what is morality, what is right; how it applies to the various relationships of life; show where its corruption comes from; prove above all, to

these people infatuated with their immortality, that Justice is sufficient unto itself and that if Justice is sufficient, the present life is also sufficient and does not need an extension into eternity.

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

Hence this decisive conclusion:

That all the previous history of mankind, dominated by the religious principle, forms a clearly characterized period, in which all the political and economic constitutions of the peoples, their legislation and their morals, despite innumerable varieties, are basically similar, amounting to the negation of the rights of man and of the citizen; — and that the

French Revolution, making the juridical principle prevail, opens a new period, an entirely contrary order of things, of which it is now a question for us of determining the parts.

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

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

competition with the episcopate?

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

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

necessary.

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

So let us say it again: the Church, invincible in its Absolute, has succumbed each time the debate has been brought onto the field of reason. But, since the Absolute has never been radically eliminated, the Church persists, even if that means signing pragmatic sanctions and concordats, simulating an agreement between reason and faith, adapting its biblical texts to the data of science, putting a little more reserve in its morals and a semblance of tolerance in its government.

Like the reed in the fable, *it bends and does not break*. The way its inept rivals lead it, it would endure, always bending, another eighteen centuries. In the face of political power, it bends and it endures; in the face of philosophy, it bends and it endures; in the face of science, it bends and it endures; in the face of the Reformation, it bends and it endures. And it will endure as long as it is not attacked in its stronghold, as long as the Revolution, raising

the debate higher, does not rid Justice of this divine sanction that makes it lame and of which the Church is the supreme representative.

§. V. — Overview of this work.

The reader now knows the plan of this work.

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

So I am not establishing the controversy on the basis of dogma. I set dogma aside and do not quibble over articles of faith. It may be that all that is said about the essence of God and about the supernatural world is true. What can I know with any certainty? Nothing. On what basis can I deny it? Again, there is none. It may

be that deep in my heart beats a secret desire for survival, testimony to an ulterior destiny: I will not take the trouble to either verify or contest it. I settle down next to belief and allow it all its fantasies until further notice. My criticism refuses to enter the regions of the absolute.

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

If then, after examination, it happens that belief, which is presented to me as the indispensable pledge of Justice, instead of assuring it, compromises it; if, by a necessary consequence, the Church, organ of religious thought, was at the same time the agent of our temptation; if such were the principle of all human decadence and retrogradation; if it was through this that Justice, vitiated, has remained doubtful to us until this day: then, without

tolerating a perfidious belief any further, I would have the right and the duty to protest against a dishonest guarantee, to take up, against the Church and against God himself, the cause of Justice, and to establish myself as its guarantor and father.

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

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

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

What is *conscience* itself? A prejudice? But a prejudice supposes a fact that determines it... A faculty? Where does it reside? What is its function? What is its mode of exercise? Where is its organism?

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

What is *government* among men? What is the *state* and the reason of *state*? If the reason of state is in conformity with Justice, of what use is it? If it is an exception to Justice, what is a Justice subject to so many exceptions? Is the political order the same as the economic order?

Do they blend into each other? How and when? Formidable questions that academic science would be careful not to raise.

What is *liberty*? Is it also a prejudice, or more simply, as modern philosophy explains it, a way of conceiving the organic life in us, the fatality of nature and of the mind? Would there be liberty, as some maintain, only in communities; and would liberty be reduced, for the man and the citizen, to living under a regular, legal and legitimate state regime?

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

What is *marriage*? Of what does this union consist, which all peoples distinguish from amorous union? The Church, which claims its consecration, admits that it has not yet understood it. Is it a simple legal *concubinage*? Should it be classified among the civil or commercial societies? What is *paternity*? What

is *family*?... Our moralists, who preach the domestic virtues to us, have forgotten to give us the definitions of all these things.

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

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

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

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

What is meant by *moral sanction*? Is it within

humanity or outside humanity? What difficulties in the first case! What doubts in the second!

What is *religion*? What is *prayer*? What is *God*? Is religion eternal or transitory like its forms? Are we moving towards a religious transformation or towards a resorption of religion by Justice? Admitting that religion was only a preparatory form of civilization, it still remains to be said what was its role, function and mandate; and as nothing happens in social life that does not have its roots in the entrails of humanity, we must also say what religion must be reduced to, and what will be the mode of exercise of this faculty in subsequent ages.

Is there a *system of society*, as all ancient and modern utopians and legislators have understood it? What is this system? How are we to recognize it, to demonstrate it? Is there no system? What then is social order? And when the social system, in all its manifestations and evolutions, is once explained by the principle that is immanent to it, a sovereign, immediate, synthetic principle, both real and formal, power and idea, the negation of which implies the supreme contradiction, what will be the influence of this legal demonstration on the

general philosophy? Does it contain moral certainty; does it give speculative certainty; would the science of right become the key to the science of nature, and should JUSTICE, finally, be considered as the sovereign reason and reality, the *archeus*, the God who governs the world of consciousness, the world of the spirit and the world of things?

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

In summary :

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

This principle, in my opinion, is Justice.

What is Justice? — The very essence of humanity.

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

What should it be? — Everything.

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

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

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

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

from the series of phenomena that express it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I haven't been as brief as I would have liked: the time has not come for the Revolution to

make *Etrennes mignonnes* [almanacs] and catechisms. What is needed by a cause threatened in its very existence are demonstrations, facts, science. All of this takes time and space. Let us first philosophize with the breadth that unrecognized truth requires: afterwards, the abbreviators may have their say.

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

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

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

Although I am not terribly frightened by the

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

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

We don't know what will come of these masses created by the Revolution. We imagine that all their eloquence is exhausted in the vote. It is up to me, more than anyone else, to serve as their interpreter. What the people would think if, by a sudden illumination, they could at

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

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

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

I thought, in 1848, that after so many catastrophes, all those formulas of the ancient antagonism, by which Aristotle and Machiavelli had not been fooled—monarchy, aristocracy,

democracy, bourgeoisie, proletariat, etc.—should no longer have more than a transitional value; that the constitution of power mattered little, provided that it passed quickly, after having created the economic order; that in the spirit of the new France, politics should be eclipsed like worship and make way for justice, and that granting the same importance as before to theological reason and the reason of state was to mislead the Revolution and regress.

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

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

The Revolution had passed into the status of

a myth. I come, the first, to present its exegesis.

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

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

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

NOTES.

1. The worst part of damnation is the hatred of God. We know the words of Saint Thérèse about Satan: *The wretch, he does not love.* Now, the love of God is the same thing as the love of moral good and beauty, of which God is the living and eternal image. Whence it follows that it would be better to suffer damnation, that is to say the loss of God and the tortures of hell, than to have deserved them by sin. This in no way contradicts the doctrine of the theologians, reported below, *First Study*, Chapter IV, on the exclusively divine origin and nature of Justice. It only follows that of two things that, according to theologians, come to us from God, Justice and beatitude, the first, admitting that they can be separated, is the more excellent.

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